

HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

Submission cover sheet

Post your submission with this cover sheet to:

Submissions Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry
PO Box 3460
GIPPSLAND MC Vic 3841

Email your submission with this cover sheet to info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au.

Title: MR	First Name: SIMON	Surname: ELLIS
Organisation represented (if applicable):		
Email address:	[REDACTED]	
Postal address:	[REDACTED] Morwell.	
Telephone:	Mobile:	[REDACTED]
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire <input type="checkbox"/> Application and administration of regulatory regimes <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)	Response to fire by: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazelwood Coal Mine <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials <input type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies	

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Should the Inquiry consider the request for confidentiality not to be appropriate you will be provided with an opportunity to withdraw your submission or re-submit it in a form suitable for publication.

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10/4/14 SM

Acknowledgements

I understand that:

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- Anonymous submission will not be accepted.
- The name or work or suburb of each submitter will be identified as apart of every published submission. Other contact details will be removed before publishing.
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OR if sending electronically please confirm your acknowledgment by ticking by box

Date

Simon Ellis

[REDACTED]
Morwell, VIC 3840

Personal Submission.

To the Judicial Inquiry.

On the 9th Feb 2014 at about 1pm I was on the veranda of my house at the above address with my younger brother Robert Ellis and we noticed in a south west direction a plume of smoke appear from the tree line. I grabbed my phone and called 000 at 13.03 pm to let the fire brigade know as it was a total fire ban day and you are supposed to report any fires. While I spoke to the 000 operator I also took photos with my camera which I have attached to my submission.

The fire seemed to be on the hill on the west side of the Strzelecki Highway and it did not seem to be part of the fire that had been burning on previous days at hearnes oak this from watching and seeing it begin was a fresh fire and not that of embers.

But I am no professional and only can tell what I saw. After a while of the fire moving towards the mine in an easterly direction the wind changed direction and headed towards the west back to the direction it came from at this time me and my brother continued watching and taking pics of the events as they unfolded. After about an hour the wind was more swirling than going in a specific direction and the whole of Morwell from our vantage point was covered in smoke. Myself and my brother had now got many visitors from the street joining us to see what was going on and find out if there was any further information but we had yet to receive an evacuation, the only message we got from cfa was at 3.44pm "bushfire emergency warning from cfa Hazelwood,

yinnar, Driffield, and surrounding areas. Seek shelter now check local radio of cfa.vic.gov.au”

The next message was not sent to us until 15/02/2014 at 13.02pm
“Watch and act from cfa Morwell west residents shelter indoors immediately, close windows/doors/vents seek further info via radio”
And then on the same day at 17.44pm “watch and act message from cfa has been downgraded. Morwell residents can go outside and open doors and windows. Further info via radio and cfa website”

But back to the 9th feb at about 15.00pm me and my brother went for a drive around town and also to stock up on supplies for the house just in case we were stuck in the house longer and the shops closed.

On the journey we went down to the cfa at the bottom of comans street and ask them what was the plan and was told by a fire officer there to stay in our house because there were plenty of fire fighters and appliances and they were here to protect the assets.

We took some videos and photos of the travel which I have made available to the inquiry and would be happy to explain them in more detail.

The evening of the 9th kept us alert as was noticed once it went dark you could see the extent of the fire as the whole horizon was glowing red/orange from the fires. The fire could be seen along the whole horizon out the front of my house, and you could clearly see that the mine was on fire. Whilst watching from our veranda we also had the abc new TV on and the radio abc, we heard an interview with Trevor Rowe on the radio saying all was fine and there was no fire in the mine and that the power station was all fine which you could clearly see the fire was in the mine.

There were 4 explosions at one time in the direction of the mine and there was no explanation of where they came from or what they were.

During the evening when our neighbors had seen enough we decided it better to leave while we had the chance but were told there was no way out that all roads had been closed in and out of Morwell, and so we were to stay put.

10.02.2014

The night was long as we stayed up through the night to watch and protect our houses from the embers in the air, the smoke still filled the streets and was a weird smell and taste to it and we put up with it for the next few days waiting and watching to see what would happen next, I remember calling to see if the rest bite ce3ntres were still open but was informed they had close and the fire was no longer a danger but we were breathing in this rancid smoke for weeks they eventually did reopen the rest bite centers in Moe and Traralgon for people to go to.

Since the fire there was little information passed to us I attended the first community meeting on 14th February which revealed nothing much for the community apart from them telling us if we could not see in front of us with the smoke then you should be leaving town.

We were told too many different stories by too many people as the saying goes too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

In comparison I have seen some of the houses in Morwell south and have been in some of them to see how they have been affected but I think maybe some of them got off lightly compared to the houses on the hill where I live my house is black on the outside and on the inside from the ash and smoke I have cleaned my carpets once already but yet I can't get them back to clean I am wiping my window sills every day to avoid the ash getting into my house. I have a 7 year old daughter who has had one nose bleed and had a cough and sore eyes and throat most of the time.

Myself I have been to the doctors as I am an asthmatic and have managed my asthma all my life, now I have been put on prednisolone and also a stronger inhaler as my breathing has become harder for me I

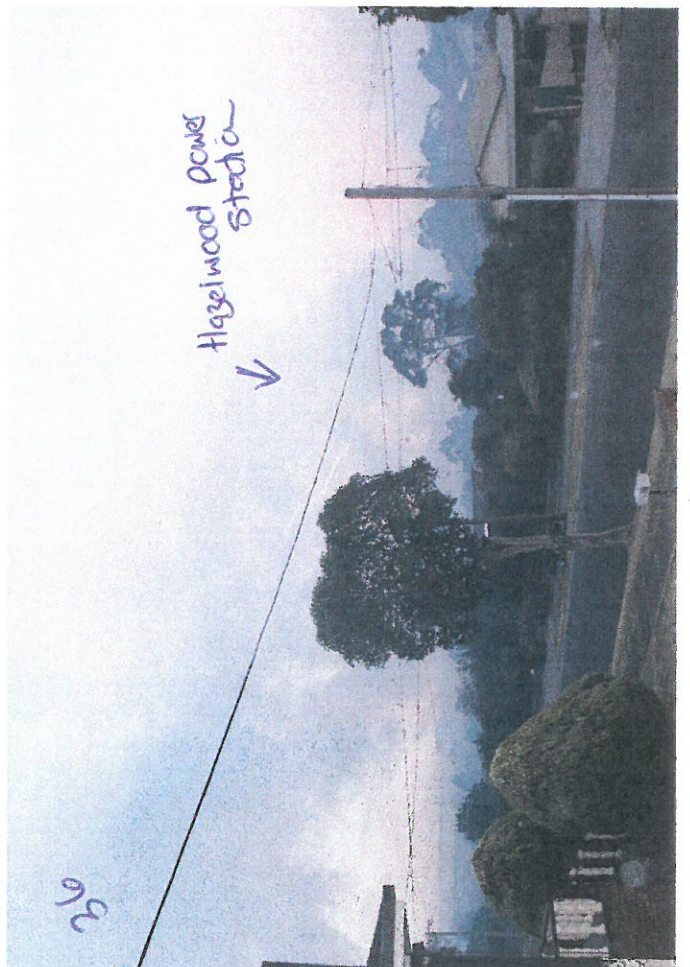
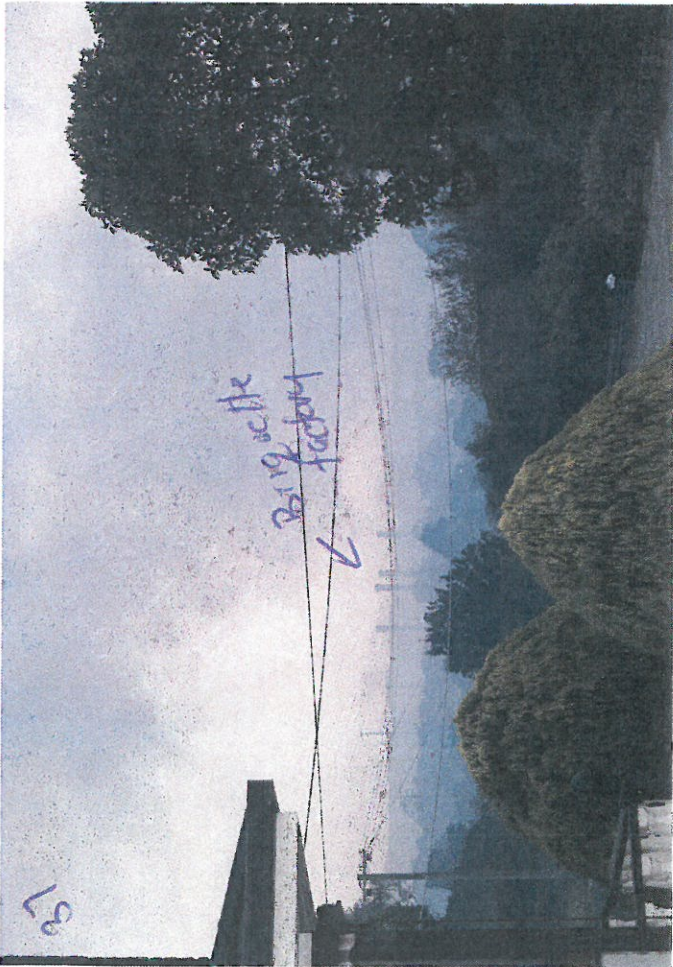
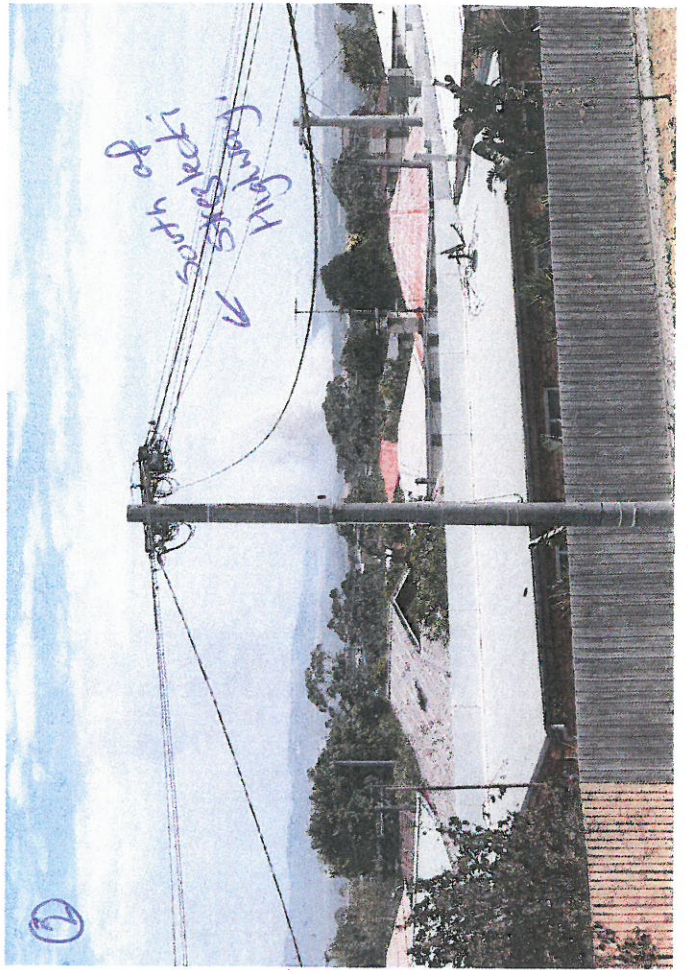
spent one day in hospital and have yet to receive my discharge papers for this visit was told it would be sent to my doctor but he has not received it also. I have had 2 occasions to go away for a few days since the fire began one to Melton and the other to Warnambool, whilst at these locations my breathing subsided and I was able to breathe more easily as if nothing had happened and was able to sleep without wheezing, but once I returned to the valley my breathing became worse.

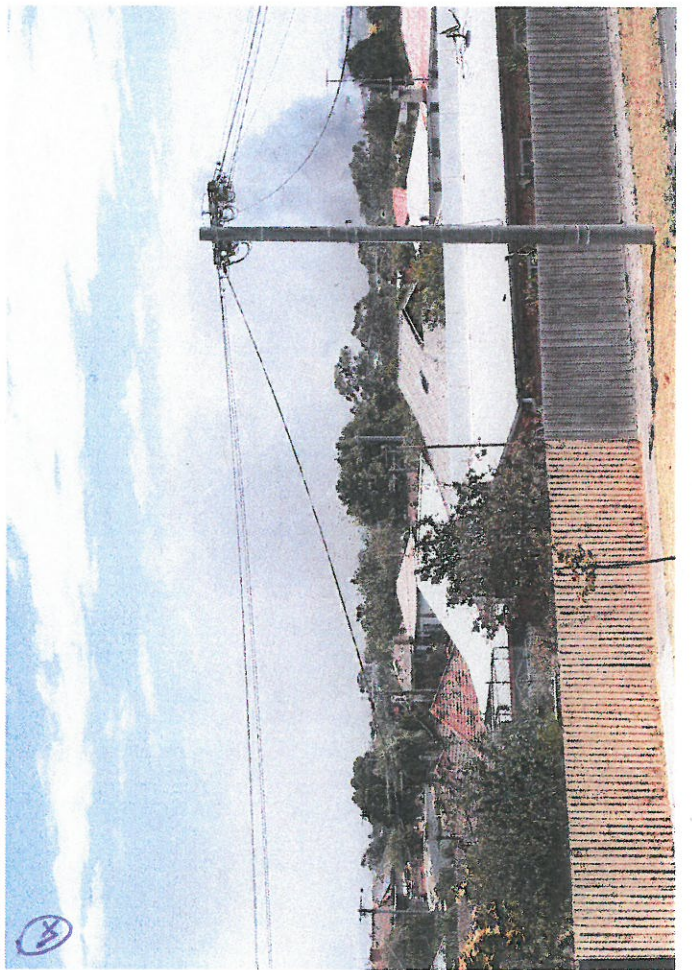
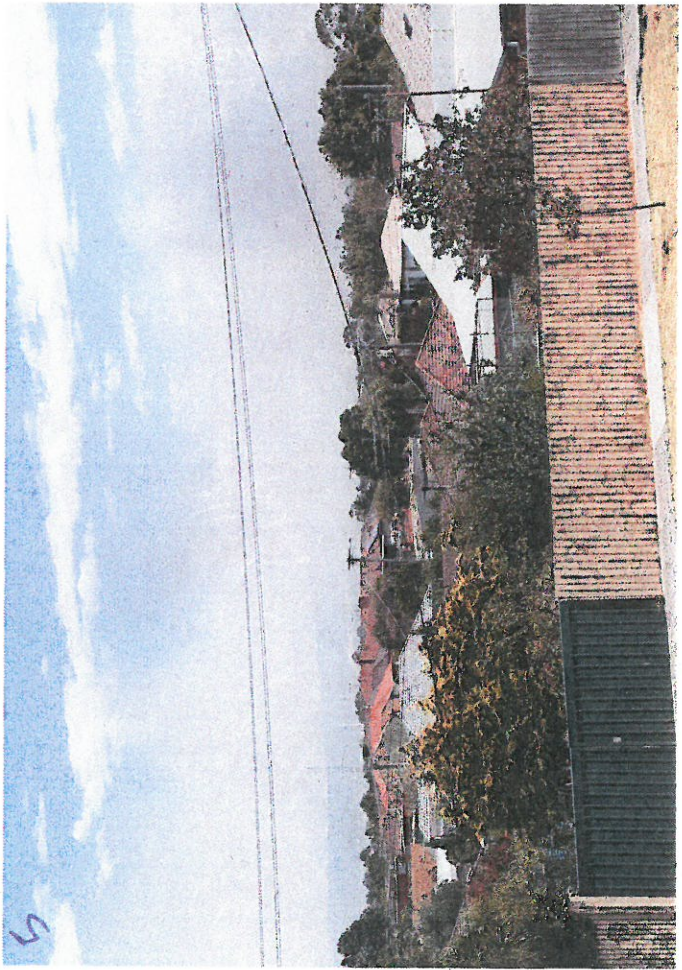
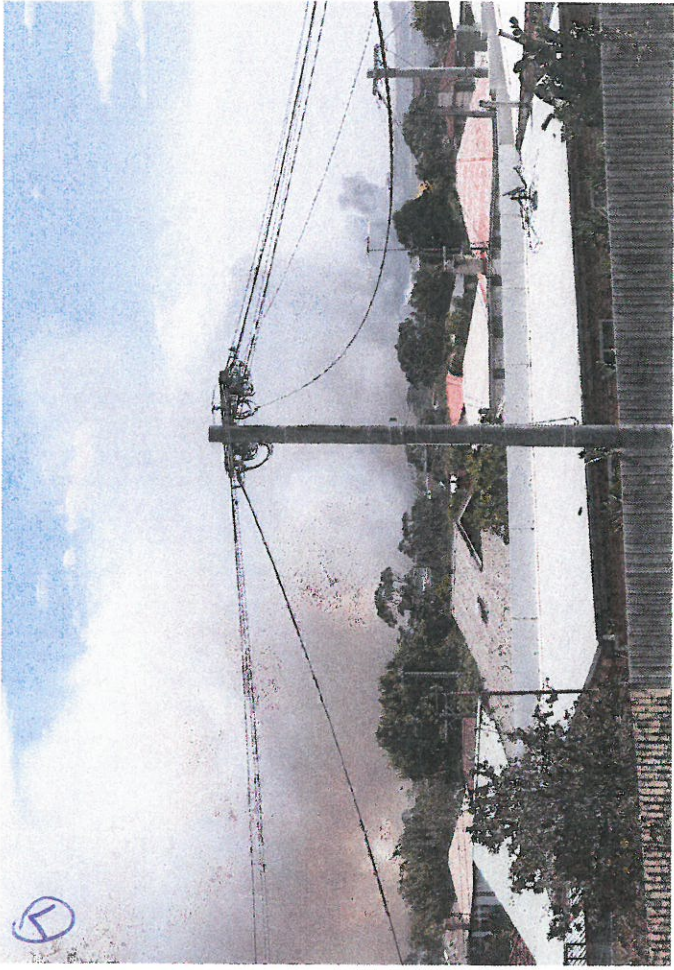
I feel that we have been misinformed and people have been gagged in many ways, I was offered a position in the Hazelwood power station as a security guard during the disaster and because I was on television I was told I could no longer work for them then I was offered a position with fusion foods cooking for the CFA and all the staging area at Hazelwood power station now whilst there I had the opportunity to speak to some of the fire fighters there and heard stories like "it is like working on Mars" and many more some telling how they are not being looked after.

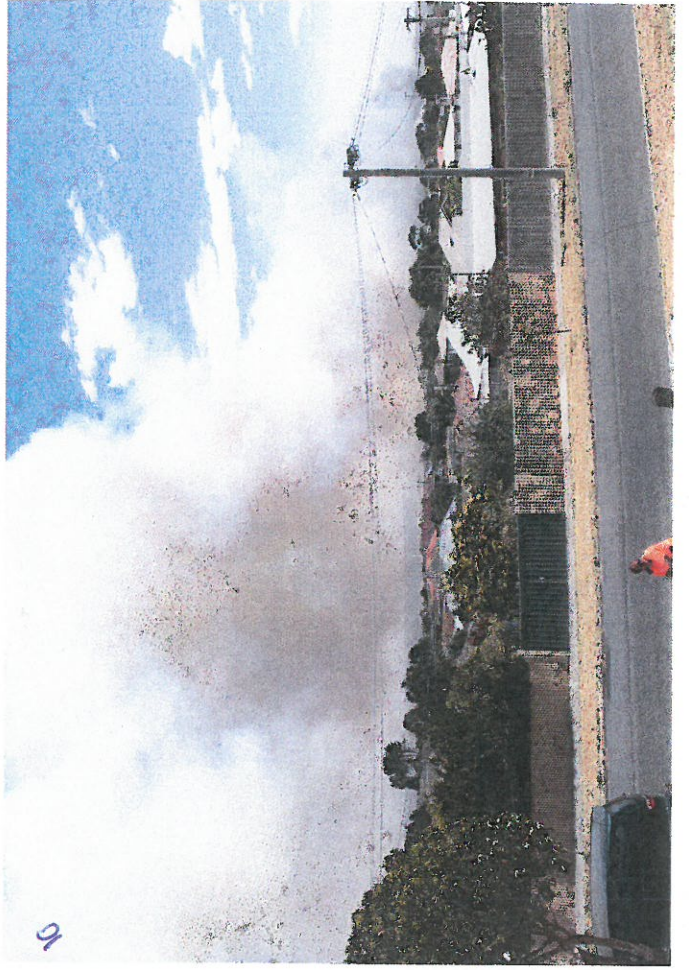
While I was at the staging area we were informed we are supposed to have a check every 2 hours to be sure we were OK to work and did not have excess carbon monoxide in my system. But it was amazing before I started everyday my CO level was between 3 and 5 and was asked if I had been working and informed them that I was just starting and upon leaving my CO level was 0 or 1, this is alarming to find out and would have been more interesting to be testing the community and not the staging area and I never had my check every 2 hours neither did many people in the area.

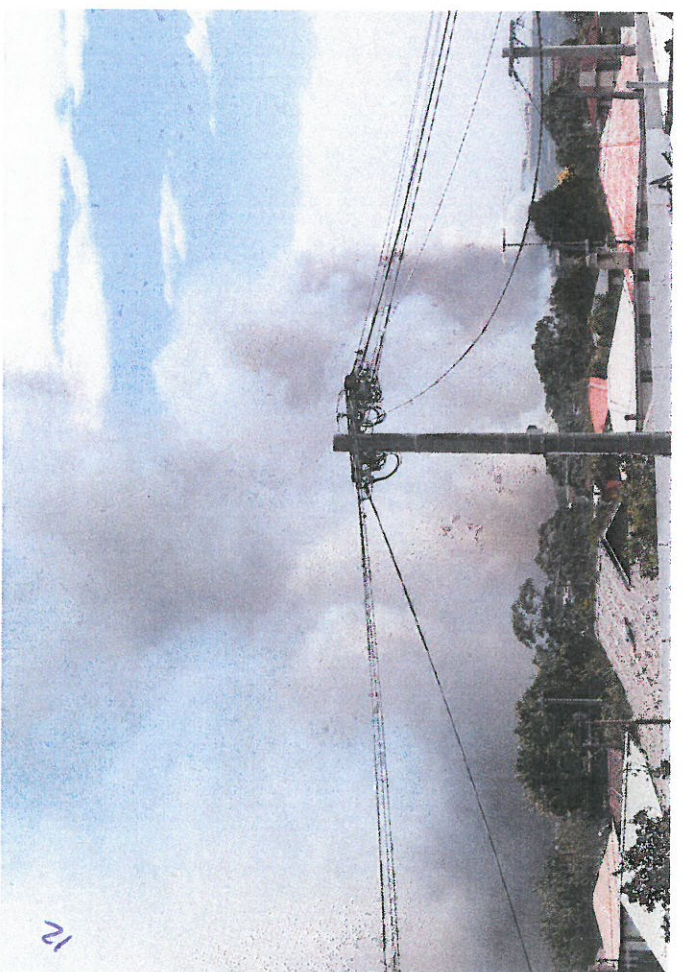
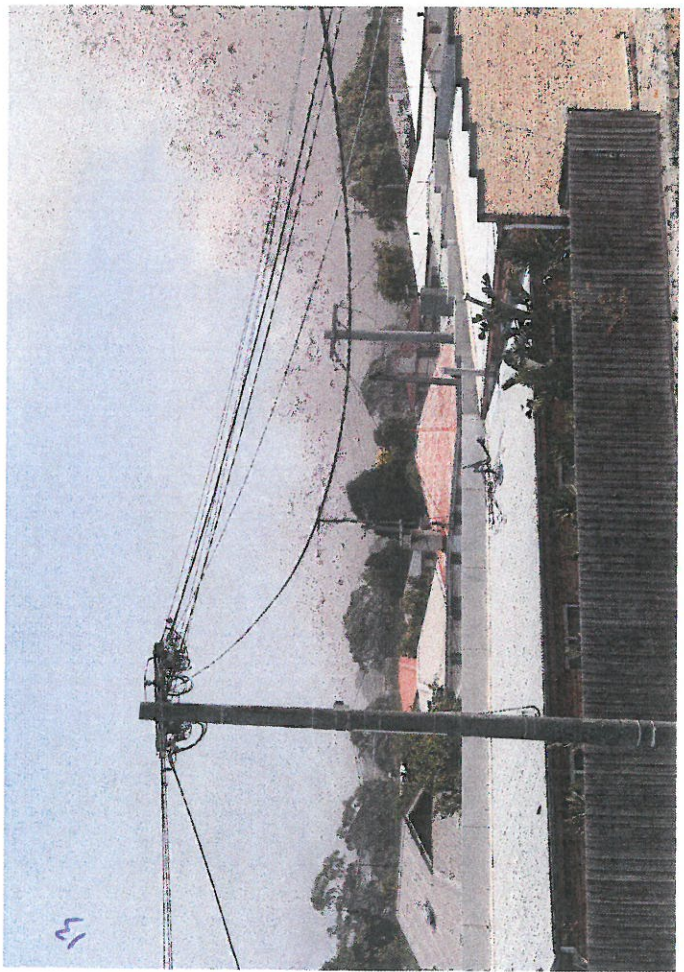
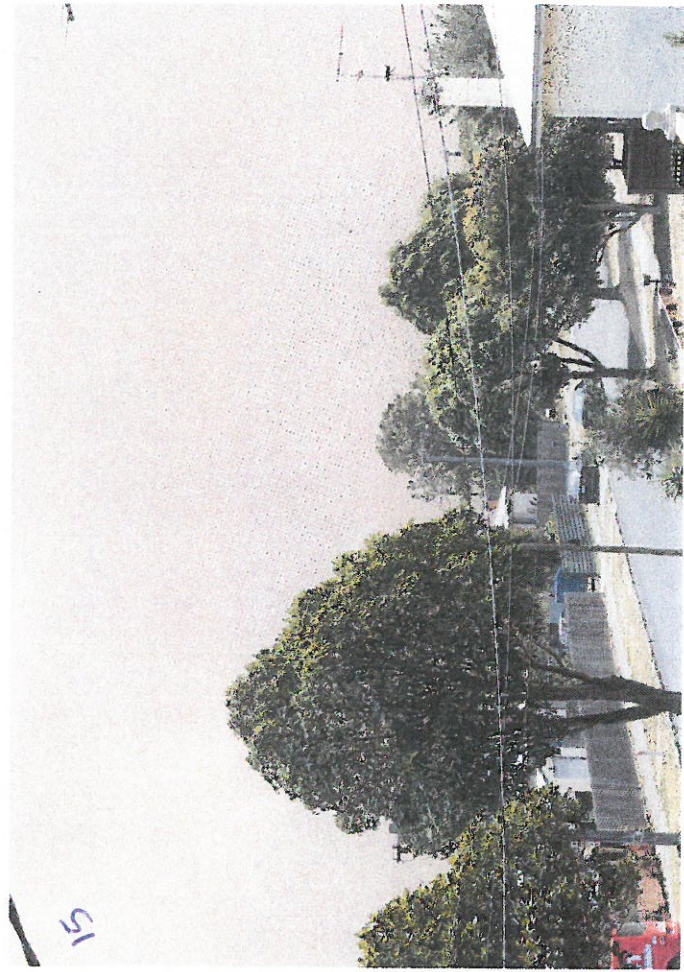


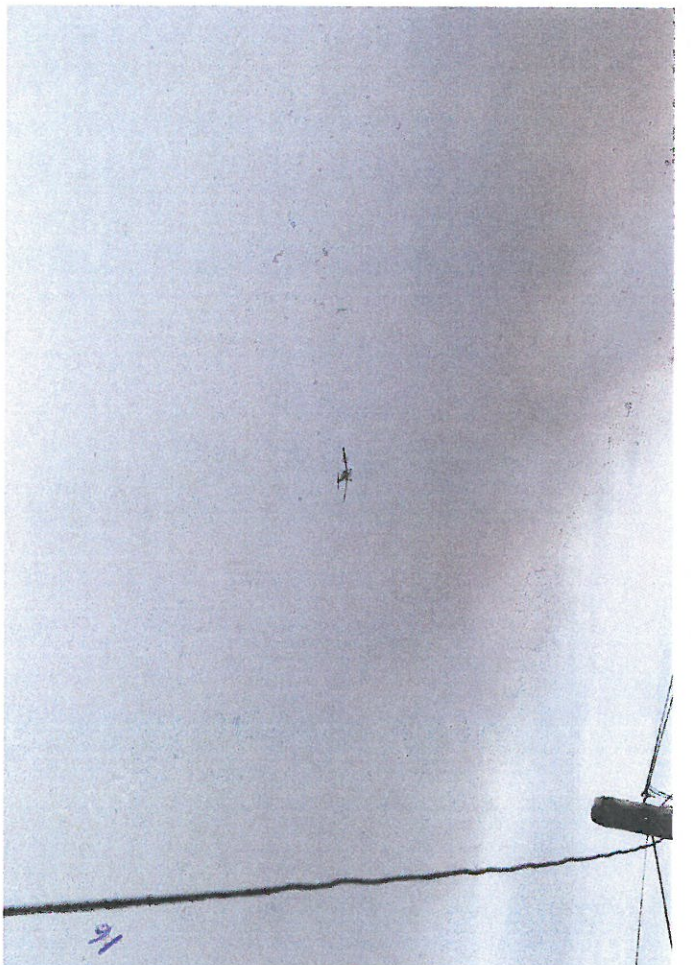
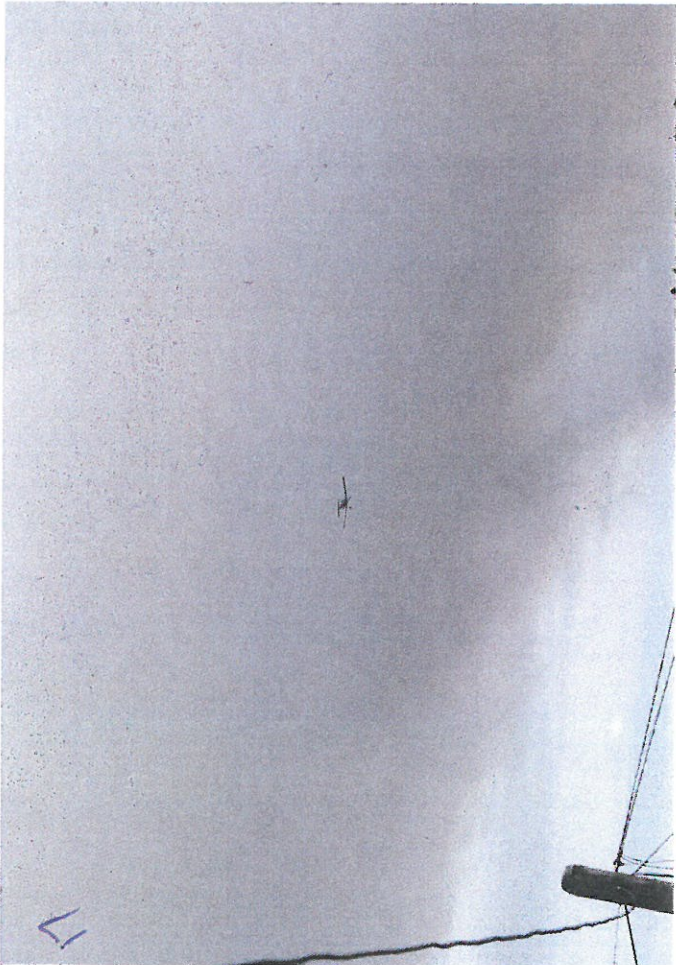
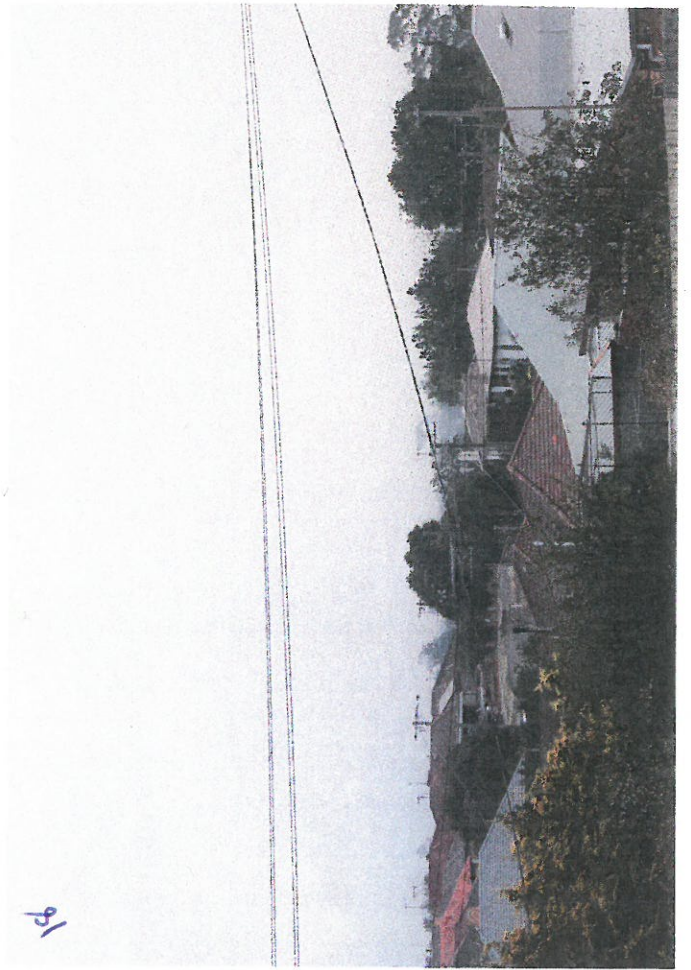
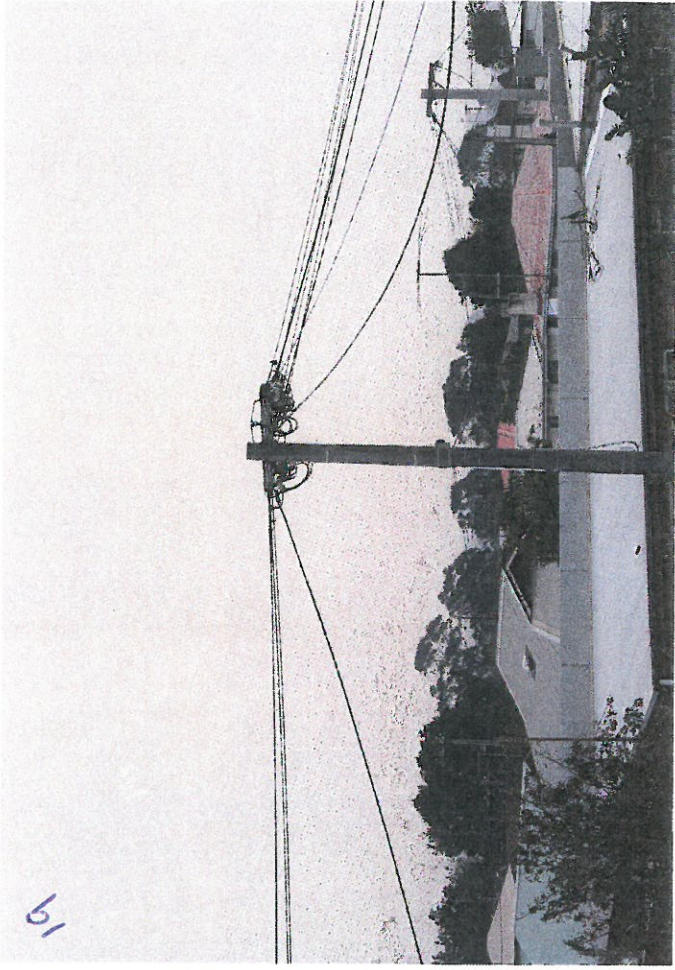
①
13:03pm
From 109 Gannus
St. Maxwell,
Simon Ellis













Down town Princess drive morwell

