

# HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

## Submission cover sheet

Post your submission with this cover sheet to:

Submissions Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry  
PO Box 3460  
GIPPSLAND MC Vic 3841

Email your submission with this cover sheet to [info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au).

Title: <i>MR</i>	First Name: <i>JOHN</i>	Surname: <i>LEE</i>
Organisation represented (if applicable):		
Email address:	[REDACTED]	
Postal address:	[REDACTED] <i>TRAFALGAR 3824</i>	
Telephone: [REDACTED]	Mobile:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Origin and circumstances of fire <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Measures by Hazelwood Coal Mine to prevent fire <input type="checkbox"/> Application and administration of regulatory regimes <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)	Response to fire by: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazelwood Coal Mine <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Agencies <input type="checkbox"/> Public Health Officials <input type="checkbox"/> Other Government Agencies	

### Confidentiality

The Inquiry will consider all requests for confidentiality. Should you wish for your submission or parts of your submission, to be treated as confidential, please clearly state the reason in the space provided below. If you require more room, please attach a separate page and provide together with your submission.

Should the Inquiry consider the request for confidentiality not to be appropriate you will be provided with an opportunity to withdraw your submission or re-submit it in a form suitable for publication.

#### Please select one of the following options

I acknowledge that my submission will be treated as a public document and may be published, quoted or summarised by the Inquiry.

**OR**

I request that my submission or parts of my submission, be treated as confidential, and not published quoted or summarised by the Inquiry, for reasons stated below

## Acknowledgements

### I understand that:

- I can be contacted by the Inquiry in relation to my submission.
- Anonymous submission will not be accepted.
- The name or work or suburb of each submitter will be identified as a part of every published submission. Other contact details will be removed before publishing.
- The Inquiry will not publish submission, if it believes that the submission material is or could be defamatory, offensive, contravenes, anti-discrimination or anti-vilification legislation or is outside the scope of the Inquiry's terms of reference

Signature

*John R. Lee*

OR if sending electronically please confirm your acknowledgment by ticking by box

Date *10/4/2014*

## 1. Introduction

Prior to my retirement in Feb. 1991 I had 37 years service with the State Electricity Commission Vic

24 years of that time ( 1967-1991 ) with Fire Services Morwell Open Cut,

12 years ( 1979-1991 ) as Fire Service Officer responsible to the Mine manager for fire and flood protection. During that time I experienced the 1977 Morwell open cut fire and was continually involved in the review and research that followed, this review resulted in the establishment of a Fire Service Policy and Code of Practice which complied with the Country Fire Authority Act 1958. In the years that followed to my retirement in 1991 this Code of Practice was strictly adhered to by management of all three open cut mines in the Latrobe Valley and rendered us free of serious fires.

Unfortunately it does appear that the Policy and Code of Practice has gone astray with the present Hazelwood Mine Operators.

## 2. Concerns

It was with great concern that I followed the event of the recent fire in the Morwell Open Cut (Hazelwood Mine) on TV & Newspaper, I would like to have been able to inspect the mine before making comment but that was not possible. For a grass fire to invade the open cut is possible any time, but for that fire to continue burning and escape back into the grassland approximately one week later and burn to within 400 mts of the Hazelwood power station (as reported) is not acceptable fire fighting - fire prevention standards.

I found the scenes on TV disturbing,

Helicopters dropping water heavily loaded with solids on sloping batters, I felt this was fueling the fire more than extinguishing it,

Monitors designed for fighting fires on highrise buildings spraying fires on rising conveyors, where are the sprinkler systems? where are the rotary sprays in the open cut?

Reports of Fire Fighters affected by toxic smoke - Infected cuts from use of contaminated water.

With the proper fire fighting system in place as per the Code of Practice these detrimental affects would be avoided because close proximity extinguishing of the fire would only occur after the main fire was subdued by rotary sprays and sprinkler systems.

## 3. Conclusion.

In conjunction with my two colleagues Mr Graeme Freashwater and Mr Bill Brown I hope we have the opportunity to enlighten the Board of Inquiry with the knowledge and expertise we gained over many years in the Morwell Open Cut especially in field of Fire Prevention/ Fire Fighting, the expertise may be considered old but it is proven as the record will show, unlike the practice in use in the Hazelwood Mine today which is a failure as the recent fire demonstrated. There are many recommendations we can offer well beyond the scope of this submission.