

**IN THE MATTER OF  
The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry**

**STATEMENT OF CRAIG WILLIAM LAPSLEY**

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Date of Document: 1 December 2015	Telephone: +61 3 8684 0444
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Prepared by: Victorian Government Solicitor	DX 300077 Melbourne Ref: 1503689
Level 25 121 Exhibition Street Melbourne VIC 3000	Attention: Andrew Suddick

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I, Craig William Lapsley, of Level 26, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne Victoria, Emergency Management Commissioner, can say as follows:

**INTRODUCTION**

1. My full name is Craig William Lapsley.
2. My professional background and experience are set out in my previous statement provided to the Inquiry dated 20 July 2015 (VGSO.1005.001.001) (**my previous statement**).
3. I am the Emergency Management Commissioner (**EMC**). This is a statutory office established under section 24 of the *Emergency Management Act 2014* (**EM Act**). Although this is a statutory office, the EM Act falls with the portfolio of Acts administered by the Department of Justice. It also sits within the structure of Emergency Management Victoria (**EMV**), which operates as a statutory entity. The role and composition of EMV are detailed in Part 3 of the EM Act.
4. My specific statutory functions and powers are set out under sections 32 and 33 of the EM Act.
5. The EMC is responsible for coordinating the response to major emergencies (including ensuring appropriate control arrangements are in place) and operating effectively during Class 1 and Class 2 emergencies. The EMC is also responsible for co-ordinating consequence management and recovery for all major emergencies.
6. I have been in the role of EMC since 1 July 2014.

**THE BOARD'S REQUEST FOR THIS STATEMENT**

7. I make this statement pursuant to the request made by the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Board of Inquiry (**Board**) by letter of 25 November 2015 (**Board's letter**). The

questions in the Board's letter are set out in the remainder of this statement together with my responses.

8. The information contained in this statement is substantially derived from enquiries carried out by officers of EMV and is accurate to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

## THE BOARD'S QUESTIONS AND MY RESPONSES

### *Question 1 – The activities of the Taskforce*

#### *Coal Mine Emergency Management Taskforce*

9. I am Chair of the Coal Mines Emergency Management Taskforce (**Taskforce**), of which there have been 17 meetings to date.
10. Details regarding the establishment, membership, management and functions of the Taskforce are set out in my previous statement.
11. The Taskforce was created on 16 September 2014 to facilitate the responsible departments, agencies and owners/operators of mines having appropriate plans and processes to prevent, prepare for and respond to any threat of fire in or around the mines.
12. The immediate and specific purpose of the Taskforce was to determine and coordinate emergency management priorities for the Latrobe Valley and Anglesea for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 summer seasons.
13. The Taskforce incorporated separate memberships in both the Latrobe Valley (**Latrobe Valley Taskforce**) and the Surf Coast (**Surf Coast Taskforce**) in order to ensure a consistent approach to emergency management across the operators of all four operating brown coal mines in Victoria, these being Hazelwood (**GDF SUEZ**), Loy Yang (**AGL**), Yallourn (**Energy Australia**) and Anglesea (**Alcoa**).
14. The following Terms of Reference (**Terms of Reference**) were developed for the operation of the Taskforce (**Annexure 1**):
  - Review the fire/emergency preparedness of the four Victorian brown coal mines;
  - Oversee the implementation of relevant Hazelwood Coal Mine Inquiry affirmations and improvement plans; and
  - Support improved capability and interoperability between the coal mine industry, government agencies, and community.
15. In accordance with these Terms of Reference and as outlined in the Taskforce Status Report dated 31 December 2014 (**Annexure 2**), the Taskforce's priority to date has been the preparedness of the mines in addressing improved prevention and response capabilities, to reduce the risk of major fires occurring in or entering the mines.

16. The additional consideration is to foster a consistent approach by all mines in adopting standards that will achieve these goals while taking into consideration a broad scope of probabilities.
17. The Anglesea mine ceased operation in September 2015 and, having completed its objectives, the Surf Coast Taskforce was concluded in October 2015. Alcoa committed to an ongoing maintenance regime in which CFA and the local community are engaged.

*Activities of the Latrobe Valley Taskforce*

18. The Latrobe Valley Taskforce is based in Morwell. Its membership comprises local government, government agencies and commercial organisations and includes:
  - Latrobe City Shire councils;
  - Worksafe Victoria (**Worksafe**);
  - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (**DEDJTR**);
  - Country Fire Authority (**CFA**);
  - Environment Protection Authority (**EPA**);
  - Department of Health and Human Services (**DHHS**);
  - GDF SUEZ- Hazelwood;
  - AGL - Loy Yang;
  - Energy Australia – Yallourn; and
  - Others as required.

*Governance and planning*

19. A Latrobe Valley improvement plan was developed by the Latrobe Valley Taskforce and is in the process of being implemented by the Latrobe Valley Taskforce and its constituent members. The key themes of the improvement plan relate to preparedness and response to fire emergencies including:
  - Monitoring systems and processes;
  - Planning and mapping;
  - Hazard reduction/removal;
  - Improved capability- training and equipment;
  - Operational improvements;

- Relationships, including the sharing of information between and with industry and agencies;
  - Systems alignment; and
  - Welfare.
20. Further details on the activities of the Taskforce are contained in:
- Taskforce Status Report dated 31 December 2014 (**Annexure 2**); and
  - Taskforce Workplan and Taskforce Initiatives Status Report – Fire Preparedness (**Annexure 3**).

#### *Communications*

21. A Communications Group was established in October 2014 and has met on an as-needs basis. The Communications Group is chaired by EMV and consists of representatives of each of the Taskforce member bodies. The aim of the Communications Group is to:
- Develop overall approach and direction;
  - Identify key stakeholders for engagement;
  - Manage development and timing of media releases; and
  - Facilitate consistency of messaging and engagement across communities.
22. Members have been distributing information to Latrobe Valley communities about their own agency responsibilities using a range of mediums.
23. The following community communication activities have been undertaken:
- On 19 December 2014, I distributed a letter to approximately 45 community leaders, as well as through the Latrobe Valley business networks and media in Morwell, detailing the additional and improved preparations undertaken by emergency services, government agencies and mine operators in respect of the 2014-15 fire season (**Annexure 4**). This will be repeated in mid-December 2015 following the introduction of the Fire Danger Period in the Latrobe Valley on 30 November 2015.
  - On 19 February 2015, EMV published a localised media release (**Annexure 5**). The media release informed the community that the first status report from the Taskforce was available on the EMV website. The media release stated that works to improve fire preparation and prevention measures in Victoria's mines were well underway. A further media release will be distributed in mid-December following the introduction of the Fire Danger Period.
  - I presented a community update video outlining the additional and improved preparations carried out ahead of 2014-15 fire season. This video

was uploaded on 15 January 2015 and is available at <https://youtu.be/rR90BZ72lPc>.

- GDF SUEZ conducted a community briefing day in October 2014. This was attended by politicians, councillors, community group representatives and included participation of Taskforce members. Briefing on the mines' fire mitigation program and plans/actions to meet the Recommendations made pursuant to the 2014 Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Inquiry were provided together with a tour of the mine to display works in progress. Media coverage was also undertaken. Additional information days were conducted on 17 February and 21 October 2015.
  - All Latrobe Valley Taskforce members were invited to a Community Day that was held on 22 March 2015.
  - Local trusted network and principal community leaders were invited to a Community Connections Workshop that was held on 6 May 2015 at Morwell Bowling Club.
  - I have conducted regular and ongoing media interviews in my role as EMC.
24. The following industry and emergency services communication activities were undertaken:
- A coal mine fire introductory video for responders was uploaded on 10 February 2015 by the EMC, mine operators and the CFA outlining the specific dangers and hazards presented by a coal mine fire. The video is available at <http://youtu.be/HvoksvnQCJ0>. The video is to be used in briefing emergency responders to coal mine fires, particularly to those who may have limited experience in such environments.
  - On 24 November 2015, I wrote to the Security and Emergency Management Taskforce (SEMT) (**Annexure 6**), providing a video specifically focussed on the dangers of CO to responders. This video was uploaded on 19 November 2015 and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAmpXpEBa5A&feature=youtu.be>.
  - Industry familiarisation sessions are conducted on an ongoing basis by the CFA. In addition, tours of the open cut mines are arranged by the CFA for all brigades and groups within Districts 9 and 10 who are first responders or those who are responders when fire incidents are escalated.

*Exercise - 'Latrobe 15'*

25. On 8 and 9 October 2015, a pre-bushfire season facilitated exercise, 'Latrobe 15', was conducted in the Latrobe Valley. The aim was to test the clarity of roles and responsibilities, capability and readiness of stakeholders at an assurance level prior to the upcoming fire season. The exercise was designed to identify and provide insight into response arrangements and capability for key players to "work as one."
26. A stated aim of the exercise was to display and practice the integration of industry into the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). This was

a vital component of Recommendation 2 of the 2014 Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Inquiry, relating to the piloting of integrated incident management teams and adoption of AIIMS philosophy within industry.

- 27. The three Latrobe Valley Brown Coal Mines participated in the exercise, together with Australian Paper Mill (APM) a major hazard facility and Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP).
- 28. The Latrobe Valley Taskforce produced a report on Exercise ‘Latrobe 15’ (Annexure 7).

***Question 2 – The steps taken by the mines in the Latrobe Valley to reduce the risk of mine fires since the establishment of the Taskforce***

- 29. The meeting minutes of the Latrobe Valley Taskforce record the actions reported by the mines to reduce the risk of mine fires. Outlined in Table 1 below is a summary of applicable meeting minutes where the mines provided updates and actions on activities to reduce the risk of mine fires.

*Table 1: Latrobe Valley Taskforce Record of Mine activity to reduce fire risk*

	<b>GDF SUEZ</b>	<b>Energy Australia</b>	<b>AGL</b>
Meeting #4 28/10/14 (Annexure 8)	Two trailer mounted FLIR cameras being purchased to monitor northern batters and monitored through Control Centre. Follow up TIC monitoring in place.	CCTV for smoke detection was established around the mine. Operations Fire Tower staffed.	Continual CCTV monitoring of mine and surrounds and TIC capacity.
Meeting #5 11/11/14 (Annexure 9)	Works being completed for vegetation management and fuel reductions for 3,5k hectares of land surrounding mine. Key works estimated to be completed by December 2014. Work progress identified at community briefings on 24 October 2014 to be verified and included in implementation plan	Provided a presentation detailing fire prevention activities being conducted by Energy Australian including: Water tankers on site over summer Water resources Fire service pumps Equipment Additional clay/sand cover of exposed coal Slashing program Roads Personnel and planning	Fire prevention Management plan completed for management of land surrounding the mine for the management of vegetation types and fuel reduction.
Meeting #6 26/11/14 (Annexure 10)	ICS AIIMS underway Phoenix training complete. Additional pipeworks	Rehabilitation continuing Camera coverage of mine Response, capability enhanced, details provided	Vegetation management ongoing Slashing ongoing Regenerate works

	<p>installed and continuing.                      Upgrading signage                      Rehabilitation work                      2 fixed FLIR cameras installed</p>	<p>in presentation document tabled 11 November                      Additional pipe work to be installed                      Slashing progressed                      Level 1 ICC to be on line for summer.                      Expanding training to: Planning and Logistics                      Introduction to AIIMS specific to mining Industry including Water boards.</p>	<p>underway                      Full CAFS unit ordered and due February 2015                      Additional firefighting equipment placed online                      Outside contractors engaged to support works                      CCTV installed on top of mine for continued monitoring.                      Push button activation to CAD installed in gatehouse and enhanced communications to responding vehicles enhanced for consistent messaging.                      18 level 2 IC's and 9 ESLO's trained.                      Efforts in prevention and mitigation.                      Quick attack plans.</p>
<p>Meeting #9                      30/1/15                      (Annexure 11)</p>	<p>Well prepared.                      Grass Mowing second cut.</p>	<p>Normal maintaining rehab / clean up.</p>	<p>Preparedness plans implementation ongoing                      Verification audit late January – Issues being dealt with.                      Grass mowing second cut.                      New CAFs unit due February 2015.</p>
<p>Meeting #10                      10/3/15                      (Annexure 12)</p>	<p>Successful information Day help on 17 February with support of the Taskforce and CFA.</p>	<p>Update provided regarding current hotspot and actions undertaken for successful management thereof.</p>	<p>Full scale exercise planned for 25 March. CAFS unit being delivered shortly. Work Plan being progressed.</p>
<p>Meeting #11                      14/4/15                      (Annexure 13)</p>	<p>Recent 'familiarisation exercise' held at the mine. There is a new plan and system in place.</p>	<p>Work continuing with additional pipe works, rehabilitation and upgrading the wall on the high level dam.                      GHD are facilitating workshops for the new 'Risk management and fire</p>	<p>New CAFS Unit arriving shortly. A mine and wildfire training exercise was held 26 March 2015 with impressive results, all staff successfully managing</p>

		plan’ in conjunction with the three mines and agency groups. The second workshop is being held 17 April 2015. TFD attending and CFA OM Bill Johnstone to be invited.	their roles.
Meeting #12 6/5/15 (Annexure 14)	Next phase is giving the community the confidence the mines have taken serious steps to ensure the mines capability and preparedness to approach the upcoming fire seasons.		CAFS truck should be arriving in May followed by 2 weeks of training and then brought online. Keen to do a public launch thereafter. Several million dollars have been allocated to areas of improvements. An old hotspot is being monitored.
Meeting #15 11/8/15 (Annexure 15)	Working on preparedness for the upcoming season. There has been poor attendance to Community sessions. Visiting Anglesea mine 20 August 2015 to observe their operations and closure plan.	Working on preparedness for the upcoming season. Conducting AIIMS training. Working on Woods Gulley dam to ensure structurally sound. Process of putting some more droppers down western batters.	Suggest Phoenix model training to be extended to some community groups. TFD will discuss with Liam Fogarty (DELWP) the possibility of some short term training conducted locally.
Meeting #16 8/9/15 (Annexure 16)	Run a number of risk workshops on major mining hazards. Ongoing works in mine. Knuckle area being capped. Ongoing pipe work in the knuckle area.	Completed a range of risk workshops as a result, no risks to public safety came out very high. Fire management control plan has been finalised and submitted. Continuing to review and put in more pipe infrastructure. Between now and the end of the year there will be more coal covering.	Preparedness continuing for the upcoming fire season as normal.

***Question 3 – Could more be done by mines in the Latrobe Valley to reduce the risk of mine fires and if so, what further steps should be taken?***

30. I commend the work undertaken by the operators of the Latrobe Valley mines since February 2014 to reduce the risk of mine fires originating from within the mines themselves and mine fires occurring as a result of external fires encroaching upon



the sites. I also note the significant investment that the operators have made in works and equipment to achieve this end.

31. I consider these current works to be effective in reducing risk of fires providing such works are maintained and expanded as planned and as appropriate in the years to come. Ongoing initiatives should be undertaken to provide systems and technologies that further reduce the possibility of fires.
32. It is fundamental that the relationships and initiatives already established through the work of the Latrobe Valley Taskforce be continued and further developed into the future to provide a critical and realistic level of fire risk mitigation. This involves the maintenance by the operators of their own initial response capability.
33. Equally fundamental is that the measures which have been undertaken to date are sustained by the operators so that the future does not involve a return to past practice, for example, in terms of unmanaged vegetation within the mine perimeters or significant exposures to external fire in marginal high risk areas.
34. Integration of planning, response capability and information flow between mine operators and other high risk industries in the Latrobe Valley, regulators, emergency management agencies, state and local government is vital. This is necessary to ensure that the regulatory requirements are being met insofar as they affect fire risk, prevention and response.
35. Similarly, the development and maintenance of relationships between the mine operators and surrounding land managers – be they public or private – will define the future management of the buffer areas around the mines.
36. Improved performance in relation to fire management within the mines is crucial in building community understanding, confidence and trust in the mine operators and agencies having an enhanced and sustainable capacity and capability to reduce their exposure to major incidents in future.
37. Equally, planning for the rehabilitation of worked out areas of the mines must include the consideration of measures that will provide for both long-term and sustainable fire prevention in those areas. This is complex and requires the use of expertise and process that allows for further planning to achieve a satisfactory and sustainable outcome.

**Dated 1 December 2015**

**List of Annexures**

1. Annexure 1 - Coal Mine Management Terms of Reference dated 29 October 2014 [EMV.1004.001.0001]
2. Annexure 2 - Coal Mine Management Taskforce Status Report dated 31 December 2014 [EMV.1004.001.0003]
3. Annexure 3 - Taskforce Workplan and Taskforce Initiatives Status Report - Fire Preparedness [EMV.1004.001.0020]
4. Annexure 4 - Letter to Community Leaders dated 19 December 2014 [EMV.1004.001.0033]
5. Annexure 5 - Media Release dated 19 February 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0035]
6. Annexure 6 - Letter to Security and Emergency Management Taskforce dated 24 November 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0036]
7. Annexure 7 - Latrobe Valley Taskforce report on Exercise 'Latrobe 15' [EMV.1004.001.0037]
8. Annexure 8 - Minutes of Meeting #4 dated 28 October 2014 [EMV.1004.001.0045]
9. Annexure 9 - Minutes of Meeting #5 dated 11 November 2014 [EMV.1001.001.0052]
10. Annexure 10 - Minutes of Meeting #6 dated 26 November 2014 [EMV.1004.001.0059]
11. Annexure 11 - Minutes of Meeting #9 dated 30 January 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0066]
12. Annexure 12 - Minutes of Meeting #10 dated 10 March 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0071]
13. Annexure 13 - Minutes of Meeting #11 dated 14 April 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0077]
14. Annexure 14 - Minutes of Meeting #12 dated 6 May 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0083]
15. Annexure 15 - Minutes of Meeting #15 dated 11 August 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0091]
16. Annexure 16 - Minutes of Meeting #16 dated 8 September 2015 [EMV.1004.001.0098]