

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: Max	Surname: Williamson
Organisation represented (if applicable): Advance Morwell Inc		
Email address:	[REDACTED]	
Postal address:	Morwell 3840	
Telephone: [REDACTED]	Mobile: [REDACTED]	
<input type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire <input type="checkbox"/> Application and administration of regulatory regimes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please state) Mine stability	Response to fire by: <input type="checkbox"/> Hazelwood Coal Mine <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials <input type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies	

Confidentiality

The Inquiry will consider all requests for confidentiality. Should you wish for your submission or parts of your submission, to be treated as confidential, please clearly state the reason in the space provided below. If you require more room, please attach a separate page and provide together with your submission.

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.

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.

OR

I request that my submission or parts of my submission, be treated as confidential, and not published quoted or summarised by the Inquiry, for reasons stated below

Acknowledgements

I understand that:

- I can be contacted by the Inquiry in relation to my submission.
- 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.
- The Inquiry will not publish submission, if it believes that the submission material is or could be defamatory, offensive, contravenes, anti-discrimination or anti-vilification legislation or is outside the scope of the Inquiry's terms of reference

Signature

M Williams

OR if sending electronically please confirm your acknowledgment by ticking by box

Date 12/05/14



Registration No A36948L ABN: 79 430 405 176

PO BOX 1061 MORWELL 3840 VICTORIA

Advance Morwell Inc.

Chairman: John Guy

Secretary: Keith Brownbill

Telephone: [REDACTED]

12 May 2014

HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

1. Mine stability

This submission is presented by Advance Morwell, an incorporated organisation focussed on advocating for the Morwell community. We are supported by a membership of 140 members comprising corporate, business and community members.

We wish to highlight the issue of batter stability in brown coal mines situated in the Latrobe Valley. Our concern applies particularly to the northern batter of the Hazelwood mine where escape of water from the Morwell main drain in 2011 caused a batter instability incident that closed the Princes freeway bypass of Morwell for seven months.

The high volumes of water used by fire fighters to quell the extensive fire in the Hazelwood mine northern batter in 2014 heightened the risk of further instability developing that could lead to a major collapse with disastrous consequences for residents in the southern section of Morwell as well as loss of the freeway. Although the northern batter was closely monitored for the duration of the mine fire and remained stable, water retained in the interstices may have weakened the coal face that could lead to instability developing in the future.

We recommend that high priority be given to remediation and stabilisation of the northern batter of the Hazelwood mine.

There have been two other instances of mine failure in recent times, commencing in June 2007 when the southern batter of the Yallourn mine collapsed allowing the Latrobe River to flood the mine. In 2012, the Morwell River embankment through the Yallourn mine collapsed which severely disrupted mining operations for several months.

After the Yallourn batter collapse in 2007, the government formed an independent Technical Review Board in 2009 to advise the industry on mine safety. During its first term, the Technical Review Board identified seven at-risk structures within Latrobe Valley coal mines but gave no assurance that all at-risk structures had been discovered. Currently there are at least four at-risk structures still under investigation. The Board's 2012/13 second term report has been submitted to government but not published.

The Technical Review Board believes that the issue of brown coal mine stability in the Latrobe Valley has reached a serious state due to no advancement in the knowledge base of mine stability mechanisms following the demise of the State Electricity Commission in 1996.

The recently released February 2014 government report on Emergency Risks in Victoria emphasises the risk of mine failure to people, infrastructure and environment. In view of the past record of mine stability failures in Latrobe Valley coal mines and the identification of several latent at-risk structures, it is recommended the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry should consider and make recommendations on managing mine stability at the Hazelwood mine in particular and other mines in the Latrobe Valley.

2. Incident control

Advance Morwell holds the view that despite the professional work by the CFA as incident controller of the Hazelwood mine fire, the scale of this major incident and its broader ramifications on the Morwell community warranted declaration as a state emergency with management at government level. We believe that management at agency level lacked the necessary authority to coordinate and direct all aspects of the incident.