

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

**STATEMENT OF ROSS MICHAEL SULLIVAN**

---

Date of Document: 21 May 2014	Solicitor's Code: 7977
Filed on behalf of: The State of Victoria	Telephone: +61 3 8684 0444
Prepared by:	Facsimile: +61 3 8684 0449
Victorian Government Solicitor	DX 300077 Melbourne
Level 25	Ref: 1403971
121 Exhibition Street	Attention: Peter Stewart
Melbourne VIC 3000	

---

I, ROSS MICHAEL SULLIVAN, of 8 Lakeside Drive, Burwood East, Victoria, Operations Manager, Country Fire Authority (**CFA**), can say as follows:

**A. Introduction**

1. My full name is Ross Michael Sullivan. My date of birth is 19 June 1962.
2. I was the Incident Controller (**IC**) for the fire that was burning in the Hazelwood Coal Mine (**Mine**) on 22, 23, 24 and 25 March 2014. By the time I commenced as IC, the fire at the Mine was under control.
3. I have been a CFA volunteer since 1978 and a staff member of the CFA since 1986. During my time with the CFA, I have worked my way up through the ranks, having started in the role of fire fighter.
4. I became an Operations Officer in 2003. I was an Acting Deputy Chief Officer of the CFA from December 2010 until June 2012. I was also the Acting Deputy Commissioner at the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner for a period of 6 months from September 2012 through February 2013.
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 IMT/Mine Operations Meetings;

- 6.3 minutes of Combined IMT/Emergency Management Team (**EMT**) meetings;
  - 6.4 Incident Action Plans (also known as Incident Shift Plans (**ISPs**)); and
  - 6.5 written fire information releases;
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 to 3 of the Outline, these matters relate to the period between 7 and 9 February 2014. I did not become IC until 22 March 2014 and therefore do not know the answer to these questions.
9. As to questions 4 and 5, by the time I became IC, the suppression effort in the Mine was being scaled back. The size and composition of the IMT changed at 2000 hours on Thursday 25 March 2014 when the Incident Control Centre (**ICC**) for the Mine fire was closed. I am not aware of any change to the makeup of the EMT during the period that I was IC.
10. As to questions 6 and 7, the plan to suppress the fires at the Mine on the days that I was IC are described in the ISPs for 22, 23, 24 and 25 March 2014. By the time I became IC, the fire fight had been reduced to two sectors. The fire fighting procedures were well established and there were no problems or difficulties with their implementation. The Mine was handed back to the operator on 25 March 2014.
11. As to question 8, external expertise had informed the IMT's approach well before I became IC. The only variation that I can recall that occurred during the period that I was IC was to introduce an additional approach to the Forward Looking Infrared (**FLIR**) scans that were being regularly conducted over the Mine. FLIR scans are taken from aircraft and identify the presence of fire or 'hot spots', through smoke, by highlighting areas of heated earth. These scans were being regularly conducted over the Mine as a way of monitoring the progress of the suppression effort.
12. On 22 and 23 March 2014, I made arrangements for a FLIR run to be conducted over the Loy Yang open cut coal mine. The purpose of this scan was to provide a comparison or base line between a working mine, that was not on fire, and the Hazelwood Mine.
13. I considered this scan necessary because the fire was on its way to being declared safe and handed back to the Mine operator. The suppression effort had become one of principally blacking out and cooling down the Mine. At the same time, however, wind events had the potential to cause the fire to re-ignite. By obtaining the comparison scan of the Loy Yang open cut mine it was intended to make an assessment of how likely wind events were to cause the fire to re-ignite. Ultimately, however, the scan of the Loy Yang mine was of little assistance in circumstances

where the only hot spots identified on that scan were those created by working machinery.

14. As to question 9, as I did not become IC until after the fire at the Mine had been brought under control, I do not know what, if anything, could have been done better in relation to the preparedness for, and response to, the fires at the Mine.

### **C. Communications**

15. 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.
16. As to questions 11 and 12, the information and advice messages that I issued during the period that I was IC maintained the messages that had already been implemented. Consideration of tailoring these messages for vulnerable community members was an issue that had been dealt with before I became IC. The only major change that was made to the messages during the period that I was IC occurred when the fire was declared safe.
17. In addition to the formal community information and warnings that were issued in the period that I was IC, there were also well established procedures for liaising with community groups. This procedure, as it related to the period that I was IC, is described below under the heading 'Liaison with other parties'.
18. Whilst generally, during the period that I was IC, communication to the community worked well, the templates used for the fire information releases did not easily allow for contribution from other agencies. In my view, there is an opportunity to review these templates so that this issue can be improved upon.

### **D. Evacuation**

19. As to question 13, no consideration was given to evacuation during the period that I was IC. I was, however, aware that mechanisms were in place via the CFA regional controller and the police in the event that the issue of evacuation needed to be considered.
20. As to question 14, I was not the IC on 28 February 2014.

### **E. Liaison with other parties**

21. As to question 15, in the period that I was IC, I had established liaison arrangements with each of the Mine operator, the Environment Protection Authority, the office of the Chief Health Officer, Victoria Police and the Ambulance service. These liaison arrangements had been established prior to my becoming IC. Liaison occurred both formally in the context of IMT meetings and meetings with the Mine Operator and on a more informal basis. I did not have cause to have any dealings with WorkSafe.
22. In addition, I also had an established liaison relationship with a community group. When I became IC, this group was being kept informed about the situation with the Mine Fire through the Emergency Management Team. This had in turn been arranged through the CFA's community engagement staff.

23. When I was IC, I considered liaison with this community group to be important. I wanted to make sure that this group understood the contingency planning that was being undertaken for the period after the Mine was handed back to the Mine operator. The liaison I undertook in that regard included discussions with the community group about the presence that the CFA would maintain at the Mine and the fire fighting resources that would be available in the event that it became necessary for the CFA to quickly redeploy. I also discussed the specialist equipment that would remain in the Latrobe valley, including an aerial pumper that would remain at Morwell.
24. As to question 16, liaison with the Mine operator could have been improved by having a management representative from the Mine present in the ICC. Also, representatives of the Mine were not available for combined IMT/Mine Operator meetings on the weekend I was IC, as we worked towards the final handover. The presence of a management representative from the Mine in the ICC would have assisted in obtaining input of the Mine operator.

Dated: 21 May 2014

.....

**ROSS MICHAEL SULLIVAN**