



Media release

The Hon Dr Denis Naphthine MP

Premier
Minister for Regional Cities
Minister for Racing

The Hon Peter Ryan MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for State Development
Minister for Regional and Rural
Development

Tuesday 11 March 2014

Premier announces independent Inquiry into Hazelwood Mine Fire

- **Premier and Deputy Premier announce independent inquiry into Hazelwood mine fire and the response to and support of Morwell and affected communities**
- **Inquiry to be headed by the Hon Bernard Teague AO**
- **Inquiry to convene by the end of March**

Premier Denis Naphthine and Deputy Premier Peter Ryan today announced the establishment of an independent Inquiry into the Hazelwood Mine Fire, the response to and support of the Morwell and affected communities and the emergency response.

The Board of Inquiry will comprise three members and be headed by the Hon Bernard Teague AO. It will be asked to submit its report to the Government by the end of August 2014.

Justice Teague will bring to this Inquiry his extensive experience, which includes having headed the Royal Commission into the Black Saturday bushfires.

The Inquiry will be convened by the end of March. Its Secretariat will be based in Morwell and will be given all necessary resources to fully support the Inquiry.

Dr Naphthine said the Government had decided that a Board of Inquiry – with coercive powers similar to a Royal Commission – was the most appropriate legal form for the Inquiry.

"I have directed the establishment of this Inquiry to give Victorians confidence that the Government is focused on ensuring community safety and recovery. The Inquiry will enable us to review the mine operations and the emergency response to the fire. The Inquiry will also cover health and environmental responses and the response to and support of the affected communities," Dr Naphthine said.

Dr Naphthine also thanked everyone involved in fighting the fire and supporting the community.

"I welcome the news that the fire is under control and congratulate all those involved in this work over the last few weeks in addition to agencies and volunteers who have, and continue to, support the community as it recovers," Dr Naphthine said.

"Now is the time for individuals, families, community representatives and businesses to have the opportunity 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."

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Mr Ryan said the Government had made good on its vow for an open, independent inquiry.

"This inquiry is testament to the Government's commitment to be open, transparent and straightforward with the community," Mr Ryan said.

"The Inquiry provides the local community the chance to have its say, and it is important the views of the local community are heard.

"The Government will continue to work with the community and council to get businesses and the community back to full strength as soon as possible."

The Terms of Reference will be finalised after consultation with Justice Teague and the Solicitor General before being submitted to Governor in Council and made public.

Broadly, the Terms of Reference will examine the regulatory regime which applied to the Hazelwood mine; the adequacy and effectiveness of the emergency response; how the fire started and spread into the mine; and the adequacy of information to and support of the affected communities.

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