

**IN THE MATTER OF
The Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Inquiry**

STATEMENT OF JOHN CHARLES HAYNES

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I, JOHN CHARLES HAYNES, of 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, Victoria, Deputy Chief Officer, Country Fire Authority (CFA), can say as follows:

A. Introduction

1. My full name is John Charles Haynes. My date of birth is 27 August 1966.
2. I have been employed by the CFA since December 1985 and have been CFA Deputy Chief Officer since November 2007. Between 1985 and 2007 I have held various operational roles within the CFA and have worked my way up through the ranks. I became an Operations Manager in 1995. In the time I have been employed by the CFA I have been based at various locations including Melbourne, Horsham, Casterton, Ararat and Shepparton.
3. Prior to being employed I was a CFA volunteer. I commenced as a junior CFA volunteer at Traralgon in April 1981. I have been an endorsed Level 3 Incident Controller (IC) for the last 20 years. I have been an accredited Level 3 IC since 2011, when changes were introduced as a result of Black Saturday.
4. I was IC for fire that occurred at the Hazelwood Coal Mine (**Mine**) for three rotations. Those rotations were 26 February-1 March 2014, 6-9 March 2014 and 14-17 March 2014. The fire was declared under control on the night of 10 March 2014.
5. I have been shown a copy of a document entitled 'Outline of witness statement from Incident Controllers' (**Outline**) [\[CFA.0006.001.0005\]](#).
6. In this witness statement, I address each of the matters referred to in the Outline, insofar as they relate to the period in which I was IC. In addition to matters referred to in this statement, the following records of events were kept at the time that I was IC:

- 6.1 minutes of Incident Management Team (**IMT**) meetings;
 - 6.2 minutes of Hazelwood Mine Operations Meetings;
 - 6.3 minutes of Emergency Management Team (**EMT**) meetings;
 - 6.4 Incident Action Plans (also known as Incident Shift Plans (**ISPs**)); and
 - 6.5 written fire information releases (including official warnings).
7. These documents contain details relevant to the matters referred to in the Outline. In the time that has been made available to me to prepare this statement, I have not had an opportunity to review these documents. I have been advised by the solicitors for the state of Victoria that the various minutes, plans and fire information releases are being collated and will be provided to the Board separately.

B. Preparedness and response

8. As to questions 1-3, I was not the IC in the period referred to.
9. As to questions 4 and 5, the details of the make-up of the IMT and EMT in the period that I was IC (including whether the size and composition changed and the reasons for those changes) are described in the minutes of the IMT and EMT meetings that I have referred to above.
10. As to question 6, the overall suppression strategy in the period that I was IC remained consistent with what was in place before I took over.
11. In addition to suppressing the fire, reducing smoke and ash from the northern batters (as the walls of the Mine are known) was a major consideration. This consideration was particularly relevant because there were houses approximately 300 metres from the northern batters. These houses were being particularly effected by the smoke and ash from the fire at the Mine. The southern batters were less of a focus because whilst they were producing similar amounts of smoke and ash to the northern batters, they were far enough away from the houses to be causing less of an impact.
12. Attempts to reduce the smoke and ash, whilst suppressing the fire, occurred in a number of ways. These included the use of compressed air foam. This foam was necessary because, during wind events, the Mine became like a blacksmith's furnace in that the fire increased in intensity which in turn produced additional smoke and ash.
13. To assist the suppression effort, the reticulation system within the mine was extended. I believe that when the fire first started reticulated water was only present in that part of the Mine which was being worked on, immediately prior to the impact of the fire. This was a different part of the Mine to that which was on fire. Extension of the water reticulation system was therefore necessary to quickly and effectively supply water to the fire trucks. It was also necessary so that fixed fire fighting infrastructure was present in such a way as to facilitate the handing back of the Mine to the Mine operator, as soon as possible.
14. A further iteration of the plan to suppress the fire in the Mine, which occurred in the period that I was IC, was to introduce 'hot changeovers'. These changeovers were

introduced as a way of attempting to create additional fire fighting efficiencies which could enhance the suppression effort. It was necessary to find such efficiencies because of the sheer size of the fire. It was also necessary because safety considerations meant that fire fighters could only spend 2 hours at a time fighting the fire. Firefighters did three, 2 hour, shifts per day or night before they were relieved by other firefighters.

15. In simple terms, 'hot changeovers' occurred through a process whereby fresh firefighting crews were taken into the Mine by four-wheel-drive vehicles. When these fire fighters arrived at the fire ground, they relieved the fire fighters that were already working on the fire and took over the fire fighting appliances that were already in place. This approach to 'hot changeovers' meant that it was not necessary to drive the fire trucks in and out of the Mine every time there was a changeover of resources. It also resulted in the maximum number of resources being devoted to the suppression effort 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The details of when and how these 'hot changeovers' were introduced was recorded in the various ISPs and IMT meeting minutes that were created at the time.
16. As to question 7, the management of water was the major difficulty. In that regard, to ensure that the structural integrity of the Mine was not compromised it was necessary to pump water out of the Mine at the same time as water was being pumped into the Mine by firefighting appliances and aircraft.
17. Difficulties were also created by the sheer scale of the Mine. It is massive and required a large commitment of resources in order to gain ground in bringing the fire under control.
18. As to question 8, a number of experts from a number of fields had been consulted by the IMT, EMT and at a state level, before I commenced as IC. This included an expert panel that was convened by the Fire Services Commissioner.
19. The experts with whom I had the closest contact during my period as IC included those relevant to the use of firefighting foam and geotechnical experts. Those experts were of particular assistance because the location of the fire at the northern end of the Mine meant it was close to the Princes Highway. In consultation with these experts, I considered issues such as the extent to which the fire might undermine the highway and the extent to which explosives could be used as an option to assist in the suppression efforts.
20. As to question 9, the matters that worked well included:
 - 20.1 the way in which solutions were found to combat various aspects of the fire which made the suppression effort less difficult. An example of such a solution is the 'hot changeovers' I referred to earlier in my statement. A further example was the approach taken to the fire that was burning at the top of the Mines highest batters. In that regard, the foam and water that was being used to fight the fire can reach to a height of about 40 to 50 metres. Some of the batters in the Mine were beyond that reach. In order to fight the fire above the 40 to 50 metre mark, it was necessary to deploy bulldozers to flatten the area above that mark. By doing that, those parts of the fire could be extinguished, notwithstanding the immense height of the batters;

- 20.2 the way in which third party experts were engaged to ensure that the deployment of firefighting foam was as effective as possible; and
- 20.3 the systematic taskforce approach to the delivery of services, particularly with CFA, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and firefighting foam crews from Tasmania, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and other states working in a methodical way, dealing with 100 metre sections of fire at a time. This concentration of a large number of resources working on small areas of fire was already being employed by the time I commenced my first rotation as IC.
21. The matters that could have been done better included that the harsh environment of the fire, the difficulty of the suppression effort and the longevity of the incident meant that it was difficult to maintain morale. It may have improved morale if the tracking of the progress that was being made in the firefight had been communicated more effectively, from the earliest stages of the fire. Communicating progress had a positive effect on morale later in the firefight.

C. Communications

22. As to question 10, I have been advised that the community information and warnings that were issued during the period that I was IC are being collated and will be provided to the Board separately.
23. As to questions 11 and 12, I continued to use the processes which had been adopted before I became IC. The approach to community information was extensive. There were CFA community engagement officers riding the trains travelling to and from Gippsland so that they could talk to people and keep them informed about the ongoing situation. Information busses were dispatched and community centres were opened so that members of the community could obtain information. I completed a weekly blog in the period I was IC. It is difficult to think of any more that could have been done to provide information to those who wanted it.

D. Evacuation

24. As to questions 13 and 14, during the period that I was IC, there was no immediate fire threat to the community of Morwell which caused me to consider the possibility of an evacuation.
25. There was however the ongoing issue of the health concerns arising by reason of carbon monoxide (CO) in the air, smoke and ash. At no time did I personally seek or receive advice from the Chief Health Officer (CHO) that these health concerns could justify the evacuation of Morwell.
26. During the period that I was IC, there was ongoing monitoring of CO levels. These remained within levels that I understood to have been acceptable. At the same time, I was also receiving reports from CFA sector commanders and community engagement staff that there was no ash or spots falling in Morwell that could have caused fires to ignite.
27. On 27 February 2014, I attended a press conference with Rosemary Lester, the CHO. This was the day before the press conference at which vulnerable people were advised to consider leaving Morwell as a precaution. As neither the issue of

evacuation nor the advice to vulnerable people was dealt with at this press conference, my presence was limited to any possible discussion of fire suppression issues.

28. The process by which this press conference was organised was managed at a CFA regional level. As this was not a declared evacuation it was not necessary for me, and I did not, consult with Victoria Police in relation to the messages that were delivered by the CHO on 27 February 2014. I also did not recommend an evacuation or sign any documentation to give effect to an evacuation.
29. My state of mind was that it was not necessary for me to consider evacuation. The issue being considered was a health issue. Health professionals were considering the matter. There was no discussion about evacuation at the time. There was no immediate fire risk to the residents of Morwell at the time.

E. Liaison with other parties

30. As to questions 15 and 16, I had daily formal, minuted, meetings with both the IMT and the Mine operator. The IMT meetings were attended by the Environment Protection Authority (**EPA**) as well as the geotechnical experts that I have referred to earlier in my statement. The meetings with the Mine operator did not occur on some weekend days, by agreement. The minutes of these meetings record the interaction that was occurring between the IMT, the Mine operator and the EPA.
31. In addition, Mine staff, geotechnical experts and fire fighting commanders met every 6 hours in the period that I was IC to discuss suppression tactics and resources at the Mine.
32. I did not have any liaison with the CHO, other than attending the press conference with her on 27 February 2014. I did not have any interaction with WorkSafe, but I believe that this interaction may have occurred at a regional level.
33. The liaison between stakeholders generally worked well. That was so even to the extent that commercial competitors in the mining industry worked together to assist each other with equipment such as supplying additional pumps and pipes.

Dated: 21 May 2014

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JOHN CHARLES HAYNES