

From: [David Hollis](#)
To: [Hazelwood Info Shared Mailbox](#)
Subject: Submission addendum.
Date: Wednesday, 12 August 2015 3:28:40 PM
Attachments: [The case for an independent community health service funded by polluting industries.docx](#)

Please add this to my submission.

David Hollis



The case for an independent community health service funded by polluting industries.

Health Issues-

"The impact of the Hazelwood mine fire on the Latrobe Valley community has been significant. People have been affected in many ways. First and foremost, the community has experienced adverse health effects and may be affected for an indeterminate period into the future.

Many people and local businesses have experienced financial impacts for a range of reasons including a downturn in business, medical costs, veterinary costs, time taken off work, relocation from their homes, cleaning their homes and businesses, and possible decreases in property value."

<http://report.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au/executive-summary-2/hazelwood-mine-fire>

Health and Social Harms of Coal Mining in Local Communities: Spotlight on the Hunter Region cites excess deaths from lung cancer, chronic heart, respiratory and kidney disease related to living near coal mines. The evidence is mostly from the United States and often features a dose-response effect related to coal quantity or surface area of the mine. Other effects include high blood levels of heavy metals in children, and higher rates of birth defects.

Living near coal combusting power plants is associated with excess death – in this case from lung, laryngeal and bladder cancer. Respiratory complaints, increases in non-melanoma skin cancers, still births and miscarriages are also reported.

<https://theconversation.com/coal-industry-thriving-but-at-what-social-and-health-cost-9266>

A major review of evidence on the impact of coal mining has highlighted serious, ongoing health and social problems and an urgent need for improvements in government coal mining policy.

The research by the University of Sydney has also revealed a critical lack of local studies investigating the effect coal mining has on Australian communities.

The report, which analyses 50 peer-reviewed research papers from 10 countries, will be launched at the University today

"This comprehensive review of Australian and international health and medical literature underlines the pressing need for Australia to re-evaluate whether the overall health and social costs of Australia's reliance on a coal economy will ultimately outweigh its economic benefits," said lead author Associate Professor Ruth Colagiuri, from Sydney Medical School

<http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newscategoryid=1&newsstoryid=10393>

In Australia there are 3000 deaths each year from air pollution, which is more than from traffic accidents. Imagine the nightly TV news – instead of the twisted car metal and bodies, they show a child fighting for breath from asthma being loaded into an ambulance in Bulga, or a patient with a heart attack in the Latrobe Valley.

Air pollution is an invisible killer. Tiny, unseen particles from coal combustion, from other industries and from vehicles are breathed deep into the lungs where they cause diseases of the lungs, heart and blood vessels.

Some of these particles have an association with the only sort of lung cancer that occurs in a substantial number of non-smokers. They worsen lung disease and restrict lung growth in children.

<http://dea.org.au/news/article/canberra-times-invisible-killer-need-for-better-air-quality-standards-is-ur>

Researchers from Harvard University have produced analysis suggesting that the pollution from Victoria's brown coal power stations are imposing annual health costs of \$831 million, on top of significant levels of greenhouse gases that drive global warming.

The report by Jordan Ward and Mick Power of the Kennedy School of Government attributes health costs on the basis of local air pollutants emitted by the power stations, specifically SO₂, NO_x, and small particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and a methodology they claim is based on work from the US National Academy of Sciences. Climate change costs are based upon the values for the social damage caused by CO₂ estimated by the US Government for use in their cost benefit analyses.

<http://www.businessspectator.com.au/news/2015/4/20/science-environment/brown-coal-imposes-800m-health-cost-annually-victorians-0>

Financial Issues

One year on from the Hazelwood mine fire, the communities of Morwell and the broader Latrobe Valley are calling for an urgent long-term strategy to deal with the ongoing economic and social impacts of the fire as well as pre-existing disadvantage, according to a report from the Victorian Council of Social Service.

“The Hazelwood mine fire has had a deep and lasting impact on Morwell and the Latrobe Valley, resulting in significant social and economic upheaval and leaving crucial community supports struggling to meet growing need,” said Emma King, CEO of VCOSS.

“Years of structural change and neglect, along with major service gaps, have left Morwell significantly disadvantaged and the impact of last year’s Hazelwood mine fire is proving to be a long-term crisis.”

“Local services, agencies and community members tell VCOSS they are concerned that authorities are quickly forgetting about Morwell and Hazelwood in the wake of the immediate emergency, when in fact deeper, more lasting, issues are only just emerging.”

The warning comes in a report, ‘*One year on: Morwell and the 2014 Hazelwood Mine fire*’, which examines the difficulties faced by Latrobe Valley communities in responding to the mine fire which blanketed the town in toxic smoke for 45 days.

The report, based on the experiences and feedback of community and social services working in Morwell, highlights the long-term impacts of the Hazelwood Mine fire including:

- Loss of pride in the community, lack of trust in the rebuilding process, and the need for further community building activities to help it recover from the fire
- Ongoing difficulties and lack of funding for community and social services organisations to respond fully to the complex and diverse needs of their clients
- Operational challenges for community service organisations that have had to shut down essential services, lost revenue and face ongoing staffing issues.

“The mine fire was merely the latest in a long line of upheavals that have hit the people of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley that date back to the restructure and privatisation of the State Electricity Commission in the 1990s.”

“This is clearly a critical period for the Latrobe Valley. There is significant uncertainty of what the future might hold, and a real fear that the mine will ignite again,” said Emma King.

“While emergencies can cause great physical, financial and psychological hardship for all involved, they can devastate those who are already facing disadvantage.”

The report is being launched at the 2015 Emergency Management Forum hosted by and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), which will gather local, national and international experts to explore in depth issues and initiatives for vulnerable people in emergencies.

Read the full report - <http://vcoss.org.au/documents/2015/06/2015-Hazelwood-Report-FINAL.pdf>

A new report shows Morwell is one of the most disadvantaged communities in Victoria.

The *Dropping off the Edge* report from Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, also shows the community has shown little sign of improvement over the past 15 years.

<http://blogs.abc.net.au/victoria/2015/07/morwell-among-the-most-disadvantaged-postcodes-in-victoria.html>

Community leaders have now called on governments to pay a "debt of responsibility to the region" to help it overcome "widespread entrenched, intergenerational" disadvantage.

The challenges inherent in entrenched disadvantage are well-known to local service providers and expert observers, several of whom told The Express yesterday the data strengthened the Valley's case for securing intensive government assistance, with one source saying "there is quite a bit of ground to make up".

<http://www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/3229318/morwell-disadvantage-severe/>

The Problem-

Communities near polluting industries face an undue health burden (especially in low socio economic areas) leading to ongoing medical costs which research shows they struggle to pay and may avoid treatment altogether based on their lack of resources, which may exacerbate their conditions. There may be a lack of faith in existing government services and support structures. Disasters like the Hazelwood Mine Fire have led to a lack of trust in authorities and people are more likely to rely on fellow community members or approach them more easily to advocate for them.

Since the Hazelwood Mine Fire a long term health study has been established and a health clinic manned by a Nurse who can refer people to other medical services if needed. However many of these services require payment. It seems unfair that victims of the mine fire now have to cover medical costs and there is no support in place to defray expenses which they are now subject too. Hundreds of families now need to pay for ventolin inhalers and other medicine where they have not had too before. In some cases this can be a significant impost for people who can ill afford to pay.

Of particular concern are emissions from transport and power generation which create toxic airpollution that is causing cardiovascular disease, respiratory diseases and cancer, and is

also implicated in adverse health impacts on people's reproductive, urological and neurological systems. Figures from NSW in 2009 indicate the annual health costs of air pollution from transport, power generation and industry in that state alone are A\$4.7 billion.¹ The costs for the whole of Australia are likely to be much higher.

In Australia, the main sources of air pollution are carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NO, NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and particulate matter (PM₁₀-PM_{2.5}) which are produced by the combustion of fuel or other high-temperature industrial processes, and ozone. Ozone is a gas produced in the presence of sunlight and volatile organic compounds from the combustion of fossil fuels. Particulate matter from combustion is composed of many chemical compounds, including organic carbon species, elemental or black carbon, and trace metals (eg lead and arsenic). These can range in size from a few nano-meters in diameter to particles in the diameter range of 200 to 1000 nm (0.2 to 1 µm). Ultrafine particles are strongly linked to fresh combustion and traffic-related pollution.

The mining and combustion of coal for electricity generation in Australia produces toxic air pollution containing particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, as well as emissions of arsenic, sulphuric and nitric acids, boron, fluorides, mercury, antimony, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, lead, manganese, nickel, selenium and zinc.^{6,7} The mining and transportation of coal also generates large quantities of dust: for example, the National Pollutant Inventory estimates 42,000,000 kg of dust is produced in the Hunter Valley each year from coal mining.

The Solution- (Funding)

There needs to be a mining/air pollution levy introduced so that communities living near coal mines and power stations and other polluting industries are not forced to bear the health burdens alone. Raising the GST to cover the health shortfall is not the answer as it is a regressive tax that falls on the most disadvantaged the hardest. The industries causing the health shortfall should be responsible for it not the public health system. Situating polluting industries in the most disadvantaged areas of the state exacerbates the social and health issues..

The Structure

A Non Government Organisation (charity or foundation) to manage the health funds raised by the levy should be established. This would operate an independent community health centre and hire independent health professionals who are educated on the particular needs of communities exposed to air pollution. Its aim would be to alleviate medical costs associated with air pollution and in particular coal mining and power industry related diseases whether through grants to cover bills either in full or partially. It may include psychological and psychiatric as well as physical ailments, and preventative programs such as quit smoking and healthy eating to counteract environmental toxicity.

Owing to the mismanagement of funds granted after the mine fire and the mistrust of authorities by locals it needs to be independent. The mine fire health clinic simply refers people to specialists they can't afford.