



[REDACTED]
12/05/2014 03:38 PM

To Hazelwood Inquiry
info/DPC@DTF
cc
bcc
Subject Fwd: FW: FW: Re:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: 07/05/2014 4:20 PM
Subject: FW: FW: Re:
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:

From: Wendy Sands
Sent: Wednesday, 7 May 2014 4:19 PM
To: 'wendy sands'
Subject: RE: FW: Re:

I feel like I am a prisoner in my own home (and even more frustrated because I don't think my home is even a safe place to be). My car smells terrible. Even though I have a pollen filter in the air conditioner and have been careful to only run it on recycle, somehow the smoke and odour has come into my car and no matter what I do, I can't get rid of it. Some days I go outside and within minutes, my breathing is affected and I feel need to take ventolin. Other days, my eyes sting or I get headaches. Even now, 7/5/14, 3 months after the initial fire, I am affected by these problems almost daily. I am worried about my health and the health of my family. I have been getting out of the area as much as possible since the fires began which has cost us quite a lot of money. My vegetable garden was left to perish as I was not going to stand outside and water it and would not trust that the vegetables would be safe to eat. I am concerned about the water supply and food supply from cattle in our area. I have lost faith in our leaders as I no longer trust that they are looking after our community. I am upset that my brand new home that we just built will not be saleable or will sell for much less than it would have prior to the fire. I hate living in the Latrobe Valley and miss our beautiful landscape that is still covered in smog. I am concerned about the health of my animals as they have lost a lot of weight and are lying around all the time like an older animal would. I am upset that my elderly mother is out of breath all the time. I am upset that my daughter and baby grandson have been exposed and could only stay away for a month. I am upset that my husband and son are still out exercising in toxins every day. My husband continued to play sport despite me pleading with him to stay indoors. He said that it was safe for everybody or the health department would have advised otherwise. A few weeks after the fires, he began having blood noses and his nostrils are full of sores. He has now developed a wheeze and cough. The community should have been told the truth so that they could better protect themselves. I am especially upset for the people of Morwell who have lost so much more than we have. Why weren't we been told the truth?

An evacuation was not offered to those who wanted to leave. Nobody should have been allowed to

stay, let alone been made to stay. I am concerned about the reputation of the Latrobe Valley and how that will impact people. I have always loved the Valley, we have such beautiful landscape, national parks, great amenities and only a short drive to the City and beautiful 90 mile beach. I hate living here now and know that many others feel the same way.

The respite centre should have been further away. I work at Newborough and there were many days where the smoke was very thick and it was hard to breathe. Other services such as health check centre and masks should have been made available to people outside of Morwell without expecting people to travel to the worst area to access these services. In the early stages of the fire, I purchased face masks from the hardware store. We were then told that they were providing better quality masks which would filter even more particles to protect our lungs. I went to the Community Health Services in Churchill and was advised to go to Traralgon or Morwell to pick up a mask as they did not have any. I told them that I did not want to drive into the smoke to get a mask to protect myself from the smoke and asked that one could be delivered to Churchill in their next inter-office mail run. They then advised me that they had in fact run out of the masks so no more were available. We should have been advised that the masks they were giving people were not effective in filtering 2.5 particles. I would have happily worn a proper mask like the firefighters are given. The proper protection gear should have been made available in towns other than those most affected.

I wanted to quit our jobs and leave the area. This prospect was too difficult as we would have to leave as we have our children and extended family live in the area. We built a house 2 years ago and planned on selling it when we retire. I am concerned at the fact that nobody would want to buy a house less than 10 km from Hazelwood Power Station and if they do, it will not be worth what it would have been and therefore we may not be in a financial position to do this.

This has cost us thousands of dollars by the time you add up sick days, air purifier, petrol and motel rooms. We went away at every opportunity and I was too unwell to enjoy myself. It was (and still is) depressing to drive back home through the Latrobe Valley.

My daughter took my grandson away as they both had vomiting and diarrhea from too much smoke exposure and she could no longer cope with the constant headaches and could not keep anything down. They had just moved into a new house in Traralgon and had not even unpacked. The house had been renovated and was left in clean, brand new condition. After being away for a month, we had to clean up her house as I did not want them exposed. Her house was thick with ash and soot both inside and out. As she did not qualify for a clean up, I did this myself even though I knew that I should not be handling this toxic matter. This makes me very upset and angry that we were (and still are) unsupported and left to fend for ourselves.

My mother was in hospital with vomiting after being exposed to the smoke. My sister came down from Melbourne to visit her and had to leave as she had an asthma attack. Since the fires, my sister has been unable to visit my mother. This is most concerning as my mother is elderly and relied on her weekly visits from my sister.

I used to be fit and attend aerobics 2-3 times/week as well as other personal activity. My breathing was impacted within the first week of the fire. Previously I had controlled asthma, using a preventer only with no need for ventolin and good lung capacity. I now use my preventer a lot more regularly and have ventolin with me at all times

I have contacted the EPA on many occasions asking for testing in the Churchill area. They

assure me that they have been conducting testing in Churchill but have failed to provide me with the data that I have been asking for with the figures for Churchill. On the days that I was reporting either bad odour, fumes or smoke and their website was saying the air was very good, I questioned them on what they were actually testing for. I asked them to test for other substances that would be causing health symptoms or odour in the air. I advised them that the air was not "very good" and that they need to expand their testing to find out what was making people sick. All of my requests have fallen on deaf ears. It seems to me that they do not want to know what is in the air because then they will have to do something about it. From the initial stages of the fire, we kept all windows and doors shut, and the air conditioner was not used. I then went and purchased an air purifier to ensure that the air inside my home was kept clean. The air purifier displays blue for good quality air, purple for average air and red for poor air quality. In the first few weeks, the air was mostly blue and would only go onto purple or red after a door had been opened. After a while, the purple and red lights would come on more often and now are rarely displaying blue lights. I spoke to the EPA to ask their advice to ascertain how the bad air was getting into a new house with everything shut up. I mentioned that the smell of smoke was particularly bad in the rooms with ceiling fans and asked them how to address this situation. To date, they still haven't given me any ideas on how to stop the bad air from coming in through the roof. I am waiting for the air to clear before getting my central heating and air conditioning vents cleaned. I recently turned on the gas wall heater and within minutes, was ill with a headache and sore eyes. How am I supposed to heat or cool my house without letting the bad air in???? This question still has not been answered. Every time I speak with the EPA, they give me a reference number but nothing is being done about it.

Once the initial fire was out, the mine owners were given permission to dig up an old fire which caused more smoke and toxins in our air. I am very unhappy that this was allowed to happen and that they were not forced to cover it up until they could find a safe way to extinguish it. Since the old faithful has been smouldering, my health has not improved. I am still feeling constantly fatigued and short of breath. I know that it is environmental, because when I leave the area for a few days, I start to feel better. I am most concerned that the continual smouldering of this fire will cause more damage to people's health and to our environment. I don't understand why they were allowed to dig up an old fire and expose us to even more smoke.

In the early stages of the fire, I purchased face masks from the hardware store. We were then told that they were providing better quality masks which would filter even more particles to protect our lungs. I went to the Community Health Services in Churchill and was advised to go to Traralgon or Morwell to pick up a mask as they did not have any. I told them that I did not want to drive into the smoke to get a mask to protect myself from the smoke and asked that one could be delivered to Churchill in their next inter-office mail run. They then advised me that they had in fact run out of the masks so no more were available. We should have been advised that the masks they were giving people were not effective in filtering 2.5 particles. I would have happily worn a proper mask like the firefighters are given. The proper protection gear should have been made available in towns other than those most affected.

Because the Health Officer deemed it to be safe, I had to leave my house, travel in my car past the mine to go to work. Our office in Newborough had the air conditioner on which was sucking in the smoke and fumes. My manager said that because of Occupational Health laws,

we could not turn off the air conditioner while people were in the building. Being forced to go to an unsafe work location was upsetting but I had to go because the Health Department said it was safe. It was not safe as my lungs were hurting whilst at work.

My husband continued to play sport despite me pleading with him to stay indoors. He said that it was safe for everybody or the health department would have advised otherwise. A few weeks after the fires, he began having blood noses and his nostrils are full of sores. He has now developed a wheeze and cough. The community should have been told the truth so that they could better protect themselves.