



Fw: Morwell Mine Fire Submission

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Submission.

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

Title: Dr

First Name: Christine

Surname: Sindt

Organisation represented (if applicable): Morwell Community (elected Councillor)

Email address: [REDACTED]

Home or office phone: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Content of submission (you can choose multiple): Application and administration of regulatory regimes, Response to fire by Other Government Agencies, Other (please state)

If Other please state here: Lack of response and lack of communication by State Government with Latrobe City Councillors, which includes cancellation of three of the four quarterly meetings which were to be held last year.

Please select one of the following options: I acknowledge that my submission will be treated as a public document and may be published, quoted or summarised by the Inquiry.

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HAZELWOOD-MINE-FIRE-BOARD-OF-INQUIRY.pdf

HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE BOARD OF INQUIRY

As a Latrobe City Councillor who lives within two streets of the Hazelwood Mine Fire which burned for 45 days, I have been utterly dismayed at the response by the Victorian State Government to the health concerns of the Morwell community.

I can only conclude that this is due to scientific ignorance.

When coal burns cleanly at very high temperatures in a power station, there is a by-product of carbon dioxide, steam and coal ash. "Ash" is the correct terminology for the by-product of an efficient burn. During the Hazelwood Mine Fire, the temperatures were much lower, coal was not burned efficiently, and toxic pollutants were generated.

Typically, these toxic pollutants are CO (carbon monoxide), NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide), O₃ (ozone and photochemical oxidants), SO₂ (sulphur dioxide), PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} (particulate matter of 10 microns and 2.5 microns). These are all covered by the SEPP (State Environment Protection Policy) which adopts the requirements of the NEPM Air Quality standards (National Environment Protection Council Measure). This should be regulated by the EPA.

BEFORE THE FIRE

Last year, Latrobe City Councillors sought meetings with the EPA in relation to Air Quality Monitoring. Notes from the meetings are attached to the Latrobe City Council submission. It is clear that the EPA have never taken into account the unique nature of the coal mining industry. The tendency has been to set up monitoring stations on a per capita basis, rather than on an industry basis. Air Quality Indicator descriptors provided by the EPA need review. The readings during the Hazelwood Mine Fire went beyond Good, Fair and Poor. They were extremely Hazardous and a trigger point for evacuation should be specified.

DURING THE FIRE

At the time of the fire, a Monash University Study was underway to determine the impact of "Planned Burns" on human beings. Serendipitously, it coincided with the Hazelwood Mine Fire. Latrobe City Councillors were promised an identical study to the "Planned Burns" study by John Merritt, Craig Lapsley and Rosemary Lester. This did not take place. I myself underwent a series of health tests at the time of the fire as a result of my participation in the Planned Burns study, and received correspondence from Professor Abramson of Monash University dated 1 April 2014 regarding concerns about my health from my blood tests. My health is still compromised. Monash University was prepared to run those tests

for the community at the time of the fire at an indicative cost of \$250,000 for 100 people, and our local Member for Morwell, Russell Northe was advised of this. However, nothing transpired. Firefighters wore protective clothing and stayed at various towns overnight for the duration of the Fire, while local residents were required to breathe the foul poisonous air 24 hours a day, for 45 days. The mail delivery was halted because it was considered too dangerous for the posties to ride their scooters 5 hours per day, 5 days per week (25 hours per week) while the residents breathed poison air 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (228 hours per week). Although the office of Russell Northe is in the middle of the Morwell South danger zone, he did nothing for the community. Possibly he did nothing for political reasons, because last year he had supported the takeover of our world-ranked Monash University Gippsland campus by an unranked institution headquartered in Ballarat.

It was only on the day that I met with the Premier's Senior Adviser, Greg Hannan, that the Premier announced support for evacuation of Morwell South. On that same day, I attended the EPA facility in Macleod, where they appeared to lack the capacity to analyse particulate matter. The EPA had indicated to the community at a public meeting that it would take weeks to analyse particulates. However, I had preliminary work undertaken at a day's notice. More analysis of the particulates, including the morphology is required.

AFTER THE FIRE

Last week, a petition with 25,000 signatures for a Public health Study was handed to the Chief Public Health Officer at a local meeting. I find suggestions that the same format that was used for the Monash University Planned Burns Study should *not* be used quite puzzling. The particulates and poisons are the same. Surely, the Human Ethics Process which would have been carefully defined last year can be rapidly refined for the circumstances of this human catastrophe. I find it concerning that a Public Health Study may be months away while Terms of Reference are cogitated by bureaucrats.

I would like to suggest that an Animal Health Study could also be undertaken which could include whether there was an increase in the death rate of family pets. Since Latrobe City Council has a register of all dogs and cats in the Morwell area, this could give an indication of the effects of the Hazelwood Mine Fire on mammals. This option may well be appreciated and understood by our Premier, who I understand has a Veterinary Science degree.

Dr Christine Sindt, Williamson Fellow

Councillor for Central Ward, Latrobe City

██████████ Morwell VIC 3840

12 May 2014