

Submission to: **The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry**

By: Surf Coast Air Action Inc.

1. Surf Coast Air Action Inc. (**SCAA**) is an Anglesea based group of Surf Coast residents and homeowners who are concerned about damage to our health, environment and local economy caused by, inter alia, the open cut brown coal mine (**mine**) and power plant (**plant**), which operate immediately adjacent to the township of Anglesea on Victoria's Great Ocean Road.
2. The risk of major fire in the mine has long been a key SCAA concern, particularly in circumstances where:
 - a. There is a large amount of exposed high-sulphur content coal in the mine;
 - b. The mine is surrounded by some of the most fire prone vegetation on earth, which has been the subject of numerous fires, including the disastrous Ash Wednesday fire; and
 - c. No health risk analysis has been carried out in relation to the risks that the Anglesea community would face from a major fire in the mine.¹
3. On 15 May 2015 the operator of the mine and plant (**Alcoa**) announced that the mine and plant would be permanently closed on 31 August 2015. The plant is to be decommissioned and cleaned up and the mine rehabilitated.

¹ This has been confirmed to SCAA by Emergency Commissioner Craig Lapsley on two separate occasions.

4. SCAA confirms the Inquiry's advice provided at the 2pm information session held at Anglesea on 28 June 2015 that the Inquiry will be dealing solely with the issue of fire risk for the 2015/2016 summer season and not the issue of the rehabilitation of the mine more generally.
5. For the avoidance of doubt SCAA asks the Inquiry to note that:
 - a. Both SCAA (and its individual members) have a significant interest in the issue of the rehabilitation of the mine and will, in due course, want to make detailed submissions to Alcoa, government and regulators about the nature and standard of the rehabilitation that should be required for the mine;
 - b. This will include submissions that Alcoa be required to fully restore the National Estate listed Anglesea Heathland to as close to its natural condition as is possible; and
 - c. SCAA has made a deliberate decision not to include its detailed submissions on the rehabilitation of the mine in its submission to the Inquiry because of the Inquiry's advice referred to in paragraph 4 hereof.
6. For the reasons set out in the previous paragraph SCAA requests that the Inquiry refrain from making any comments or findings in its reports (or otherwise) that may impact upon or cut across the ability of the community to have substantial input into the issue of the rehabilitation of the mine generally.
7. In relation to the discrete issue of fire preparedness for the 2015/2016 fire season, SCAA's position is that the mine should be made as safe as it possibly can be, subject to the proviso that the work performed should not compromise the ability to restore the National Estate listed Anglesea Heathland to as close to its natural condition as is possible.

8. SCAA asks the Inquiry to note that the ability of the community to make sensible submissions about the fire preparedness issue has been severely constrained by Alcoa's failure to publicly release the detail about its actual plans. At a high level what is known is that it is apparently intended that the coal in the mine will be covered by approximately 1 metre of overburden by 31 August 2015 (**civil works**) and that an excavator, dozer and water cart will be left on site for fire protection work. It is not clear (again due to Alcoa's lack of transparency) whether the civil works are intended to be a temporary solution or part of Alcoa's longer term rehabilitation plan.
9. To the extent that the civil works are intended to be part of the long term rehabilitation plan SCAA repeats paragraph 5 above and again requests that the Inquiry refrain from making any findings in its reports (or otherwise) that may impact upon or cut across the ability of the community to have substantial input into the issue of the rehabilitation of the mine generally.
10. If the Inquiry would be assisted by any amplification of or clarification of the above submissions SCAA would be pleased to assist.

16 July 2015

Surf Coast Air Action Inc.

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