



Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

Morwell Multicultural Community Consultation – 20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell, 4.00pm, 7 May 2014 Summary of discussion

Background

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry held its ninth community consultation with the multicultural community at its offices at 20 Hazelwood Road, Morwell at 4.00pm on Wednesday, 7 May 2014. The multicultural community consultation was attended by 24 people. The following summary reports key themes and issues that were raised by community members during the consultation discussions. This summary reports on what was stated and does not attribute views to any or all community members.

What worked well

- Nothing
- Everything worked well
- The firefighters who saved the German Clubhouse; and the firefighters who stopped the fire
- Newspaper updates on where the fire was
- Text messaging (via Telstra)
- Information
- The response was very organised (police and fire agencies all worked together)
- A good level of assistance was provided
- Neighbours informing and helping neighbours, especially with evacuation (the need to take money, important papers and medication)
- The \$500 financial assistance
- Masks
- The Moe relief centre
- Roadblocks, because they provided a safe way to get home

What didn't work well

- There weren't enough patrols or other measures to prevent the fire
- No mine sprinklers – they used to be there but have been removed
- Not enough information on the television about where the fire was
- The spread of inaccurate information; people weren't told the truth
- This was an unexpected event, people panicked, the Government went into damage control
- Concerns about health effects
- People with respiratory problems suffered, and people developed respiratory problems (bronchitis and asthma)

- Health effects - smoke in the house and dust in eyes
- Not being able to go outside, having to wear masks, choking on the smoke – we were advised to seal the doors and windows but that didn't stop the smoke getting in and made it hard to go out and return
- Uncertainty about whether the air is now clear
- No information about the potential long term health effects which is causing a lot of stress in the community
- Homes that weren't cleaned, or weren't cleaned properly by clean up crews - the cleaning crews didn't clean everything (they didn't clean the garage or the roof cavity); the cleaners were exhausted; three people came to assess the clean up and only two people came to clean; the cleaners were not professional cleaners
- All the help services being based in Morwell only
- The relocation assistance was not enough for people to be able to stay away the whole time there was smoke in the town
- The \$500 was not enough for large families with many children
- Not enough support for elderly residents
- The evacuation process was far too slow and badly organised
- Not enough awareness that those who were eligible could receive two grants of \$500 (some who were eligible missed out)
- Not being able to hang the washing outside
- Since privatisation money and business has become more important than public safety
- Difficulties having the council remove trees burned by the fire that might now pose a risk
- House prices are dropping, but other expenses are increasing (rates and electricity)
- Uncertainty about who will pay for replacing insulation if insurance doesn't cover it
- No insurance to help with the clean up

What should be done differently

- Stricter rules for the mine owner to rehabilitate parts of the mine as soon as they are out of use by creating lakes and parks
- Employ the best technology available for fighting mine fires, regardless of the cost
- Better inspections of the mine to prevent fires; ongoing maintenance and preventative measures
- Put the sprinklers back in the mine
- Install cameras around the perimeter of the mine
- Establish emergency plans
- Improve how information is given out – not just on the television and radio, maybe have a truck with a loudspeaker drive around the streets
- Better information should be available to tell people where the actual fire front is
- Police and SES giving information to community leaders so they can inform their own communities in their own language/s
- Giving emergency information to elderly and multicultural people clearly and quickly
- The Government should provide more information and treat everyone equally
- Make the health of the community the number one priority and deal with people's health concerns – people are worried about developing cancer
- Financial assistance should be given to everyone that is impacted, including those living outside of Morwell (Traralgon etc)
- The community should be told what (toxins) are in the smoke
- Morwell shouldn't be divided by an imaginary line
- Shut the mine