



Fw: Morwell Mine Fire Submission

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13/05/2014 10:39 AM

Submission.

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Hazelwood Inquiry info/DPC@DTF
12/05/2014 02:53 PM

To Hazelwood Inquiry
info/DPC@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Morwell Mine Fire Submission

Title: Mrs

First Name: Kerryyn

Surname: Wall

Email address: [REDACTED]

Home or office phone: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Response to fire by
Public Health Officials

Please select one of the following options: I acknowledge that my
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Submission-to-mine-fire-inquiry.docx

My family and I live approximately 34 kms from Morwell. We own a business in Buckley Street and have relatives and friends who live in Morwell. Growing up in Morwell, as my husband and I did, and working there, we have had intermittent exposure to coal dust and smoke all our lives, like many of the residents of Morwell and nearby towns. How much we cannot know as there has not been monitoring of PM 10 or PM 2.5, especially in the area where we grew up, around Latrobe Road.

My husband and son both suffered from headaches when exposed to smoke from the Hazelwood mine fire, including after the control of the fire had been officially handed back to GDF Suez. My husband was exposed to smoke when working at our shop and my son was exposed while completing a university placement with Hospital in the Home, visiting patients in the Morwell area.

My concern is that people were not given appropriate advice and support to be kept safe from the air pollution. I understand that there is very little data on the precise length of time necessary for exposure to such high levels of toxins to be deemed a health risk, and that even the effects of short term exposure seems to vary considerably between individuals. However, lack of relevant studies or adequate monitoring of air pollution does not mean there is no risk. The World Health Organization and the AMA submission to the Senate on air pollution (2013) state that studies suggest “an association between short term exposures to particulates and cardiorespiratory health, as well as effects to the central nervous system”. Given the extraordinary high readings of pollution it would therefore have been appropriate to advise people to avoid exposure to coal fire smoke until more information is available. As such the response of authorities to this fire seems ad hoc and inappropriate, gambling with people’s health. People were not warned early enough or informed about possible long term consequences of exposure to coal fire smoke. Most people I have spoken to assumed the smoke might cause a ‘bit of a cough’, nothing more. For example my elderly relatives chose to stay in their home, based on early advice from authorities, even though they have a caravan and could have easily relocated for a few weeks. My uncle is now on considerably more medication than before the fire. Likewise, friends with a young child stayed in Morwell, and his school was not relocated, (indicating an inconsistent, uninformed approach to the disaster by organizations such as schools). These people took up the offer of a weekend out of town, yet considering the length of time they have been exposed to high levels of toxic smoke this seems inadequate. In addition organizers of public events, such as the Go-Kart meeting held at the end of February, were not given any information at all.