

Communique for Regions to Send to Early Childhood Services

NOTE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS

Air Quality Monitoring

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is installing air quality monitoring units to regularly test air quality in classrooms and learning spaces across Morwell government and non-government schools and early childhood centres.

The units are designed to help schools and early childhood services determine when it is OK for children to play outside and when it's not, and will supplement existing monitoring being done by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA's website is the best source of accurate and current information; go to: <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/aq-latrobe-valley-mine-fire>

In addition to the existing unit at the Commercial Road Primary School, units are progressively being installed from today at the following locations:

- Morwell Primary School
- Tobruk Street Primary School
- Kurnai College – Morwell Campus
- Gunnai Lidj – Early Childhood Centre, Morwell

Early childhood service directors will be trained in how to read the relevant data produced. Queries about the data should be directed to DTZ on 1300 133 468 (please note that this number is not for wider circulation). A hygienist contracted by DTZ will then advise what action, if any, should be taken. The hygienist is available every day 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Face Masks

Services are also being asked whether children should be wearing face masks.

The Victorian Department of Health has issued a fact sheet about wearing masks – it can be accessed here: <http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Face-masks--questions-and-answers-about-the-smoke-and-ash-from-the-Hazelwood-open-cut-mine>.

The Victorian Department of Health advises that face masks are not a simple solution to providing protection from some of the particles and gases contained in smoke from the Morwell mine fire. Specifically, children are advised to stay indoors as much as possible, instead of wearing a face mask that may be difficult or impractical to wear correctly, can be hot and uncomfortable and can make it harder to breathe normally.

Given this advice, DEECD will not be providing children with face masks. If parents have queries about using face masks for their children or themselves, they should visit the Health Assessment Centre in Morwell, which is staffed by paramedics and nurses, or call Nurse on Call on 1300 60 60 24.