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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 3841Email your submission with this cover sheet to info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au.

Title: <i>M.R.</i>	First Name: <i>GRAEME</i>	Surname: <i>FRESHWATER</i>
Organisation represented (if applicable):		
Email address:	[REDACTED]	
Postal address:	[REDACTED] <i>MORWELL</i>	
Telephone:	[REDACTED]	Mobile: [REDACTED]
<input 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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Please select one of the following options

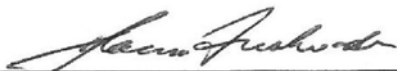
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Acknowledgements**I understand that:**

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- 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

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

Date 9/4/2014

1. Introduction

I am a Civil Engineer and former employee of the SECV from 1966 to 1995. I worked at all three mines in the Latrobe Valley and in later years was Mine Manager at Hazelwood Mine and Loy Yang Mine.

During my time at Hazelwood Mine I experienced a number of fires, in particularly the 1977 fire and was involved in the subsequent review.

2. Concerns

During a brief interview in March 2014 by the local Express Newspaper I indicated my concern regarding the rapid spreading of the fire and the duration of the fire before it was brought under control. Previous experience indicated slower spreading of fire due to the installed spraying systems and significant fire were brought under control in days rather than weeks.

3. Major Changes

Outsourcing of some operations and privatisation of the Power Station and Mine along with downsizing of the workforce brought changes to the management and resulted in loss of many experienced staff and wages personnel.

There have been several owners of Hazelwood Power Station and Mine since privatisation.

In relation to fire management, there was a dedicated Fire Service group within the mine when under the SECV. I understand the group was disbanded after privatisation and the duties were allocated to mine operators for miner fire situations and to the CFA for other other/major fire situations.

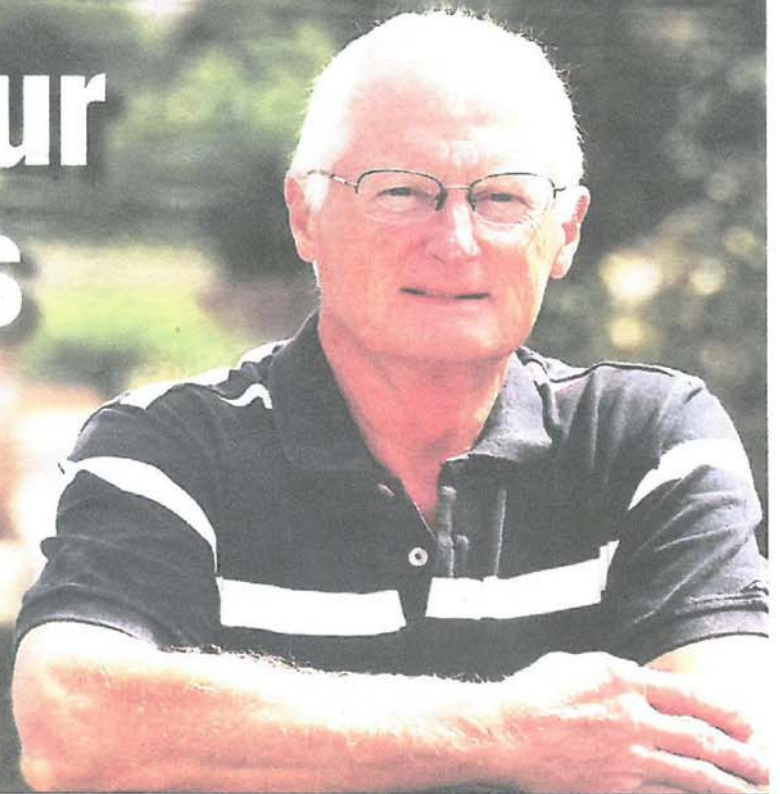
4. Review Expectation

- Review mine fire prevention/fighting capabilities
- Review CFA experience/capability in fighting Latrobe Valley open cut coal fires
- Review value of use of expensive helicopters in dumping large quantities of water on steep coal batters
- Determine if Mine Management is meeting all Fire Policy and Codes of Practice

Voice your concerns

Looking ahead: Former Hazelwood mine manager Graeme Freshwater believes fire prevention and management should be a key focus of an independent inquiry into the fire.

photograph by Ryan Petts-Jones



By REBECCA SYMONS

THE Latrobe Valley community has been invited to take part in the Morwell-based independent inquiry into all aspects of the Hazelwood mine fire, which is expected to begin this month.

Supreme Court Justice Bernard Teague, who led the Black Saturday Royal Commission, was chosen to lead the inquiry because of his expertise in bushfires and connected communities like the Latrobe Valley.

Chief Fire Commissioner Craig Lapsley said while the inquiry would address the fire's impacts and information delivery, health issues would be "front and centre".

In addition to the independent inquiry, Mr Lapsley said he would conduct an

inquiry into the fire service's handling of the mine fire.

"(Justice Teague) brings the understanding of fire emergency management and also the key issues around fire prevention, litigation and response," Mr Lapsley said.

"The ability for individual community members and families to have their say is unique in this inquiry compared to others into incidents including the Morwell Princes Highway closure in 2011, which allowed only representatives from community groups to contribute.

During the inquiry's announcement on Tuesday, Premier Denis Napthine said now was the time for individuals, families, community representatives

and businesses "to have their say on how they and their communities have been impacted by the fire, the level of support they received and their views of the emergency response".

Former Hazelwood mine manager and Morwell resident Graeme Freshwater was unsure whether he would contribute to the inquiry.

However he questioned whether 28 fire prevention and fighting principles put in place after the last large open cut fire in 1977 were still being followed.

"The main question is why did it take hold so quickly and was the equipment available?" Mr Freshwater said.

"It's obviously affected some people who aren't able to handle it and that needs

to be reviewed and perhaps a bit slow in reacting to it, but dragged on a long while."

Morwell resident Lauren Beckett recently returned to her home after relocating to Lakes Entrance six months ago because of constant asthma attacks.

While Ms Beckett said she would like to provide information to the inquiry, she said it would be too late.

"It doesn't matter what happens now, if people are going to be sick later it's too late," Ms Beckett said.

"I worry about my kids, I've been inside all the time but they're sick."