

SOUTH-EASTERN VICTORIA REGION



Department of Education and  
Early Childhood Development

# SEVMail

## MEMORANDUM

SEV: 2014-017

**TO:** All Schools and Early Childhood Providers – Morwell District

**FROM:** John Allman, Regional Director

**DATE:** 21 February 2014

**SUBJECT:** Update on Morwell Mine fire impact

### Summary

Advice for Schools and Early Childhood Facilities in and around Morwell

The Department of Health also has information on its website about smoke and your health. Visit: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/chiefhealthofficer/2014-02-latrobe-valley-smoke.htm>

### SCHOOLS

The first day of temporary relocation (Thursday, 20 February) went well. Only a small number of students were absent, most of who are taking a break away from the area with their families. Some families have chosen to not participate in the school's relocation to Moe, and the school is offering assistance by developing a learning program that parents can use at home.

All schools are encouraged to consider rotating students to available spaces in schools in the wider region (Moe) for a break or 'excursion.' Please ensure that all usual requirements for excursions are in place. Please follow standard practice for arranging bus transport; if you have any queries please contact your bus transport coordinator.

The advice remains that where possible, limit physical activities and keep children inside as much as possible. Windows and doors should remain closed, and where schools have air conditioners, they should be on 'recycle air' or turned off if they cannot recycle air. Please take every opportunity available chance to air out your facilities.

The Department is also supporting Morwell schools to access additional cleaning to help keep surfaces clean from ash. Please work with your cleaning contractor to increase the frequency of cleaning, based on your needs. Please continue to make sure children wash their hands regularly.

The Department continues to conduct regular air quality tests in classrooms and early learning spaces across all Morwell government and non-government schools and early childhood centres. The testing is being undertaken by qualified hygienists using hand held monitors. Data collected is at a point in time during a day and is not a continuous stream across 24-hours. All available data will be sent to the Department of Health to inform its assessment of the situation.

The DEECD school nursing service has staff available to support you with any concerns in your school relating to the smoke from the Morwell Mine Fire. School nurses are available to provide advice via phone, or a nurse can visit your school to assist with any concerns that you may have regarding students or staff. This advice could include assistance in relation to asthma and respiratory issues; hygiene issues associated with smoke and ash, or any other issues as they arise.

If you would like to access this service please contact Kylie Pollard, Nurse Manager or Nicola Stuart, Manager – Health, Wellbeing and Engagement at DEECD – South Eastern Victoria region on 5127 0400.

A Community Health Assessment Centre has been established at the Ambulance Victoria Gippsland Regional office at 2 Saskia Way in Morwell, adjacent to the Mid Valley Shopping Centre. It will be operating from 8am to 8pm. The centre will offer basic primary health assessments such as blood pressure, heart rate, temperature and basic respiratory checks such as chest sounds and respiratory rate. Should anyone need medical care, they will be referred to their own doctor or to Latrobe Regional Hospital. For general health enquiries contact Nurse-On-Call on 1300 60 60 24.

### **FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD FACILITIES**

The advice remains that where possible, limit physical activities and keep children inside as much as possible. Windows and doors should remain closed and air conditioners, should be on 'recycle air' or turned off if they cannot recycle air. Please take every available opportunity chance to air out your facilities when smoke levels reduce.

The Department is also supporting all services to access additional cleaning to help keep surfaces clean from ash. This could take the form of arranging for your existing cleaner to clean more often. Please discuss with your cleaning contractor. Continue to also make sure children wash their hands regularly.

The Department continues to conduct regular air quality tests in classrooms and early learning spaces across all Morwell government and non-government schools and early childhood centres. The testing is being undertaken by qualified hygienists using hand held monitors. Data collected is at a point in time during a day and is not a continuous stream across 24-hours. All available data will be sent to the Department of Health to inform its assessment of the situation.

The DEECD school nursing service has staff available to support you with any concerns in your facility relating to the smoke and ash from the Morwell Mine Fire. School nurses are available to provide advice via phone, or a nurse can visit your facility to assist with any concerns you may have regarding children or staff. This advice could include assistance in relation to asthma and respiratory issues; hygiene issues associated with smoke and ash, or any other issues as they arise. If you would like to access this service please contact Kylie Pollard, Nurse Manager or Nicola Stuart, Manager – Health, Wellbeing and Engagement at DEECD – South Eastern Victoria region on 5127 0400.

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**JOHN ALLMAN**  
Regional Director  
South Eastern Victoria Region