

# Unite & Recover

## Mine fire recovery 2014

Edition # 14  
April 19 2014

14



## NEWSLETTER

**For more information:**  
Community Information and  
Recovery Centre 1800 017 777  
20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell

recovery.vic.gov.au  
latrobe.vic.gov.au  
health.vic.gov.au  
epa.vic.gov.au  
worksafe.vic.gov.au  
esv.vic.gov.au

*The information contained  
within this document has been  
provided by the Department  
of Health, Department of  
Human Services, Environment  
Protection Authority, Victorian  
Work Cover Authority  
(WorkSafe), Energy Safe  
Victoria, Gippsland Water  
and Latrobe City Council.  
Information is correct as at 17  
April 2014.*

### Newsletter Update

The Unite and Recover Community Newsletter is designed to help keep you up to date with the latest information about all things Recovery.

**Please note the next edition of this newsletter will be published in the Latrobe Valley Express newspaper.**

### Information Website

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Recovery Committee has recently launched a website to provide information in a central location for those affected by the recent fires in Morwell and Districts. This website can be found at [www.morwellfirenoticeboard.org](http://www.morwellfirenoticeboard.org) and will contain direct links to all the latest news, updates and recovery information from the various organisations and government departments. This website will serve as a single point of contact for all residents interested in keeping up to date with the recovery process. It will also provide a one-stop-shop for those interested in finding out what assistance is available to them. The site will be updated on a regular basis.

### Clean-Up Update

Latrobe City Council and the Department of Human Services are working with community members in the clean-up process.

The recently opened Community Information and Recovery Centre is a one-stop shop for all recovery information. The Centre is located at 20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell and is open from 9am to 5.30pm daily.

Morwell residents can collect:

- a clean-up kit
- laundry voucher
- car wash voucher
- hose nozzle

Residents can also borrow a HEPA filter vacuum cleaner.

Morwell residents can make appointments with:

- Relationships Australia on Fridays for a free counselling service
- Insurance Council Australia on Wednesdays for a free consultation service

You can contact the Community Information and Recovery Centre on 1800 017 777.

### Fire Update

CFA is continuing regular visits to inspect the Hazelwood mine and maintaining links with GDF SUEZ.

A helicopter run two weeks ago picked up some remaining hot spots in the mine floor. While these hotspots aren't posing any risk they will continue to emit small amounts of smoke for the next month.

GDF SUEZ continues to monitor the situation closely with mine staff working on hotspots during the day as best they can with the current weather conditions.

CFA is planning another helicopter run for early this week and the information will be shared with the mine.

Morwell and Traralgon firefighters are rested up, after the prolonged firefighting effort.

### Air Quality Update

EPA continues to issue air quality advice daily on the website and twitter @EPA\_VICTORIA. Air quality hourly update (data table)

[www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/monitoring-the-environment/air-quality-bulletins/hourly-air-quality-data-table](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/monitoring-the-environment/air-quality-bulletins/hourly-air-quality-data-table)

EPA will maintain vigilant air quality monitoring and reporting until we have compelling evidence that the air quality has returned to a sustained acceptable standard for the community. In addition to providing air quality monitoring as promised, we have continued to provide the sampling results for ash, soil and water, which can also be found at EPA's website.

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EPA officers remain in the field, and that includes both our science officers and the pollution response team, stationed in Traralgon.

As the fire at Hazelwood mine is a brown-coal fire, EPA has placed particular emphasis on testing for levels of particulate matter, PM2.5, and carbon monoxide.

We currently have 22 fixed and mobile monitoring devices measuring air quality, 24 hours a day, across the region. The monitoring locations have been specifically chosen to ensure they are in the right places to capture the overall air quality in the region, as well as the very worst particle levels.

### Health Update

The Community Health Assessment Centre saw its last client on 30 March 2014 after 38 days of operation and 2072 consultations.

The centre was an initiative of the Department of Health and was established by Ambulance Victoria at their office in Saskia Way, Morwell.

The centre was established rapidly on 20 February 2014 with staff working during the night to clear the space and get the centre ready for opening the next day. The centre was doubled in size a week later to cope with the additional demand. At its peak the centre had over 200 consultations a day.

The centre provided an opportunity for Latrobe Valley residents to discuss their health and the smoke with nurses and paramedics. For most people a basic health check was undertaken, and many people took the opportunity to have their blood carboxyhaemoglobin levels checked, which is measure of carbon monoxide exposure.

Environmental monitoring of carbon monoxide during the smoky conditions did not find air levels of health concern in the community. The personal testing of carboxyhaemoglobin that was available at the Community Health Assessment Centre provided many people with reassurance. Clients that are smokers were also able to see one of the many impacts of smoking, with smokers generally reporting higher levels of carboxyhaemoglobin in their blood than non-smokers.

Some clients presented with pre-existing illness unrelated to the smoky conditions. The centre was able to refer people back to their doctor to ensure appropriate management of their condition in the longer term.

Nurses from Latrobe Regional Hospital and Latrobe Community Health Service were supported by nurses from West Gippsland Healthcare Group (Warragul) and Central Gippsland Health Service (Sale) making the centre a real regional effort.

Demand for the service had dropped off significantly by the time the centre closed.

Thanks to all the paramedics and nurses who provided a fantastic service to the community.

Anyone with ongoing health concerns should speak with their doctor, or they can call Nurse-on-call 1300 60 60 24.

### Health Study

Public advertisements for a suitable organisation to conduct the study into the long term health impacts of the Hazelwood open cut mine fire will be released in the very near future.