



Hazelwood Mine Fire
Inquiry - Submission of
AGL Loy Yang in Response
to Health Improvement
Forums –
6 October 2015



INTRODUCTION

1. AGL Loy Yang Pty Ltd (**AGL Loy Yang**) owns and operates the Loy Yang coal mine (**AGL LY Mine**) and Loy Yang A power station (**AGL LYA**) at Traralgon South, Victoria.
2. AGL Loy Yang lodged a submission to the Board of Inquiry (**Board**) in respect of paragraph 6 and 7 of the terms of reference (**ToR**) for the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry on 10 August 2015 (**Submission**).
3. AGL Loy Yang representatives attended the Health Improvement Forums held on 28 September to 30 September 2015, and Mr Steve Rieniets, General Manager of AGL Loy Yang, participated in the forum on Healthy Workplaces on 30 September 2015.
4. AGL Loy Yang congratulates the Board on the Health Improvement Forums, which brought together representatives from a wide range of State, regional and local organisations that are currently engaged in health and wellbeing activities in the Latrobe Valley. The forum provided unique opportunities to listen and to participate in a discussion of issues which are critical to the community within which we operate and our people live and work.
5. AGL Loy Yang appreciates this opportunity to respond to some of the issues raised during these Health Improvement Forums.

HEALTHY WORKPLACES

6. AGL Loy Yang directly employs approximately 700 people at the AGL LY Mine and AGL LYA with another 400 contractor employees servicing the business.
7. AGL's overarching value of 'safe and sustainable' incorporates not only the safety of our employees but a strong commitment to the protection of our environment and the communities in which we operate. AGL Loy Yang believes that a healthy and safe workplace is not only integral to its operations, but also contributes significantly to the health and wellbeing of the Latrobe Valley community.
8. AGL Loy Yang refers to the comments made by Mr Steve Rieniets at the forum on Healthy Workplaces and confirms its support for the proposals that Mr Rieniets put forward at the forum such as:
 - opening up the health forums that it currently conducts for workers and their families to the broader Latrobe Valley community;
 - participating in the development of a Latrobe Valley wellbeing calendar; and
 - sharing knowledge about current AGL Loy Yang employee support, health and wellbeing programs such as the "help a mate system" with businesses in the Latrobe Valley.
9. AGL Loy Yang is also willing to partner with local organisations and the Latrobe Valley community in the development and delivery of workplace and community health and wellbeing projects.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

10. AGL Loy Yang agrees with a number of observations made during the Healthy Environments forum in relation to the gap between perception and reality in relation to many aspects of the environment of the Latrobe Valley. We thought that Mr Chris Webb, Executive Director of Regulatory Practice and Strategy at EPA Victoria, did a good job of explaining that the ambient air quality of the Latrobe Valley is generally very good, apart from the rare occasions when it is negatively impacted by fire or other event.
11. The AGL Loy Yang health submission (see pages 35-40) contains a discussion of the ambient air quality monitoring results produced by the EPA and the Latrobe Valley Air Monitoring Network (**LVAMN**). The data set out in our Submission supports the views expressed by Mr Webb at the Healthy Environment forum.
12. While there are always opportunities to improve air quality, it is important that discussions about the existing air quality in the Latrobe Valley are well-informed and evidence based. AGL Loy Yang is concerned that some of the commentary regarding these matters suggests that the Latrobe Valley air quality is much worse than in the data presented. This commentary can tend to perpetuate perceptions about the Latrobe Valley environment that are inaccurate and misleading. It is important that community leaders take an active role in promoting strong and supportive messaging about the Latrobe Valley, including in relation to the environment of the Latrobe Valley.
13. AGL Loy Yang recognises the role of the EPA as the lead State agency in relation to matters of environment protection and urges the EPA to continue its work in the Latrobe Valley by:
 - improving engagement and communication with the Latrobe Valley community regarding ambient air quality;
 - improving understanding of the science of ambient air quality in the Latrobe Valley community;
 - clarifying the differences between ambient air quality during a fire or other incident and ambient air quality during normal operating conditions for mines and power generators; and
 - addressing the incorrect perception in the Latrobe Valley community that ambient air quality is an issue during normal operating conditions for mines and power generators, and that emissions to air are causing harm to the health of the community.
14. AGL Loy Yang regards the improvement of messaging in relation to the generally very good ambient air quality in the Latrobe Valley is relevant to the subject matter of a number of the Health Improvement Forums. Improving health and well-being in the Latrobe Valley will be supported by improving the self-perception that members of the Latrobe Valley have about themselves, their community and their environment.
15. Building knowledge of, and trust and confidence in, the air quality regulatory framework is critical to building trust between the power industry and the broader Latrobe Valley community.

16. For our part, AGL Loy Yang is committed to open and transparent operations, and will continue to:
- provide information about the environmental impacts of its operations through regulatory reporting mechanisms;
 - participate in the LVAMN and support its provision of daily ambient air quality information to the community; and
 - support the work of the EPA in its endeavours to improve engagement and communication with the Latrobe Valley community regarding ambient air quality.

CONCLUSION

17. AGL Loy Yang acknowledges the extensive information provided to the Board and the diversity of opinion expressed on health improvement via the community consultations, written submissions, public hearings and commissioned reports. AGL Loy Yang congratulates the Board on collating new ideas about health improvement in the Latrobe Valley, but also notes that some proposals would require careful evaluation and close scrutiny by multiple stakeholders prior to implementation.
18. AGL Loy Yang is committed to working with the Board and community towards improved health outcomes for the Latrobe Valley and looks forward to the remaining Health Improvement Forums and, in due course, to the release of the Board's recommendations regarding health improvement in the Latrobe Valley.