

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

STATEMENT OF MERITA TABAIN

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Filed on behalf of: The State of Victoria
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Attention: Peter Stewart

I, **Merita Tabain**, of 637 Flinders Street, Docklands, Victoria, Director, Media and Corporate Communications, Victoria Police can say as follows:

Introduction

1. My full name is Merita Tabain. My date of birth is 28 February 1964.
2. I am the Director, Media and Corporate Communications, in the Victoria Police based at 637 Flinders Street, Docklands, Victoria.
3. I have been in this role since May 2012. My primary responsibility is to lead and manage the media and corporate communications functions and staff for the Victorian Police. I report to Deputy Commissioner Lucinda Nolan.
4. By convention the Director, Media and Corporate Communications, Victoria Police is also the Chair of the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee, and I held that role before and during the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire.
5. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree from Monash University.
6. I have been an employee of the Victoria Police since May 2012. Before commencing my current role, I was General Manager, Communications and Marketing at Sustainability Victoria for three years, and Executive Director, Strategic Communications, Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development for four years.
7. This Statement has been prepared at the request of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Board of Inquiry contained in a letter of 15 May 2014.
8. The letter requests that this witness statement address the following questions:

1. What was the whole of government strategy for communications and engagement with communities affected by the Fire?
 2. How was this strategy implemented? Provide details of all activities undertaken by DPC, including content, timing and location. Explain the rationale for these activities.
 3. How would DPC assess the effectiveness of the strategy and the contributions of its departments and agencies? Did it make any changes in the light of the assessment? If so, what were they?
9. As the Chair of the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee and a member of the Victorian Emergency Communications Committee I am able to provide evidence regarding whole of Victorian government communications relating to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire. I am not, however, able to give evidence as to the specific activities or opinions of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and therefore I have sought to answer the Board's questions, insofar as I can, from the whole of government perspective.
10. A number of government agencies have specific functions in relation to the provision of public information. I am aware that witness statements have been prepared for the Board in relation to what was done by those agencies. While in some cases this statement also refers to what those agencies did, it does not attempt to describe that activity comprehensively or in detail.
11. This Statement comprises information predominantly from my personal experience and knowledge but also information drawn from a variety of sources across government departments and agencies. I am as satisfied as I can be that everything in this statement is true and correct, but in the time available I have not been able to verify every statement that is outside my personal experience and knowledge.
12. The response in this Statement to question 3 in the Board's letter reflects the points made by members of the EMJPIC in a recent face-to-face discussion of lessons learnt.

My involvement in the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire incident

13. EMJPIC is a committee of media and communications representatives from emergency and related agencies who work to ensure the most appropriate information is released during an emergency through media and communication channels. In application this is done by taking advice from the relevant agencies in Government who are tasked with managing the events.
14. Leading up to 9 February 2014, I had been made aware of the high fire danger which existed in Victoria and was on standby should fires occur and EMJPIC was required.
15. On the night of 8 February, Assistant Commissioner Shane Patton phoned me to inform me of the significant risk which the forecasted weather presented and given this risk I decided to attend the State Control Centre the following day.
16. I had already scheduled an EMJPIC meeting for the morning of Sunday 9 February and conducted that meeting from the SCC.

17. This day proved to be particularly bad with a number of multiple and concurrent fires occurring around different parts of the state. The initial concern with the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire was around the potential loss of power for Victoria. Given this situation, I decided to hold two other EMJPIC meetings on that day, at midday and then at 5pm to ensure everyone kept abreast of the changing situation. I also attended both SEMT meetings held on that day. I have notes from these particular meetings and subsequent EMJPIC meetings were formally minuted.
18. During the period of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire, and during the fires which occurred prior, I attended meetings of the State Emergency Management Team to provide situational awareness of EMJPIC's work and to receive any advice for EMJPIC. If I was not able to attend, the Assistant Director Media would attend in my stead.
19. As the week progressed, the significance of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire became more apparent as the risk to energy supply diminished and the community effects came to light. As a consequence, EMJPIC met daily, and sometimes twice daily to ensure it could deliver on its tasks. These meetings were all minuted.
20. Given the nature of the fire the membership of EMJPIC was expanded to include agencies which are not normally members of the committee but which were relevant to the situation, this is detailed later in my statement.
21. My involvement also included a number of visits to the area to contextualise the issue and gain a deeper understanding of the community. Details of these are also provided later in this statement.
22. I was also before and during the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire a member of the Victorian Emergency Communications Committee.

Overview of this Statement

23. This Statement has two parts.

Part A sets out an overview of the various dimensions of communications as they were relevant to Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire and the pre-existing situation in relation to each of the relevant areas.

Part B contains answers to the questions of the Board numbered 1 to 3.

Abbreviations

24. This Statement uses these abbreviations:

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CHO	Chief Health Officer
DEECD	Department of Education & Early Childhood Development
DHS	Department of Human Services
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
EMJPIC	Emergency Management Joint Public Information Sub-committee
EMMV	Emergency Management Manual Victoria
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
FSC	Fire Services Commissioner
HHSEM	Health and Human Services Emergency Management
ICC	Incident Control Centre
MFB	Metropolitan Fire Brigade
RCC	Regional Control Centre
SEMC	State Emergency Management Centre
SEMT	State Emergency Management Team
VECC	Victorian Emergency Communications Committee
VERIL	Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line

A. Overview

Aspects of communications

25. The *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* recognizes as different aspects of emergency management communications:
 - (a) the issuing of public emergency warnings and emergency information during response (Part 3.7);
 - (b) community engagement and communications during relief and recovery (Part 4.6);
 - (c) public information and media during emergencies (Part 8, App 12);
26. Warnings are used where community action is necessary primarily to protect lives, and also for the protection of property or the environment. The Control Agency for an emergency has the responsibility to issue warnings to the potentially affected community, and to other agencies.
27. The Control Agency is also responsible for media management at the emergency, including access and safety for media representatives.
28. "Community engagement" means (see page 4-55) the communication, measures and processes used to engage or interact with communities where the views and input from those communities are to be used and to solve problems or make informed decisions relevant to the community. The EMMV does not assign community engagement to any particular agency.
29. "Communications" means (page 4-57) the practice of sending, gathering, managing and evaluating information. This can occur before, during and after (both long and short term) emergencies. Part 4.6 states that effective communications should be coordinated across relevant agencies: "Where a need to communicate relief and recovery information to the community is identified, well planned and executed public information campaigns at local, regional and state level are required" (page 4-57).

30. It follows that the provision of information to the public is a public service that may be informed and improved by community engagement. At the same time, community engagement can also inform and improve the provision of many other government services, including health services, financial assistance and psychosocial support.

Morwell at the time of the fires

Demographics

31. Knowledge of Morwell's demographic characteristics was critical for effective communications.
32. DHS helped to clarify Morwell's demographic status by referring to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure 'Towns in Time' profile, and shared this with all other EMJPIC members on 17 February¹.
33. These statistics showed the population in Morwell in 2011 as 13,691. Of the 11,167 people over the age of 15, 4,685 (42%) were employed (58% full time, 34% part time). (For Victoria the comparable figures are 58% employed, 63% full time and 31% part time.)
34. These statistics indicated that, in comparison to the Victorian population, the Morwell population notably had:
- a slightly older population (median age 40 as against 37 for all Victorians);
 - more residents born in Australia (76% as against 69% for all Victorians)
 - more households speaking only English at home (83% as against 72% for all Victorians)
 - lower internet consumption/connection at home (67% per cent for Morwell, 79% for all Victorians);
 - lower education levels (23% had completed Year 12 or higher, as against 56% with post-school qualifications for all Victorians).

Media outlets / audience reach

Press/Newspapers

35. Metropolitan press coverage in the area is very low:

The Age – extremely limited distribution in the area – mostly only by subscription.

The Herald Sun – very limited distribution into the area – with a very small number being distributed through newsagents.

¹ "Morwell" can be defined in a number of ways for statistical purposes. "Towns in Time" uses UCL213009, and "Quick Stats" are shown on the ABS website for the same code. The following paragraphs quote the ABS Quick Stats for the 2011 Census for UCL213009, which can be found at <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/UCL213009>; the "Towns in Time" profile is at <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/147745/Morwell1.pdf>.

Local press is the major avenue for press-based news with the predominant newspaper being the Latrobe Valley Express which is published Mondays and Thursdays, charging \$3.30 per edition. It is based in the centre of Morwell and it's circulation is approximately 36,000 per issue which includes Morwell and the surrounding area. The second largest local paper with a reach into the areas is the Warragul and Drouin Gazette.

Radio and television

36. Radio services the region through five key outlets, regional ABC Radio and four commercial stations, 3TR FM, which broadcasts the news from 3AW but does not broadcast any shows, and Gold 1242 which are based in Traralgon, and Star 94.3 FM and 3GG which are based in Warragul.
37. In relation to the ABC, programs are produced locally and metro programs such as Mornings with Jon Faine are not syndicated into the region.
38. Television is mainly serviced in the area through WIN-TV which produces its own nightly news service which screens at 7pm, following the metropolitan Melbourne news service.
39. Other stations which cover the region are: Prime7, 7TWO 7mate, WIN GO!, Gem, SC Ten, ONE ELEVEN, ABC1, ABC2, ABC3, ABC News 24, SBS One, SBS 2 NITV
40. Around the time of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire, WIN-TV News claimed a good audience reach of 30% of all residents on week nights, as did the local ABC Radio and two commercial radio broadcasters. Accordingly, electronic media was a useful outlet for daily messaging for all agencies.

Overview - Features and challenges

41. In the days prior to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire a comprehensive range of emergency communication had been undertaken across Victoria, including paid advertisements, media releases, press conferences and supporting interviews at state, regional and local level, videos produced for YouTube, messaging disseminated through websites, social media and the FireReady app. The majority of this work was done in preparation for the fire season as well as during the fires which preceded the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire.

The key messages included:

- health advice concerning heat waves,
 - warnings about the extreme fire weather conditions,
 - advice to have emergency plans in place.
42. The initial messaging relating to the fires in the Morwell area from the weekend of 7-9 February 2014 related to fire activity and the threat that that might pose to local residents.
 43. As the complexity of the incident unfolded over the following days and weeks, the messages issued by government agencies came into include such matters as smoke impacts, health, bushfire arson, relief and recovery.

44. The impact of arson became a focus and a short-burst press and radio campaign developed to highlight the need for the community to be vigilant on the issue and to report suspicious behaviour. The campaign ran from February 13-23 and aired across metropolitan and regional radio as well as metropolitan and regional press.
45. On the weekend of 15 and 16 February, the issue of smoke and haze at Morwell started coming to the fore as a matter of potential concern due to a warning issued by the incident controller around elevated carbon monoxide levels.
46. The following week, a greater understanding was gained around the raised levels of carbon monoxide as well as the particulate matter contained in the smoke and ash which was emanating from the mine. This necessitated a shift in the provision of public information.
47. The extended period of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire meant that the incident had a number of distinctive features that directly influenced the communications required. In particular:
- 47.1 the public focus of the incident changed from being solely a fire event to include aspects of a health event as well—that is, the immediate concern was not only the possible risk to life and property from fire, but also the possible risk to health from the particles and gases produced by the fire;
 - 47.2 over time the possible health risk to those affected (especially residents) became more to their psychological and social well-being than to their physical health;
 - 47.3 the nature of the fire required that technical information and advice be provided to the intended audience in a way that could be readily understood;
 - 47.4 there was little precedent in Victoria for dealing with an emergency with those dimensions and of that duration;
 - 47.5 there was a need for sustained and supportive engagement with the people of the town;
 - 47.6 the fact that the number of departments and agencies involved was large and period of the incident was long (meaning a larger number of individual staff contributing over time) meant that a high level of management and coordination was required.

Organizational context

48. Victoria's preparations for, response to and recovery from a major emergency are governed by the *Emergency Management Act 1986*. The practical application of the Act is detailed in the 10-part *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*, that includes a structure and process for:
- the issuing of public emergency warnings and information during response (Part 3.7 EMMV)
 - community engagement and communications during relief and recovery (Part 4.6 EMMV), and

- public information and media during emergencies (Part 8, App 12 EMMV).
49. The annual *Victorian Bushfire Handbook* (3rd Edition 2013) also provides advice tailored for typical summer season fire incidents, relating to warnings and advice, public information, and community engagement.
50. The EMMV establishes a formal hierarchy for emergency communications that comprises:
- local incident information (including the issuing of Community Warnings and Advice), managed and issued by the Incident Control Centre, under authority from the Incident Controller;
 - regional communications, managed at a Regional Control Centre for larger and more complex incidents, aimed at coordinating all agency communication and media;
 - State level communications, coordinated across government by the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee.
51. Also at the state level there are:
- the communications and media team within the Office of the Fire Services Commissioner;
 - the Public Information Unit within the Health and Human Services State Emergency Management Centre, which is a centre established by the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services through a joint agency that they term “Health and Human Services Emergency Management” with a focus on relief and recovery;
 - the Victorian Emergency Communications Committee.
52. The FSC Communications Manager sit on the EMJPIC and the VECC.
53. As chair of the EMJPIC, I worked closely with the OFSC’s communications and media team during the Hazelwood Coal Mine fire.

Emergency Management Joint Public Information Sub-Committee

54. The Emergency Management Joint Public Information Sub-Committee was established as a Sub-Committee of the State Emergency Response Planning Committee to respond to the day-to-day management of communications in emergency events. Changes to the emergency management structure at a state level mean the committee will report to the Capability and Response Sub-Committee which in turn reports to the State Crisis and Resilience Council. The membership is comprehensive and is drawn from:
- Ambulance Victoria
 - Bureau of Meteorology
 - Country Fire Authority
 - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
 - Department of Health
 - Department of Human Services
 - Department of Justice

- Department of Premier and Cabinet
 - Department of Environment and Primary Industries
 - Department of State Development, Business and Innovation
 - Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure
 - Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
 - Fire Services Commissioner
 - Lifesaving Victoria
 - Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
 - Parks Victoria
 - Tourism Victoria
 - Vic Roads
 - Victoria Police:
 - o Media Unit Manager
 - o State Emergency Response Office
 - State Emergency Service
55. Member agencies act as a link to extended industry contacts as an emergency requires.
56. The EMJPIC is a coordinating committee, and has no resources of its own (that is, no secretariat or staff).
57. In February 2014 the foremost responsibility of the EMJPIC was “to ensure that public information is co-ordinated and distributed in a timely and accurate manner to inform and advise community members during a major emergency, as well as ensuring media needs are met, through a co-ordinated multi-agency approach”.²
58. In an emergency, the EMJPIC Chair activates a Joint Public Information Centre to allow members of EMJPIC to collaborate and provide assistance with meeting the information needs of the public and the media. Depending on the severity and geographical extent of an emergency, the EMJPIC Chair may activate:
- 58.1 a Virtual JPIC — members engage in coordinated action via telephone conferences;
 - 58.2 a Support JPIC —members provide assistance (in the form of resources and/or advice) to the control agency;
 - 58.3 an Extreme Event JPIC — involves the establishment and co-ordination of a Media Centre and Public Information Call Centre.

HHSEM Public Information Unit

59. Under Part 4 of the EMMV the Department of Human Services is able to take responsibility for coordinating the Victorian Government’s emergency relief and recovery activities at regional and state level.

² EMMV, Appendix 12, page 8-55

60. DHS and the Department of Health operate a shared service – Health and Human Services Emergency Management – to prepare for, deliver and/or support both departments’ respective emergency management responsibilities.
61. When a major emergency occurs or is anticipated the HHSEM activates its State Emergency Management Centre with staff, technology and other resources ready to deliver its emergency responsibilities.
62. During an emergency, the SEMC in turn has a Public Information Unit that is responsible for a range of general communications, media and public information tasks relating to regional and statewide relief and recovery.
63. The HHSEM Public Information Unit observes the National Principles for Disaster Recovery which state “successful recovery is built on effective communication with affected communities and other stakeholders”. The primary communication tools for the HHSEM Public Information Unit at regional and state levels are the Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria website and the Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line, and in addition, the *After the Fires* factsheet was available at the Respite and Relief Centres

Victorian Emergency Communication Committee

64. The Victorian Emergency Communication Committee is a committee of representatives of departments and agencies to advise on and support government programs to increase public awareness and education regarding emergencies. It is chaired by DPC and plans and coordinates on behalf of the Victorian Government emergency communications strategies (for example, the annual summer fire preparedness campaign) and emergency campaign advertising issued on demand.

B. Specific questions

1. ***What was the whole of government strategy for communications and engagement with communities affected by the Fire?***

Communications

65. The government had in place the organizational arrangements for communications and community engagement set out in paragraphs 48 to 64 above.
66. As with the other bodies identified in the EMMV, EMJPIC had at the relevant time clear terms of reference, which could also be taken as the strategy for any emergency.
67. These terms of reference are:
 - 67.1 To facilitate the provision of co-ordinated accurate, timely, factual authoritative and where appropriate, multi-lingual, information and warnings to the public during major emergencies;
 - 67.2 To facilitate the development of multi-agency public information strategies where required;
 - 67.3 To ensure media officers from other agencies understand each others role and responsibilities in the multi-agency environment of emergency planning, response and recovery;

- 67.4 To develop procedures to ensure an information centre can be established swiftly to handle media matters, issue media releases, co-ordinate conferences and, where appropriate, assist in the establishment of information ‘hotlines’;
- 67.5 To provide a forum to explore ways to educate the media and others about the aims and operation of emergency planning, response plans and recovery plans, the Victorian emergency management arrangements and the roles of the emergency management agencies.
68. The Strategic Control Priorities for the State, as expressed by the Fire Services Commissioner are:
- 68.1 Protection and preservation of life.
- (a) emergency workers and community members.
- 68.2 Issuing of community information and warnings.
- (a) timely, relevant and tailored to help community members make informed decisions about their safety.
- 68.3 Protection of **critical / essential infrastructure** and community assets that support community resilience.
- 68.4 Protection of residential property.
- 68.5 Protection of assets supporting individual livelihoods and economic production.
- 68.6 Protection of environment and conservation values.
69. As Chair of the EMJPIC, I saw as the goals in the government’s communication:
- Keeping public safety paramount
 - Keeping in contact with those affected
 - Making sure that media and communication messages are accurate and timely
 - Making sure that those affected were considered in the way messages are given
 - Making sure that those affected were contacted in the ways that worked best for them
 - Assisting management of the emergency
70. The particular tactical response is necessarily dependent on the circumstances, and the circumstances in this case were very unusual (see paragraphs 46). As a result, the tactics evolved in response to the emerging circumstances as they related both to the fire and to its impact on the people of Morwell.

Engagement with communities affected

71. EMJPIC’s role does not include the delivery of community engagement. An authoritative guide to strategy in relation to community engagement is to be found in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience Community Engagement Framework, published by the Commonwealth Attorney General.

2. *How was this strategy implemented? Provide details of all activities undertaken at a whole of government level, including content, timing and location. Explain the rationale for these activities.*³

Communications — Co-ordination and management

72. As Chair of EMJPIC I identified those agencies that needed to be represented in daily meetings specifically related to the Hazelwood Coal Mine fire. This group had following members of the ongoing EMJPIC:

- Ambulance Victoria
- Bureau of Meteorology
- CFA
- Department of Justice
- DPC
- Department of Environment and Primary Industries
- Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure
- Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
- Fire Services Commissioner
- HHSEM
- MFB
- PTV
- SES
- SCC
- Tourism Victoria
- VicRoads
- Department of State Development and Business Innovation
- DEECD

plus members drawn from the following agencies for this particular incident:

- Latrobe City Council
- Worksafe
- EPA

³ The question in the Board's letter was, "How was this strategy implemented? Provide details of all activities undertaken by DPC, including content, timing and location. Explain the rationale for these activities."

- MAV
73. The EMJPIC met by telephone at least daily throughout the period, sometimes twice daily. Meetings typically lasted for one hour. Each meeting heard from each agency what it was doing, to whom they were talking, and what were the emerging issues.
 74. Due to the complex and protracted nature of the incident (it lasted for five weeks and meetings were held every day and sometimes more than once a day), it was not always possible for every member to attend every meeting.
 75. The key purpose for EMJPIC meetings was to was to craft, guide and align the messages to be included in public information and media contact. It aimed to keep everyone informed of what each agency was doing, to inform everyone of the feedback being received, to discuss and workshop ideas around approaches, to plan what was coming up, to ensure everyone was equally informed and that there were no inconsistent messages coming out, and to push for action when this seemed to be required.
 76. It was important as far as possible to have each agency represented in the meetings by people with a broad knowledge of what the agency had been doing and with the ability to commit the agency to what was agreed in the meeting.
 77. The role of those present at EMJPIC meetings was to report to those present (see paragraph 72) and to convey back to their respective agencies what had been agreed or was being recommended. In particular, following each meeting the representatives of the relevant agencies would speak to the key people who were engaging with the media, and give them the messages determined by the EMJPIC.
 78. Through discussions at the EMJPIC ideas such as the letterbox drop, and free tickets to museums and arrangements for public transport were canvassed and discussed.
 79. Every EMJPIC meeting started with an update on what was happening in Morwell. The incident controllers were not present at the meeting, but at least one of the communications staff from the Incident Control Centre was.
 80. As the chair of the EMJPIC I always had access to the Fire Services Commissioner and was able to resolve any issues through him and the SEMT.
 81. In addition, I attended three meetings of the State Crisis and Resilience Council, chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet which focussed on state-wide issues and I briefed it on the issues which were arising through EMJPIC.
 82. The VECC also continued to meet during the incident.
 83. In the days following 9 February 2014, key agency representatives involved in the response and recovery effort realised that the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire presented complex and unique public information challenges in comparison to other fires burning across the State.
 84. As is required under emergency arrangements, a public information function was established by the CFA at the ICC with responsibility for issuing information and warnings and liaising with the media. In the initial stages the media relations function was undertaken by three communications officers drawn on rotation from the various agencies represented on the EMJPIC, each working a 4-day tour of duty in Morwell.

85. As already noted, DHS prepared a profile of Morwell's demographic status and shared it with all other EMJPIC members on 17 February.
86. Once the media liaison was established in the Latrobe Valley, the State Control Centre continued to create and distribute information (based on information from the ICC) to major stakeholders, metropolitan media and social media for the duration of the incident as required. In the days that followed, across Victoria hundreds of fires were active, including several in the Gippsland region. As a result, there was significant smoke haze across many parts of Victoria and warnings regarding smoke haze were released from the SCC on Tuesday 11 February 2014.
87. The representative from the SCC management was present at nearly every EMJPIC meeting, and the EMJPIC discussed what the messaging should be. There was a media conference held almost every day.
88. In mid-February the RCC and ICC leadership teams decided to establish a Regional Emergency Joint Public Information Sub-Committee to capture localised issues. This group initiated work to prepare a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, and a document with that name was produced on 20 February 2014.

Communications in practice

89. The State's emergency management structure uses many media to disseminate public warnings and information, primarily through:
- emergency information websites;
 - geographically-based mobile phone warnings and advice (using SMS texts);
 - print, radio and TV advertisements (either generic prepared ads; or the ability to quickly produce more tailored messaging);
 - the FireReady app;
 - emergency broadcasters including ABC Radio and television and Sky-TV News.
90. During the period 9 February to 17 April 2014 the following media activity on behalf of the State Government and its agencies was directly or predominantly directed to the people affected by the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire:

Activity	Duration	Details
Paid print advertising	20 February until 17 April 2014	EMJPIC and DPC coordinated and despatched full page advertisements in the <i>Latrobe Valley Express</i> . The advertisements contained information supplied by the EMJPIC covering health, fire, EPA messages (air quality) and support.
Live radio reads	19 February to 21 March 2014. Additional reads 12 to 13 April 2014	EMJPIC and DPC-coordinated live radio feeds providing information about health, fire, EPA monitoring and support were read out twice daily on 3TR and Gold 1242. Additional reads relating to clean up information were provided on 12 to 13 April 2014.
Newsletters	February and March 2014	A newsletter was produced that was updated regularly and delivered to homes.
Media conferences	February and March 2014	Daily media conferences in the local area were conducted to provide current information updates and to respond to questions. These included

		representatives from the Department of Health, the DHS, the CFA, the FSC, the EPA, and Latrobe City Council.
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91. The Latrobe City Council directly contacted all its Home and Community Care clients, and the parents of children attending affected pre-schools were also directly contacted.
92. Information was available through the Latrobe City Council's established call centre
93. In addition, two CFA mobile information buses were deployed across Morwell seven days a week, and information personnel were present at shopping centres in Morwell, and also in Moe, Traralgon and Churchill.
94. On most days between February 24 and March 14, CFA and MFB personnel rode the trains between Morwell and Pakenham, utilising the messages from EMJPIC.
95. Agency personnel were also present at Neighbourhood House information sessions.
96. DEECD also had an established ready-to-use mobile phone SMS tree of parents attending government schools and it was utilised to distribute health messages to parents directly and it was made it available for all agencies to use if required.
97. During the relevant period, in addition to contributing to the activities already referred to, the HHSEM also:
- updated the Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria website;
 - updating the VERIL scripts;
 - organized media interviews with people speaking on behalf of DHS, especially on the provision of emergency financial assistance for respite, and later relocation.
98. Technical information in relation to the physical environment and health was provided by:
- the EPA, in relation to air and water quality readings;
 - the CHO, in explaining potential health implications;
 - the FSC, in explaining the fire-control strategy and the length of time it might take to bring the fire to a 'safe' status.
99. Other departments and authorities (such as the Victorian WorkCover Authority and the Departments of Health and Human Services) undertook additional communication and community engagement activity in the service of their particular responsibilities.

The internet

100. No new websites were created for this emergency, but the following departmental and agency websites were updated or added to specifically in to provide public information in relation to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire:
- Emergency Victoria
 - Country Fire Authority

Environment Protection Authority
 Department of Human Services
 Department of Health
 DEECD
 Emergency Relief and Recovery Website
 Worksafe

Social media

101. Some people without home or business internet access were still able to access social media using smart phones, and the social media became a notable means of communication for those sending, seeking and commenting on information on the mine fire, with the number of conversations peaking between 21 February and 9 March.
102. Most agencies (and notably the CFA and Victoria Police) had their own social media channels, which they used to distribute information.
103. Commencing on February 26 and closing on March 24, EMJPIC agreed to establish a “social media command centre”. The functions of this centre were co-ordinated by DPC and staffed by various EMJPIC agencies. It was located at the SCC and its purpose was to monitor social media and respond early when incorrect information was being circulated.
104. In the health domain, accuracy is critical and given the clinical nature and expertise required to provide accurate responses it was not always possible to satisfy the demand for fast and individually tailored responses. Regular, common messages were provided through Facebook and Twitter, directing people to appropriate fact sheets, the Community Health Assessment Centre, Nurse-on-Call or other medical assistance as required. This approach ensured general queries could be answered quickly and more serious medical concerns also addressed by suitably qualified health professionals.

Media

105. While the media could be used to disseminate public information, it could not be assumed that the only audience for the mass media was the local audience, or that those media were solely interested in the well-being of local residents. The approach taken to the mass media had to balance, on the one hand, the likelihood that people in Morwell would respond with attention and trust to local leaders and communicators against, on the other, the fact that during this time the media included journalists from Melbourne and beyond with an audience from across Victoria and beyond.
106. A summary of some media activity is set out in the table in paragraph 69.
107. In addition, approximately 74 media releases specific to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire were issued during the period 12 February to 7 May 2014.

The media releases were issued by: EPA; ICC Hazelwood; State Government; DSDBI; Department of Health; CFA; VWA; Latrobe City Council and Australia Post.

A folio of all media releases, media appearances and communications has been prepared.

Document Type	Ringtail number	Date	Document Title
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MEDIA APPEARANCES

1.1 List of media appearances

Table/Spreadsheet	[VPOL.0003.001.0005]		Untitled
Table/Spreadsheet	[VPOL.0003.001.0006]		Untitled
Table/Spreadsheet	[VPOL.0003.001.0009]		Untitled
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0013]	15/05/2014	EPA Communications
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0015]	15/05/2014	Untitled

1.2 Media monitoring

Table/Spreadsheet	[VPOL.0003.001.0018]		Media monitoring - radio
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COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 Advertising

Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0131]		Where to Find More Information
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0132]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by Smoke and Ash
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0133]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0134]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Help People Affected by Smoke and Ash - Here are Some Services Available for You
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0135]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - More Than 330 Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Help People Affected by Smoke and Ash - Here are Some Services Available to You
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0136]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - More Than 330 Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Help People Affected by Smoke and Ash - Here are Some Services Available to You
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0137]		Government Information Billboard - Hazelwood Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0138]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - While Emergency Services Focus on Extinguishing the Hazelwood Mine Fire More Than 160 Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Help People Affected by Smoke and Ash
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0139]		Government Information Billboard - Morwell Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0140]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by Smoke and Ash
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0141]		Morwell Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by the Morwell Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0142]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0143]		Assistance for Morwell Small Businesses
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0144]		Morwell Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by the Morwell Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0145]		Morwell Mine Fire Community Information - The Victorian Government and the Latrobe City Council are Working with the Members in the Clean-Up Process -

Document Type	Ringtail number	Date	Document Title
			Even Though the Hazelwood Mine Fire is Now Safe Morwell Residents Will Continue to See Some Smoke
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0146]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0147]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Provide Information and Support to People Affected by the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0148]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Help People Affected by Smoke and Ash - Here are Some Services Available for You
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0149]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Information - Victorian Government and Latrobe City Council Staff are Working to Help People Affected by Smoke and Ash - Here are Some Services Available for You

2.2 Live reads

Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0151]	17/02/2014	Smoke in the Latrobe Valley - 30 Sec Radio Ad
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0152]		Latrobe Valley Fires - Radio - Gold 1242 and 3TR
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0153]	25/02/2014	Radio - Live Read Scripts - Morwell Mine Fire - To Run on 50-50 Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0154]	25/02/2014	Radio - Live Read Scripts - Morwell Mine Fire - To Run on 50-50 Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0155]	01/03/2014	Radio - Live Read Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - To Run on 50-50 Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0156]		Radio - Live Read Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 4 March - To Run on Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0158]		Radio Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 6 March - To Run on Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0159]		Radio Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 12 March - To Run on Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0160]		Radio Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 14 March - To Run on Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0161]		Radio Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 17 March - To Run on 50-50 Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0162]		Radio Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 19 March - To Run on 50-50 Rotation
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0163]		Radio Scripts - Hazelwood Mine Fire - Revised 11 April

2.3 Community newsletters

Index	[VPOL.0003.001.0165]		
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0166]	14/02/2014	Community Information Newsletter - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0168]		Community Information Newsletter - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0170]	18/02/2014	Community Information Newsletter No 3 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0172]	20/02/2014	Community Information Newsletter No 4 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0174]	1/02/2014	Community Information Newsletter No 5 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0176]	01/02/2014	Community Information Newsletter Number 6 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0178]	27/02/2014	Community Information Newsletter Number 7 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fire - As at 27th February 2014
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0180]	01/03/2014	Community Information Newsletter Number 8 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fire
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0183]		Community Information Newsletter Number 9 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fire
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0186]		Community Information Newsletter Number 10 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fire
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0189]		Community Information Newsletter Number 11 - Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fire
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0190]		Community Information Newsletter Number 12 -

Document Type	Ringtail number	Date	Document Title
			Hazelwood Mine Fire
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0193]	02/04/2014	Unite & Recover - Mine Fire Recovery 2014 - Newsletter
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0195]	19/04/2014	Unite & Recover - Mine Fire Recovery 2014 - Newsletter
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0197]	01/01/2014	Unite & Recover - Mine Fire Recovery 2014 - Newsletter

2.4 Fact Sheets

Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0200]		Additional Information for Residents
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0201]		Community Respite Centre Now Open in the Latrobe Valley
Map	[VPOL.0003.001.0202]		Hazelwood Mine Fire Infra-Red Linescan
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0203]	01/02/2014	Carbon Monoxide - Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Community Information - February 2014
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0205]	01/02/2014	Smoke and Your Health
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0207]	13/02/2014	Planning for and Providing Feedback from Community Meetings
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0210]	20/02/2014	Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires - Cleaning Up a Smoke and Ash Affected Home - Community Information - February 2014
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0212]	20/02/2014	Latrobe Valley Coal Mine Fires - Rainwater Tanks - Community Information - February 2014
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0213]	23/02/2014	Face Masks - Questions and Answers - Community Information - February 2014
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0215]	24/02/2014	Air Quality - Community Information
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0217]	24/02/2014	Latrobe Valley Air Quality
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0222]	24/02/2014	Ash Fall-out - Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fires - Community Information - February 2014
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0224]	02/03/2014	Relocation Assistance for Morwell South Residents Affected by the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0226]	14/03/2014	Cleaning Workplaces Affected by the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire
Report	[VPOL.0003.001.0228]	20/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire Q & A - Health - 20-03-14 - Update - Recovery Advice
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0231]	20/03/2014	Cleaning Up After the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fires - Community Information
Brochure	[VPOL.0003.001.0233]	30/04/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Health Update for the Community

2.5 Media releases

Table/Spreadsheet	[VPOL.0003.001.0236]		Index of media releases
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0240]	12/02/2014	Media Alert
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0241]	12/02/2014	Firefighter Health Monitored at Morwell
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0242]	12/02/2014	Gippsland Fire Situation
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0249]	17/02/2014	Latrobe Valley Open Cut Mine Fires - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0251]	18/02/2014	Poor Air Quality Signals a Call for Workplace Safety
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0254]	18/02/2014	Mine Fires FAQs 18-2-14
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0257]	18/02/2014	Mine Fires Meeting 18-2-14
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0258]	18/02/2014	Mines Fires Newsletter 18-2-14
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0263]	19/02/2014	Brown Coal Ash and Your Health
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0264]	19/02/2014	Mine Fires Media Conference Audio
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0274]	20/02/2014	Latrobe Valley Mine Fires - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0275]	20/02/2014	Latrobe Valley Mine Fires - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0277]	20/02/2014	Health Assessment Centre to Open in Morwell

Document Type	Ringtail number	Date	Document Title
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0279]	20/02/2014	Minister Visits Latrobe Valley Respite Centre
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0281]	21/02/2014	News Release - Latrobe City Addresses Community Concerns over Mine Fire Response
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0286]	22/02/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fires - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0289]	24/02/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fires - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0291]	26/02/2014	Weather Creates More Challenges
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0292]	27/02/2014	News Release - Council Offers Respite Run to Boolarra Folk Festival
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0295]	27/02/2014	Focusing on the Young and the Aged
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0307]	27/02/2014	Health Assessment Centre in Morwell Expanded
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0309]	28/02/2014	New Health Advice for Morwell South Residents
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0311]	28/02/2014	Free V-Line Travel Offer for Morwell Respite
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0313]	28/02/2014	Update on Hazelwood Mine Fire
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0315]	28/02/2014	Free Phone Diversion for Morwell Residents
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0316]	1/03/2014	Hazelwood Mine Fire Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0318]	2/03/2014	Hazelwood Mine Fire Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0320]	3/03/2014	Premier Announces Business Assistance for Morwell
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0322]	3/03/2014	Scouts Victoria Offer Temporary Accommodation to Morwell Residents
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0323]	3/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0330]	4/03/2014	Additional Assistance for Primary Producers and Small Businesses Affected by February 2014 Bushfires
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0331]	4/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0333]	5/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0334]	6/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0336]	7/03/2014	Low Level Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire Smoke Advisory
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0337]	7/03/2014	Safety Remains Paramount at Mine Fire
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0339]	7/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0340]	10/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0342]	11/03/2014	Media Alert - Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0343]	11/03/2014	Premier Announces Independent Inquiry into Hazelwood Mine Fire
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0345]	11/03/2014	High Level Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire Smoke Advisory
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0346]	12/03/2014	Media Alert - Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0348]	12/03/2014	High Level Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire Smoke Advisory
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0349]	12/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0351]	13/03/2014	Firies Flying Visit to Morwell Primary School Students
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0352]	14/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0353]	17/03/2014	News Release - Door Knocks Completed

Document Type	Ringtail number	Date	Document Title
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0355]	17/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0356]	18/03/2014	Thousands of Morwell Residents Take a Break with V-Line
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0357]	18/03/2014	New \$2 Million Clean-Up Package for Morwell
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0359]	19/03/2014	Media Alert - Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0360]	19/03/2014	Untitled
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0361]	20/03/2014	Media Alert - Air Monitoring - Update
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0362]		Media Alert - Choppers Drop in to Visit Morwell Primary Students
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0363]	21/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update 21-03
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0365]	21/03/2014	Deputy Premier Opens One-Stop-Shop for Morwell Fire Clean Up
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0366]	25/03/2014	Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire - Update 25-03
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0367]	30/04/2014	News Release - Long-Term Health Study Community Sessions
Media Article/Release	[VPOL.0003.001.0368]	7/05/2014	National Award for Morwell Health Assessment Centre

Community engagement⁴

108. Often, because of the short duration of many emergencies, formal community engagement strategies are limited to community meeting, but as this incident continued community engagement sought to engage as widely as possible through a range of means.
109. Government agencies engaged with the community across a range of social media channels; primarily Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.
110. A community meeting arranged by the incident controller was held at Kernot Hall in Morwell on the evening of Wednesday 18 February 2014. Representatives from CFA, Department of Health, EPA and Ambulance Victoria addressed the meeting and representatives from Victoria Police and GDF Suez were also present. Questions were taken from the floor. Topics included:
- 110.1 the firefighting situation (which included advice to those present that this would be a protracted incident);
 - 110.2 air quality and testing;
 - 110.3 the impact of smoke on public health and how to limit potential risk.
111. At that meeting there were there were not enough people present who were sufficiently senior to give definitive answers, and many local residents expressed their strong concern with the situation. As a result, the Fire Services Commissioner, the Chief Health Officer and the Chief Executive Officer of the EPA were used in subsequent public meetings and interviews.
112. Commencing on 14 February 2014 the CFA supplied two senior community engagement managers and community engagement teams on rotation to plan and oversee the delivery of whole of government community engagement during the remaining period of the incident. The CFA has particular expertise and depth in community engagement because it is integral to their business model.

⁴ As already noted, community engagement did not fall within EMJPIC's explicit responsibilities.

113. In addition, from 17 February to 13 March 2014, the MFB provided 14 community resilience personnel.
114. On 21 February I went with Louise Martin (the Director, Strategic Communication and Protocol Branch, DPC) and Dr Geoff Russell (Manager of Communication at Department of Health, Emergency Management) to the Latrobe Valley to meet with the Latrobe City Council, the members of the regional emergency management joint public information committee, and the editor of the Latrobe Valley Express to discuss the communication needs of the local community.
115. That visit enabled us to identify some of the local leaders who could assist in communications and community engagement.
116. To the best of my recollection it was following that visit that Louise Martin and I also agreed that the Director, Communications in DPC would provide a senior media officer stationed at Traralgon with the task of coordinating the communications roles and the relationship between those responsible for media and public information and those running the RCC and the ICC.
117. The CFA's Community Engagement team conducted regular surveys through its face-to-face activities at information centres, the CFA bus in Morwell streets, the Morwell rail station, and aboard local VLine trains. The feedback from this activity eventually indicated most residents wanted simple, tailored information delivered to their letterbox, or via a door-knock.
118. Other forms of community engagement included:
- gathering additional information from the local government call centre and its front desk about how the people of Morwell were feeling.
 - community meetings, including broadcasting virtual community meetings on community radio;
 - visiting 300 business in the Central Business District of Morwell and other businesses in the industrial area of Morwell;
 - a business breakfast facilitated for Morwell and surrounding business and community leaders;
 - establishing a Community Advisory Group (which first met 5 March 2014) which has held 5 sessions;
 - engaging with Morwell schoolchildren by introducing them to firefighting equipment such as trucks and aircraft;
 - establishing a Community Information and Recovery Centre.
119. Since 22 April 2014 HHSEM has employed a community engagement and communications officer to work with council, the local community, DHS recovery officers, and the local Department of Health office for a three-month period, to support their various community engagement and communications activities.

Other activities in support of the local residents

120. On 19 February, a community respite centre was opened in Moe, as a clean air place for people to seek respite from the smoky conditions, in accordance with the advice of the CHO. The Department of Health's health information was available at the community respite centre.

121. In addition, the Department of Health provided health checks and health information to over 2000 people at a Community Health Assessment Centre, which was established in Morwell on 21 February..
122. In addition to health assessments, the Community Health Assessment Centre provided information from the Department, Ambulance Victoria, printed fact sheets and a vodcast from the Chief Health Officer broadcast on a television fitted into the Centre. Supporting information was also provided to other health professionals staffing the Centre. Nurse-on-Call, the Department's telephone health advice line, was given the relevant health messages, and this medium was actively promoted to the community as a place they could contact for information and health advice.
123. The SEMC organised and DHS sponsored two workshops in Morwell on 13 March 2014 for people assisting and supporting the Morwell community. They were conducted by Dr Rob Gordon (and his associate Dr David Younger) and attended by council call centre and media staff, and by local health professionals. Dr Gordon is a clinical disaster-trauma psychologist and the workshops were entitled 'Communicating with people in emergencies'.

3. How would you assess the effectiveness of the strategy and the contributions of departments and agencies? Did any changes been made in the light of this assessment? If so, what were they?⁵

Assessment during the incident

124. During the incident a number of activities were undertaken to check that the media and communication messages were being received and understood by the community.
- 124.1 There was regular media monitoring, including monitoring of social media, was undertaken to understand and track and community sentiment and issues. This information was used to inform communication responses and to assess the effectiveness of government messaging.
- 124.2 The doorknock conducted over February and March to provide information to every Morwell residence also collected community feedback.
- 124.3 The CFA's Community Engagement team conducted regular surveys through its face-to-face activities.
125. Over time, and as more local intelligence was gathered and fed back, it became apparent that there was no simple or single solution for delivering effective whole of government messaging to all sections of the Morwell community, and that a sustained approach that recognised and responded to issues was required.
- As a result, we continued to look for alternative methods of telling people things (such as online forums, sessions on local radio, community newsletters, and a DEECD SMS tree to allow parents to contact each other).

Particular matters to consider in the future

⁵ The question in the Board's letter was, "How would DPC assess the effectiveness of the strategy and the contributions of its departments and agencies? Did it make any changes in the light of the assessment? If so, what were they?"

- 126. In future, in the event of a campaign emergency event, Regional Control Centres should include people of equivalent rank and experience in communications to manage the communications specialists, to provide overall coordination and management for communications activity, and to provide an level of professional expertise in decision-making equivalent to the other disciplines represented.
- 127. The use and monitoring of social media by all key agencies should begin at an early stage.
- 128. In future emergencies it will be necessary to continue building a collaborative relationship with local leaders and service providers: for example, through including local government, through commencing a community newsletter, and through meeting and talking with the local media (both state and commercial).
- 129. The EMJPIC’s Terms of Reference are currently being reviewed and updated to reflect the new reform structure and to make the EPA and the Municipal Association of Victoria permanent members.

Dated May 2014

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Merita Tabain