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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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*The attached transcript, while an accurate recording of evidence given in the course of the hearing day, is not proofread prior to circulation and thus may contain minor errors.*

2014 HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

MORWELL

THURSDAY, 5 JUNE 2014

(9th day of hearing)

BEFORE:

THE HONOURABLE BERNARD TEAGUE AO - Chairman

PROFESSOR EMERITUS JOHN CATFORD - Board Member

MS SONIA PETERING - Board Member

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1 MS RICHARDS: Good morning. This morning we move into the  
2 area of communications and we have two expert witnesses  
3 who have been retained by the Inquiry and it is  
4 proposed to call them concurrently and to have them  
5 give their evidence together. I call Jim Macnamara and 10.03AM  
6 Lachlan Drummond; if you could come forward please.

7 <JAMES RAYMOND MACNAMARA, affirmed and examined:

8 <LACHLAN DRUMMOND, affirmed and examined:

9 MS RICHARDS: Good morning, gentlemen. What I propose to do  
10 this morning is to take it in turn with each of you to 10.04AM  
11 lead some evidence about your qualifications and  
12 experience and go to the report that each of you has  
13 provided, then I will go to a joint report that you  
14 prepared together earlier this week and have a  
15 discussion about each of those three documents. 10.04AM

16 Professor Macnamara, if I could begin with you,  
17 could you state your full name and your address?

18 PROF MACNAMARA: James Raymond Macnamara of 3 Dooligah  
19 Avenue, Randwick, NSW 2031.

20 You are a Professor of Public Publications at the University 10.04AM  
21 of Technology, Sydney?---That is correct.

22 You have prepared a report for the Inquiry and we have a  
23 copy of it there. Since preparing that report you've  
24 been provided with some additional witness statements  
25 and attachments to those statements, specifically a 10.05AM  
26 statement of Merita Tabain, the Chair of the Emergency  
27 Management Joint Public Information Committee, a second  
28 statement of Steven Harkins, the Director of People,  
29 Culture and Environment from GDF Suez Hazelwood, and  
30 also a statement of John Mitchell, the acting Chief 10.05AM  
31 Executive Officer of the Latrobe City Council. Having

1 had the opportunity to read that material quite  
2 recently, are there any changes that you wish to make  
3 to your report?---There's no substantial change in the  
4 conclusions I've drawn. There are a number of specific  
5 points that I would identify, there's some additional 10.05AM  
6 information that I didn't have at the time but they  
7 didn't change the overall conclusions that were drawn.  
8 Would you like to go through those in your report or are you  
9 happy to acknowledge that you now have additional  
10 information?---I'm happy to acknowledge and I think it 10.06AM  
11 will come out in questions where I would concede some  
12 points and argue others.  
13 Before I ask you to adopt your report I should ask you a  
14 little bit about your ability to express opinions on  
15 matters of communication. You've told us that you're 10.06AM  
16 the Professor of Public Communication at the University  
17 of Technology, Sydney, that's a position you've held  
18 since 2007?---Yes.  
19 In terms of academic qualifications you have a Bachelor of  
20 Arts majoring in journalism and media studies?---Yes. 10.06AM  
21 You also have a Master of Arts by research in media studies  
22 which you obtained from Deakin University?---Yes.  
23 And most recently, a Doctor of Philosophy in media research  
24 from the University of Western Sydney and you obtained  
25 that qualification in 2005?---That's correct. 10.06AM  
26 From interest, what was the subject of your  
27 dissertation?---My dissertation was gender  
28 representations in the media and the power to influence  
29 attitudes.  
30 You have worked in a range of public relations and media 10.07AM  
31 roles, starting as a journalist with Queensland Country

1           Newspapers. You had a public relations role with the  
2           Australian Army in the mid-1970s, have worked in public  
3           relations with the National Farmers Federation for  
4           some years, and then in the mid-1990s set up your own  
5           consultancy, CARMA International. What was the nature           10.07AM  
6           of that business?---That business was, the name stood  
7           for Commuter Aided Research and Media Analysis, it was  
8           a specialist research firm identifying the  
9           effectiveness of communication campaigns.

10          Then you worked for a couple of years as Group Research           10.08AM  
11          Director with Media Monitors?---Yes, I sold the company  
12          to Media Monitors.

13          And continued working there for a couple of years before  
14          taking up your current position?---That's correct.

15          You also have a number of publications that are listed in           10.08AM  
16          your curriculum vitae, most recently a book called  
17          "Journalism and PR: Unpacking Spin", and there is also  
18          a book that you have produced - - -?---"21st Century  
19          Media (R)evolution", I think.

20          Yes, and there's a public communications handbook that           10.08AM  
21          you've also authored?---Yes.

22          Returning to your report. With the qualification that you  
23          now have had access to some information that was not  
24          available when you first prepared your report, is your  
25          report true and correct?---Yes.           10.09AM

26          Are the opinions expressed in it opinions that you honestly  
27          hold?---Yes.

28          I tender that, if I could.

29

30          #EXHIBIT 50 - Statement of James Macnamara.           10.09AM

31

1 MS RICHARDS: Your turn now, Mr Drummond. Again, I'll ask  
2 you to state your full name and your address?---Lachlan  
3 Hugh Drummond, 45 Edmundson Street, Birregurra,  
4 Victoria.

5 You are lead author, Research and Strategy, for a report 10.09AM  
6 that has been prepared for the Board?---Yes.

7 You are currently employed with a consultancy called  
8 Redhanded. What's the nature of that  
9 consultancy?---I'm the Strategic Director at Redhanded  
10 Communications Group. Redhanded specialises in 10.09AM  
11 communicating with regional and rural audiences. It  
12 was founded on the notion that regional and rural  
13 audiences exhibit different values, attitudes and  
14 behaviours, and therefore in order to communicate to  
15 those audiences you need to understand those and a 10.10AM  
16 better understanding of them enables us as  
17 communicators to communicate and do what we do well  
18 with those audiences.

19 In terms of your formal qualifications, you have an Honours  
20 Degree, a Bachelor of Arts from Monash University 10.10AM  
21 majoring in media studies and visual arts, and you've  
22 also since obtained a Master of Marketing from Monash  
23 University. Your employment has involved about  
24 20 years of experience in private sector research,  
25 strategy and communications. How long have you been in 10.10AM  
26 your current role?---I have been engaged by Redhanded  
27 since about 2008.

28 You are also teaching market research at Deacon  
29 University?---That's right. I've lectured in  
30 communications at Monash University and I have lectured 10.10AM  
31 only just recently in market research and

1 communications at Deakin University.

2 Before taking up your role with Redhanded you were Group

3 Director and Head of Strategy at Newspoll?---That's

4 right, I was the Head of Strategy for Newpoll;

5 Newpoll's best known for its public opinion polling 10.11AM

6 research.

7 Yes, I think we're all familiar with Newpoll. You have

8 also prepared a report for the Inquiry, it's titled,

9 "Evacuation of the communications to affected

10 communities during the Hazelwood Coal Mine fire." You 10.11AM

11 also have been provided this week with some information

12 that's come to the Inquiry since you produced your

13 report, Mr Harkins' second statement, the statement of

14 Ms Tabain and statement of John Mitchell. Have you had

15 an opportunity to read through that material?---Yes. 10.11AM

16 Having had access to that additional material, are there any

17 changes you would like to make to your report?---No.

18 Are there any other corrections that you wish to make?---No.

19 Is your report true and correct?---Yes.

20 And are the opinions expressed in it opinions that you 10.12AM

21 honestly hold?---Yes.

22 Thank you, if I could tender that.

23

24 #EXHIBIT 51 - Statement of Lachlan Drummond.

25 10.12AM

26 MS RICHARDS: To complete the set of documentation, earlier

27 this week the Inquiry asked both of you to confer and

28 to identify areas on which you agreed, areas on which

29 you didn't agree and to prepare a joint report that

30 focused on three issues: Whether you consider that 10.12AM

31 Government Departments engaged in appropriate

1 communication strategies during the fire, whether you  
2 considered that GDF Suez had engaged in appropriate  
3 communication strategies during the fire and, lastly,  
4 what steps you consider could have been taken to  
5 improve the communication strategies of any parties 10.13AM  
6 during the fire.

7 You did that and produced a joint report which is  
8 a document of three pages. Have you both read that  
9 joint report?

10 MR DRUMMOND: Yes. 10.13AM

11 MS RICHARDS: Do each of you adopt it as your joint report?

12 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.

13 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

14 MS RICHARDS: I tender that also, Your Honour.

15 10.13AM

16 #EXHIBIT 52 - Joint Report of Professor Jim Macnamara and  
17 Mr Lachlan Drummond including protocol document.

18 MS RICHARDS: If I could tender it with the protocol that  
19 was provided that I understand has also been provided  
20 to the parties. 10.13AM

21 Before I proceed to ask a few more questions,  
22 there is a letter that was sent to the Inquiry by the  
23 Victorian Government Solicitors Office yesterday that  
24 identifies a number of factual matters that bear on the  
25 opinions expressed by Professor Macnamara and 10.14AM  
26 Mr Drummond.

27 CHAIRMAN: Do you wish that to be part of exhibit 52?

28 MS RICHARDS: Yes, if it could be part of exhibit 52. The  
29 letter is a convenient way of identifying a number of  
30 matters that the State and its agencies say bear on the 10.14AM  
31 opinions expressed.

1  
2 #EXHIBIT 52 - (Addition) Letter sent to the Inquiry by the  
3 Victorian Government Solicitors Office.

4 MS RICHARDS: The fact that we've tendered it should not be  
5 taken as an indication that Counsel Assisting agree 10.14AM  
6 with everything in the letter, and particularly not the  
7 statement that in the period 10-14 February there was a  
8 widely held view that there would not be a crisis  
9 affecting the population of Morwell. Our submission  
10 will be that it was known from at least 12 February 10.15AM  
11 that the fire would be burning for a month and would  
12 have significant effects on the population of Morwell.  
13 But I tender that statement and I'm grateful for the  
14 State for having done that work in advance, it will  
15 certainly ease proceedings this morning. 10.15AM

16 Before we move into a discussion of communications  
17 that occurred during the fire at the Hazelwood Mine  
18 in February and March this year I'd like to focus on  
19 best practice in crisis communication. Each of you was  
20 asked to write about that in your reports, and I 10.15AM  
21 thought a good place to start might be in identifying  
22 the different types of crises about which communication  
23 might be required.

24 Professor Macnamara, at paragraph 8 of your report  
25 you identify seven different kinds of crises. If we go 10.16AM  
26 to paragraph 8, there are natural crises which include  
27 accidentally started fires, there are technology  
28 failures, there are confrontation crises, crises caused  
29 by malevolence such as terrorism and sabotage, in which  
30 I expect we could include arson, and then crises caused 10.16AM  
31 by systemic issues, crises caused by deception, crises



1           caused by management misconduct.

2           Do those seven types of crises fall into two  
3           separate groups?

4   PROF MACNAMARA: I'm not sure what you mean by two separate  
5           groups. 10.17AM

6   MS RICHARDS: You draw these from some writings on something  
7           called situation crisis communication theory?

8   PROF MACNAMARA: It relates around fault, do you mean?

9   MS RICHARDS: The first four are crises that are not the  
10           fault of the person who's managing it, and then the 10.17AM  
11           fifth, sixth and seventh fall into a different  
12           category?

13   PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.

14   MS RICHARDS: Why are these classifications important when  
15           it comes to crisis communication? 10.17AM

16   PROF MACNAMARA: Crises in which there is no fault on the  
17           part of any of the organisations involved; usually  
18           there's more public understanding and more public  
19           sympathy for the organisation, the organisation may  
20           even be the victim. In the latter the organisation is 10.17AM  
21           at fault in some form or another and there is often  
22           great distrust and antipathy towards the organisation.

23           The only point I'd add is, crises have a way of  
24           never staying within one of those categories and crises  
25           can evolve and emerge, and I think this happened in 10.18AM  
26           this case where it started out as a bushfire which  
27           might be a natural crisis but then turned into a mine  
28           fire and then evolved onwards.

29   MS RICHARDS: Are you able to place the Hazelwood Mine Fire  
30           into any of these categories, accepting what you just 10.18AM  
31           said about the crisis evolving as it went on?

1 PROF MACNAMARA: It's a difficult one, and I have sympathy  
2 for those managing it. It was clearly a natural crisis  
3 in terms of the bushfire that occurred, then it spread  
4 to more of an industrial issue when the mine fire  
5 occurred. 10.18AM

6 MS RICHARDS: Which would bring it into the second category  
7 of technological failures?

8 PROF MACNAMARA: There was rumours or speculation of arson  
9 which takes it into malevolence, but then what evolves,  
10 and this really becomes a matter of some opinion, to 10.19AM  
11 what extent has management adequately prepared and  
12 adequately dealt with it, and to what extent do the  
13 authorities adequately deal with it so it morphs into  
14 potentially a criticism of management's handling of it  
15 so it can end up becoming a human crisis and a 10.19AM  
16 management crisis, and crises have a way of being  
17 slippery and moving on; it requires a great deal of  
18 deftness on behalf of management to address that.

19 MS RICHARDS: Mr Drummond, you refer in your report to  
20 something called chronic technological crises; what are 10.19AM  
21 they and did we have one here?

22 MR DRUMMOND: I think what happened here was a crisis that  
23 started as a bushfire but could probably be more  
24 accurately characterised as a chronic technological  
25 disaster or a disaster that led to a long-term health, 10.19AM  
26 and anxiety impacts for the local community. So what  
27 started as a bushfire in fact evolved into something  
28 akin to a chronic technological disaster.

29 The literature on chronic technological disaster,  
30 though somewhat out of the scope of this report, talks 10.20AM  
31 about and has a whole range of ways of dealing with

1           these sorts of issues. The reason I cited chronic  
2           technological disasters in this report is that I think  
3           that's a more accurate classification of the nature of  
4           the problem that these affected communities were  
5           dealing with.

10.20AM

6           MS RICHARDS: So as distinct from a natural disaster?

7           MR DRUMMOND: As distinct from a natural disaster. If I  
8           could add, I think one of the problems that we'll get  
9           to was that, what I could call an inaccurate  
10          classification, such as to classify it as a bushfire  
11          and roll out protocols associated with bushfire meant  
12          that the response didn't quite fit the nature of the  
13          crisis, and I think that contributed to some of the  
14          problems we'll discuss later on.

10.20AM

15          MS RICHARDS: In terms of best practice, a key feature of  
16          implementing an effective crisis communication strategy  
17          is correctly framing the crisis that you're dealing  
18          with?

10.20AM

19          PROF MACNAMARA: Absolutely agree with that.

20          MR DRUMMOND: Absolutely. It's my opinion that the framing,  
21          whilst correct perhaps at the start, didn't quite fit  
22          over the course of the event.

10.21AM

23          MS RICHARDS: Again at paragraph 8 of your report,  
24          Professor Macnamara, you talk at the bottom of the  
25          page about a key factor in crisis communication is that  
26          preparation response and recovery initiatives are far  
27          more important. We've been dealing with Emergency  
28          Management plans and protocols in some detail in this  
29          Inquiry and we're familiar with those stages of  
30          Emergency Management. I'd like to talk through each of  
31          those stages with each of you, starting with the

10.21AM

10.21AM

1 preparedness or preparation stage.

2 What, Professor Macnamara, is best practice in  
3 terms of preparing for communication during a crisis?

4 PROF MACNAMARA: On pages 9 and 10 I've outlined a number of  
5 very specific steps that are in sort of most of the 10.22AM  
6 best practice models, and the first one of those is  
7 scenario development where you identify possible risks  
8 and you carry out a risk assessment of both the  
9 potential seriousness and potential probability. Then  
10 you do a series of preparation steps, and some of that 10.22AM  
11 was certainly done, but it goes all the way through  
12 from having crisis teams on standby, having protocols,  
13 all the way through to training. Then there's other  
14 steps such as what's technically called networking and  
15 bridge building, but that's setting up the 10.22AM  
16 relationships well in advance with local - if you  
17 identify a risk in a particular area, groups in the  
18 community, leaders in the community, local newspapers  
19 having very clear relationships in advance that can be  
20 called upon, and it disturbed me in some of the reading 10.22AM  
21 I did to see people were, around 20 February and after,  
22 saying they were identifying leaders in the community;  
23 well, that would normally be done in a crisis plan  
24 strategy long, long before.

25 Those are some of the key steps, and all of the 10.23AM  
26 models absolutely emphasise preparation, and in fact  
27 most people say crisis communication and management's  
28 an iceberg; 80 per cent or 90 per cent is below the  
29 surface and done in advance and then rolled out at the  
30 time. 10.23AM

31 MS RICHARDS: Is this level of preparation a reasonable

1 thing to expect of a Government agency or a private  
2 company given that emergencies are inherently  
3 unexpected and unplanned events?

4 PROF MACNAMARA: I'm careful about the word "unexpected"  
5 because I think open cut mines, brown coal, bushfire 10.23AM  
6 areas, very close to a town - to me, I'm not a  
7 scientist or a technician, but that just spells - and  
8 the fact there's been coal mine fires around the world  
9 and in this particular mine - says that there is a  
10 risk. Now, I can't assess the total probability of it 10.24AM  
11 but one would think, you would say, things could happen  
12 at this mine, there could be a fire and a coal mine  
13 fire is usually a problem, so I think it could have  
14 been identified.

15 Is it reasonable for organisations to do so? 10.24AM  
16 Absolutely, Government Departments are in fact  
17 becoming, generally speaking, quite good, we've seen  
18 this with floods and bushfire in this State and in  
19 Queensland where they have great amounts of planning  
20 and preparation and we've seen it with corporations. 10.24AM  
21 I've worked with many companies over the years,  
22 including airlines, and they even go as far as  
23 reversing their crisis plans and actually involving  
24 their staff in real-time rehearsals to debug it and  
25 find the problems that occur because they know they 10.24AM  
26 have to work under incredible pressure at the time.

27 What do you see is the relationship between crisis  
28 communication preparation and the preparedness aspect  
29 of Emergency Management generally? Are they separate  
30 or connected? 10.25AM

31 PROF MACNAMARA: One fits within the other, and there is a

1 tension in that because in a crisis clearly the  
2 operational and technical responsibilities are  
3 paramount; I mean, putting the fire out, we'd all  
4 agree, is the most important thing. So it's very easy,  
5 that the communication has to fit within the overall 10.25AM  
6 crisis response, but it's very easy for that to fall  
7 lower down the list in the wake of technical issues,  
8 operational issues, legal issues and so forth, and so  
9 there is both a dovetailing but also a tension between  
10 the two, and we do see quite often communication sort 10.25AM  
11 of follows protocols but doesn't get down to the very  
12 hands-on, very human level of communication that we  
13 might talk about.

14 MS RICHARDS: Mr Drummond, the theme that comes through very  
15 strongly in your report is the importance of knowing 10.25AM  
16 the community that you are communicating with. Why is  
17 that such a critical feature of communication,  
18 particularly in regional areas?

19 MR DRUMMOND: I think, in order to communicate to any  
20 audience you need to understand that audience. An 10.26AM  
21 understanding of that audience is more likely to  
22 contribute to that audience respecting, trusting,  
23 listening to the communications.

24 My sense is that throughout this crisis the  
25 authorities and individuals, whilst doing their best 10.26AM  
26 and working under difficult circumstances, didn't fully  
27 appreciate the socio-economic status, the values, the  
28 attitudes, and even the needs of the community, and so,  
29 what I contend is that there's a disconnect between the  
30 communications that were given and what was in fact 10.26AM  
31 received.

1 I'd draw a distinction between information and  
2 communicating. My sense is that what we saw here was a  
3 hell of a lot of information going out but not a lot of  
4 communicating.

5 MS RICHARDS: That's a distinction that I'll come back to in 10.26AM  
6 a while. Since we're dealing with the preparation  
7 phase of crisis communication, what can be done in  
8 preparing to be ready to communicate during a crisis to  
9 ensure that you know the community that you're having  
10 to communicate with? 10.27AM

11 MR DRUMMOND: In this case I would have thought that it  
12 would be standard practice, or perhaps best practice,  
13 to be prepared by understanding the demographic and  
14 social characteristics of the community, say of Morwell  
15 and the immediate surrounds. I would have thought it 10.27AM  
16 would be critical and important to build contacts in  
17 advance of any crisis, contacts within the community,  
18 community leaders, develop networks, have relationships  
19 with editors and publishers of the local paper, and in  
20 effect build a team that, in the event of a crisis you 10.27AM  
21 can rally quickly with whom you have relationships.

22 So I think authorities, if I was to make  
23 recommendations on best practice in communicating to  
24 this audience, it would be built around understanding  
25 the audience and having networks set up and established 10.28AM  
26 so that, in the event of a crisis, you're ready to  
27 deploy very quickly.

28 MS RICHARDS: Is there anything you'd want to add to that?

29 PROF MACNAMARA: No, I think you were going to come back to  
30 the information versus communication issue I think, and 10.28AM  
31 that's something I would like to comment on at some

1 point.

2 MS RICHARDS: Yes, I certainly will come to that. If we can  
3 move to the response phase, and again if we can start  
4 with your report, Professor Macnamara. At page 11 you  
5 start with a golden rule for all communication once a  
6 crisis occurs; what's that rule? 10.28AM

7 PROF MACNAMARA: Be quick, be consistent, be open. Openness  
8 is a very, very key fundamental and that again is a  
9 challenging thing because information is often coming  
10 in in real-time, but it requires a constant - being 10.29AM  
11 open and standing up and talking to people and engaging  
12 with people.

13 MS RICHARDS: "Golden rule" is very simply stated. Another  
14 rule perhaps is that silence is not golden in a crisis?

15 PROF MACNAMARA: No, and this is where it gets to 10.29AM  
16 communication, is that organisations often put out a  
17 lot of information but communication is not only what  
18 you say, it's what you do, it's visibility. People  
19 take meaning out of those kind of things, so attending  
20 or not attending meetings, being present or not being 10.29AM  
21 present, having out-of-towners versus locals who know,  
22 these are all communication, not just the technical  
23 information that's distributed, and certainly not being  
24 present can speak volumes in many cases, it's  
25 interpreted as silence and silence tends to be 10.29AM  
26 interpreted as guilt. Rightly or wrongly, that's how  
27 humans work.

28 MS RICHARDS: There's a table that you've provided at the  
29 bottom of that page 11 that has a hierarchy, I suppose,  
30 or a spectrum of different approaches to a crisis. 10.30AM  
31 Could you talk us through those different approaches?



1 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, this is built from several hundred  
2 interviewing of people who have been in organisations  
3 and several hundred crises and I've constructed this  
4 table. As you can see, by a silence, not being  
5 visible, not being present is usually, even if the  
6 organisation is completely guiltless, it's generally  
7 interpreted very negatively. Remember, we're talking  
8 here about people's perceptions.

10.30AM

9 Denial can work but only if it's an absolutely  
10 watertight argument. Denial normally doesn't work.  
11 Excuses aren't taken well. You know, so saying, well,  
12 it was a bushfire - I see the word "unprecedented" used  
13 a lot in all the documents I've read, and I'd have to  
14 challenge that because how can it be unprecedented  
15 given that there has been fires before, there's  
16 bushfires in Australia regularly, brown coal catches  
17 fire easily. I mean, is it unprecedented?

10.30AM

10.31AM

18 MS RICHARDS: That's why they dig it up, yes.

19 PROF MACNAMARA: Certainly, it was foreseeable.

20 Justification, as you move down you get towards  
21 justification and that's certainly, if there's credible  
22 evidence - - -

10.31AM

23 MS RICHARDS: What's the difference between excuses and  
24 justification?

25 PROF MACNAMARA: Excuses often is deflecting blame.

10.31AM

26 Justification is saying, we did everything that we had  
27 to do, we were fully prepared and, in spite of that, we  
28 still had this problem and justification can work. The  
29 last one causes confusion; "confession" is translated  
30 out of different languages, it's an apology, it's more  
31 the Greek apologia rather than outright begging

10.31AM

1 forgiveness type of apology, but it's owning up and  
2 saying, "We're really sorry", not admitting legal  
3 liability but saying, "We're very concerned for the  
4 community, we share the problem and we're here with  
5 you", and that's the approach that often works best of 10.31AM  
6 all.

7 If an airliner falls out of the sky and there's no  
8 fault of the airline, they've still got to be awfully  
9 sorry about it even though they wouldn't take legal  
10 liability for it necessarily. 10.32AM

11 So best practice tends to lean towards either  
12 justification or deep sympathy and empathy with the  
13 community and sharing the problem and helping fix it  
14 very quickly.

15 MS RICHARDS: Mr Drummond, in your report there are some 10.32AM  
16 aspects of communication during a crisis that you  
17 identify as being particularly valuable; one is  
18 consistency. Can you talk about the need for  
19 consistency in communication during a crisis?

20 MR DRUMMOND: I think it's fundamental; everybody needs to 10.32AM  
21 be singing from the same hymn sheet, each of the people  
22 that are represented or various authorities, they need  
23 to be consistent in their message. To some extent I  
24 think that occurred, I think there was also some  
25 inconsistent messages delivered which caused confusion 10.32AM  
26 and created potential anxieties, but the reason  
27 consistency is so important is that people in a crisis  
28 may not hear the message initially, they may interpret  
29 it differently, you have vulnerable groups who need  
30 communications to be simple, so the need to be 10.33AM  
31 consistent is critical because not everybody hears the

1 same thing at the same time.

2 MS RICHARDS: You also identified a need for empathy and  
3 understanding during the response phase of the crisis.  
4 Could you enlarge on that please?

5 MR DRUMMOND: Empathy and understanding: People in a crisis 10.33AM  
6 need to feel validated, they need to feel that their  
7 anxieties are being listened to, being heard, and so  
8 empathy and understanding is a critical tool in  
9 validating people's emotional state in a crisis; that  
10 is to say, we hear you, we understand where you're 10.33AM  
11 coming from and therefore we know how to help you in  
12 the best possible way. So it's not an admission of  
13 guilt or liability, it's really saying, we understand  
14 you, we empathise with you and, in so doing, it builds  
15 trust and I'd argue that trust is the cornerstone of 10.34AM  
16 crisis communications.

17 MS RICHARDS: That's probably a good point to discuss the  
18 distinction between information and communication  
19 during a crisis. Professor Macnamara?

20 PROF MACNAMARA: I think that's one of the fundamental 10.34AM  
21 issues here. As I read the material, and particularly  
22 the more recent material sent to me, I would accept the  
23 point that there was even more information than what I  
24 realised distributed, so I don't contest that point,  
25 there was a lot of information. But information is not 10.34AM  
26 communication and it's a common misunderstanding.

27 Communication, in simple terms is about the  
28 information that arrives and is understood in the mind  
29 of the audience, it's about interpretation and their  
30 meaning-making. Very often in management, I see this 10.34AM  
31 across all sectors, we use an outdated view of - we

1 even say we communicated when we mean we sent  
2 information. I think throughout this there was a lot  
3 of information, but at the end of the day the community  
4 had fears that were not addressed and had concerns that  
5 were not addressed, so this information had not turned 10.35AM  
6 into meaning and interpretation within the community.  
7 Then we can analyse, well, why might have that been, so  
8 I don't contest the information, I think there was a  
9 lot of information. I have grave misgivings about the  
10 communication based on what I've seen. 10.35AM

11 MS RICHARDS: Mr Drummond, would you like to add anything to  
12 that?

13 MR DRUMMOND: No, I agree.

14 MS RICHARDS: So information is a necessary part of  
15 communication but it's not all of the picture? 10.35AM

16 PROF MACNAMARA: It's about half.

17 MS RICHARDS: And what also matters is the receipt of that  
18 information by its intended recipient?

19 PROF MACNAMARA: The interpretation of it, listen,  
20 understanding of it, reaffirming it, and a lot of that 10.35AM  
21 is human interpretation; it's a difficult part of it  
22 but in very simple terms, it's not what you send out,  
23 it's what arrives.

24 MEMBER CATFORD: Is there a two-way dimension here? Is it  
25 also about responding to people's needs and actually 10.36AM  
26 understanding what people are concerned about?

27 PROF MACNAMARA: That's a very good point; communication is  
28 two-way. In fact, when we teach communication to  
29 students we say, if it's one-way it's not  
30 communication, it's information transmission. It's 10.36AM  
31 clearly two-way, and the point that you bring out very

1 well is that the two-way doesn't mean that it always  
2 travels in the one direction. Communication is  
3 sometimes top-down and sometimes community up, and I  
4 think that we didn't see a lot of - the information  
5 might have been coming up from the community but it  
6 wasn't being received properly until much later.

10.36AM

7 When I've made comments about delays in  
8 communication, I'm particularly looking at information  
9 coming up from the community and not being - I mean,  
10 I'm reading statements saying they were identifying  
11 community leaders on 21 February; well, that's almost  
12 two weeks after the fire started. Lachlan said it  
13 before, you should have known those community leaders  
14 before the fire started probably.

10.36AM

15 MR DRUMMOND: In this particular case the opportunity for  
16 two-way communications was, I think, severely limited.  
17 So that, the community had anxieties and concerns but  
18 their ability for them to voice those and communicate  
19 those concerns to the relevant authorities was minimal.

10.37AM

20 CHAIRMAN: Can I raise the question of the way in which the  
21 communication, as distinct from the information, can  
22 potentially be done with - and I'll raise the words  
23 "enthusiasm and energy", whether they are important  
24 factors, because it's clear that some of the  
25 information, without mentioning names, was communicated  
26 by one public performer with great enthusiasm and  
27 energy and other information was conveyed without that  
28 same enthusiasm and energy. Is that just an ingredient  
29 of what you're saying or would you like to elaborate  
30 further?

10.37AM

10.37AM

10.38AM

31 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, I absolutely agree; tone and style are

1 critical elements of communication. To the extent that  
2 a person can identify with the sender of the message,  
3 can see them as somebody that they can relate to, the  
4 likelihood is that the informations are more likely to  
5 be received and trusted and acted upon. To the extent 10.38AM  
6 that they see a person or an organisation giving a  
7 message that might appear to be stiff or wooden, or  
8 coming from a group or a person that they can't  
9 identify with, there's a greater likelihood that the  
10 message will be rejected. 10.38AM

11 PROF MACNAMARA: I just very briefly add, you're absolutely  
12 right; the whole body of rhetorical theory about  
13 speakers says Ethos, Logos, and Pathos, they need  
14 credibility, they need facts and information and they  
15 need emotional connection or empathy and that is 10.39AM  
16 required otherwise communication tends to not occur.

17 MEMBER PETERING: Can you teach the second part? Can you  
18 teach empathy and not to be wooden and stiff?

19 PROF MACNAMARA: I've been trying to, but I fail often. I  
20 think you can teach skills and you can shift people's 10.39AM  
21 perspectives.

22 I've worked with a lot of senior management who  
23 are so technically brilliant at their work but just  
24 forget about the human element. So you can draw their  
25 attention to it, but ultimately personality of course 10.39AM  
26 does play a role; traits in psychology will play a  
27 role, but certainly being aware of skills and just  
28 giving consideration to the other and thinking how they  
29 might feel and building your communication backwards.  
30 As Professor Catford alluded to before, letting the 10.39AM  
31 others speak and then addressing what the other says

1 and what the other's concerned about rather than  
2 distributing information you think is relevant.

3 MEMBER PETERING: So that would be a common element in  
4 crisis communication training, the ability to recognise  
5 whether or not you're being received empathetically? 10.40AM

6 PROF MACNAMARA: Very much so. One of my recommendations  
7 was training, and I wasn't for a moment suggesting  
8 there's not a lot of training and good technical  
9 skills, but I was particularly talking about addressing  
10 the human aspects of communication and meaning-making 10.40AM  
11 and interpretation and empathising with people.

12 MR DRUMMOND: If I can add to that, that would include  
13 identifying potential spokespeople in the event of a  
14 crisis that we believe or that the authorities believe  
15 is most likely to resonate with the audience. 10.40AM

16 MEMBER PETERING: So, in appointing people to those roles,  
17 that would be a very critical element of that skill  
18 set?

19 MR DRUMMOND: Absolutely.

20 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, or you have senior technical staff who 10.40AM  
21 are doing their role and you accompany them with others  
22 who are community engagement people who do a lot of  
23 that, so often it's a team approach. I've worked with  
24 computer engineers who didn't have a lot of human  
25 skills and you pair them off with someone else who can 10.40AM  
26 handle that part of it.

27 MEMBER PETERING: With all due respect to engineers.

28 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes. I love them dearly.

29 MS RICHARDS: The third phase of Emergency Management and  
30 also crisis communication is the recovery phase. In 10.41AM  
31 what way do the requirements of crisis communication

1 change once the crisis is in hand, the fire is out, the  
2 spill has been cleaned up? What's different about that  
3 phase compared to the response phase?

4 PROF MACNAMARA: I'm not sure if this fully answers your  
5 question: People want to move very quickly to that. 10.41AM  
6 People know there's a fire and know there's a problem,  
7 they have some immediate concerns about their health  
8 and their safety. As soon as that's addressed, though,  
9 they mainly want to know, what are you doing about it,  
10 what's going to happen next. People actually are 10.41AM  
11 action oriented, they want to know what can I do. Not  
12 just receive massive information, you're okay and just  
13 sit there and watch out the window, they want to know  
14 what can I do, what should I do and clear instructions  
15 and so I think you move very quickly towards the 10.42AM  
16 - - - you're almost moving to recovery stage whilst  
17 you're still addressing the operational crisis.

18 MS RICHARDS: Yes, there can be an overlap between the few  
19 phases. Mr Drummond, did you have anything to add to  
20 particular features of communication that are necessary 10.42AM  
21 once the immediate crisis has passed?

22 MR DRUMMOND: I have nothing further above what Jim said.

23 MS RICHARDS: Professor Macnamara, we did ask you, after  
24 identifying features of best practice for a theoretical  
25 level, to provide us with a number of case studies 10.42AM  
26 which you have done. I'd like to ask you about three  
27 only of those and ask you to talk about each of the  
28 cases and identify particular features of it that have  
29 some similarity with the case that we're dealing with  
30 here. 10.42AM

31 The first of those in the case studies that you



1 have listed was the James Hardie Industries and  
2 asbestos case study.

3 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, and I should pre-empt what I say by,  
4 James Hardie was a particular case where the High Court  
5 of Australia found some very serious, serious problems 10.43AM  
6 with their management; I'm not suggesting there are  
7 similarities at that level.

8 What was interesting in the James Hardie one,  
9 though, was an inability to step up and be open about  
10 the problem. Asbestos had been a problem for a long, 10.43AM  
11 long time and communities were slowly growing concerned  
12 about it. It was only when it burst out as a public  
13 issue that the company started to address it, so that's  
14 an issue, it needed to be much more proactive.

15 MS RICHARDS: So you would identify a need for a much 10.43AM  
16 greater level of preparedness?

17 PROF MACNAMARA: Much greater preparedness and more  
18 openness, and the organisation then really tried to  
19 duck for cover as much it possibly could, even to the  
20 extent, in the James Hardie case, of trying to move the 10.43AM  
21 head office offshore. I don't want to get into the  
22 legal aspects of that, I'm not qualified for that, but  
23 the perception, the only perception that could give to  
24 people is that this company just wants to hide. It may  
25 be not true, but it's the perception that comes across 10.44AM  
26 in the James Hardie case, but that was a particularly  
27 malevolent kind of crisis and has some similarities.

28 MS RICHARDS: The second of the case studies I'd like you to  
29 elaborate on this morning is the BP Deepwater Horizon  
30 oil explosion and fire. 10.44AM

31 PROF MACNAMARA: I put that case study in there because it's

1 a fire, it had all those dimensions of huge operational  
2 challenges for two reasons: There was a lot of comment  
3 by BP initially that they couldn't have foreseen this  
4 problem and it was unprecedented. They were deep sea  
5 drilling; that had never been done before, and again 10.44AM  
6 I'm not an engineer, but there was not even regulations  
7 in place at that time, subsequently they were  
8 introduced. The argument was they should have realised  
9 that this was a highly dangerous activity and maybe  
10 done a lot more beforehand. 10.44AM

11 The second point that comes out of that is  
12 perceptions. I don't know that it was a wrong thing to  
13 do, but the CEO of BP was, (a) slow to get there on the  
14 scene, that caused negative perceptions like 'we don't  
15 care'. Secondly, right in the peak of the crisis, and 10.45AM  
16 this is where lives were lost, he got on a plane and  
17 flew home to the UK to go back to a yacht race. The  
18 message that that sent was - I'm not saying it's as bad  
19 here - but just the invisibility of the CEO, the  
20 perception that it was obviously a family matter that 10.45AM  
21 he went home for, but the perception was very, very  
22 negative in the community and people felt that the  
23 company demonstrated that it simply didn't care. So it  
24 shows how sensitive public opinion is to not only what  
25 you say but the visible actions, the symbolic gestures 10.45AM  
26 you make.

27 MS RICHARDS: The third of the case studies I'd like to ask  
28 you to talk about this morning is the January 2011  
29 Queensland floods, a natural disaster in a regional  
30 area, at least for part of it until the water reached 10.45AM  
31 Brisbane.

1 PROF MACNAMARA: Lockyer Valley definitely.

2 MS RICHARDS: And also an instance of very effective use of  
3 social media during a crisis?

4 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, that's a very informative case study  
5 for a whole lot of reasons, and I do commend the 10.46AM  
6 Victorian Government Departments in their adoption of  
7 social media; it doesn't address everybody, we must  
8 bear that in mind, and we talk about audience before;  
9 if you've got a low level or lower level of internet  
10 connection you have to bear that in mind. 10.46AM

11 The Departments here did use social media and  
12 overall I think they did that well and I'd commend them  
13 to keep doing that. What was different in Queensland  
14 with the police is that it wasn't one-way traffic, it  
15 wasn't the Department sending out information. The 10.46AM  
16 police, who generally are highly regulated, quite a  
17 bureaucratic department in my view, actually engaged  
18 community and said, you tell us, and they solicited  
19 thousands and thousands of SMS messages, text messages,  
20 tweets on Twitter to gather information and respond to 10.47AM  
21 it, and so they were very much working in a partnership  
22 with the community, and that was the part that stood  
23 out and people enjoyed it, the opinion of the  
24 Queensland Police rose dramatically and it was because  
25 of that, they really engaged with the community, they 10.47AM  
26 are really listening to us.

27 MS RICHARDS: There was as I recall some quite effective use  
28 of humour in some of their tweets?

29 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, and that occurred, which you believe,  
30 even in the Boston bombing that I've alluded to where, 10.47AM  
31 that's a terribly serious issue. Even in great

1 diversity people value humour, it's something perverse  
2 about us, and that means having the protocols and all  
3 the procedures, they are important, we must have them,  
4 but at the end of the day you're dealing with human  
5 beings and I still think that was a little bit lost 10.47AM  
6 here in Morwell, is that, we might have had all the  
7 protocols and all of the procedures in the world, but  
8 acronyms this long, I've got a PhD and I can't learn  
9 the acronyms here, I'm sorry. They don't really help.  
10 At the end of the day you're dealing with human beings 10.47AM  
11 and what the Queensland Police did well was just be  
12 human, they sat, they talked, they went out and they  
13 listened.

14 MS RICHARDS: You identify an interesting feature of use of  
15 social media in communications. It's more than a 10.48AM  
16 matter of simply posting information on a Facebook  
17 page or tweeting an update, there's more to the  
18 process, is there not?

19 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, I've written my book, The "21st  
20 Century Media (R)evolution" about social media and I go 10.48AM  
21 back to Professor Catford's statement that it's a  
22 two-way process. A lot of organisations are making  
23 dreadful mistakes with social media. We've lived  
24 through the year of mass media which is one-way  
25 transmissional by-and-large. Social media is not a 10.48AM  
26 replacement to mass media, it's different, and the  
27 difference is that it's two-way, but too often we don't  
28 use it for that. If anyone said what's the simplest  
29 difference, it's that social media is the people's  
30 media, so it's therefore for organisations a listening 10.48AM  
31 medium as well as a transmission medium.

1 MS RICHARDS: So social media is a very effective way of  
2 getting information out into the community, but it's  
3 also a very effective way of hearing, reading what the  
4 community are saying and intervening in those  
5 discussions? 10.49AM

6 PROF MACNAMARA: Nipping rumours in the bud, correcting  
7 misinformation, and again I sympathise with the  
8 organisations because there is often misinformation out  
9 there, but if you're active on social and you're  
10 responsive, you can go back in and say, yes, we hear 10.49AM  
11 you but that's not quite right, bang. Again the Boston  
12 bombing's a great example where the Boston Police  
13 Department were constantly tweeting and saying, no, no,  
14 that's not quite right, don't do that, watch this,  
15 don't take photos of the police and it was a dialogue 10.49AM  
16 backwards and forwards between the citizens and the  
17 organisation.

18 MEMBER PETERING: Could I just ask, why is it important to  
19 aim for best practice and what's the point of looking  
20 through these case studies? 10.49AM

21 PROF MACNAMARA: At the end of the day I guess you're  
22 talking, there's a number of dimensions. I'd start  
23 with the broader one and that is community welfare. At  
24 the end of the day people want to live in a community  
25 and feel safe and feel that their health is protected 10.49AM  
26 and that the Government cares for them, so there's a  
27 trust in Government. Dare I say, the latest trust  
28 research is showing trust in Government is at an all  
29 time low in Australia and the UK.

30 At a corporate level corporations usually want to 10.50AM  
31 have, and it does help them, to have a relationship

1 with their community. Companies can be terribly  
2 important to the economy and Governments will always  
3 look at their economic value, but at the end of the day  
4 if the public is unhappy with that corporation it does  
5 often result in regulation or tougher treatment from 10.50AM  
6 Government.

7 Corporations want to have community engagement and  
8 a good relationship, we want our communities to feel  
9 safe and trust our Government. If we don't handle  
10 crises well, Lachlan said it before, trust - and it's 10.50AM  
11 on one of my charts - trust is a very, very key issue,  
12 I think it's what holds our community and our democracy  
13 together. Does that answer the question?

14 MEMBER PETERING: Did you have anything further to say,  
15 Mr Drummond? 10.50AM

16 MR DRUMMOND: No, I agree.

17 MS RICHARDS: I was discussing social media with  
18 Professor Macnamara just a moment ago. Mr Drummond, in  
19 your report you identify that in this event traditional  
20 forms of media were particularly important and 10.51AM  
21 effective. Can you explain why that is?

22 MR DRUMMOND: Sure. So this community exhibits a range of  
23 differences that set it apart from, say, metropolitan  
24 Melbourne; lower in terms of, typically anyway, lower  
25 in terms of income, lower in terms of education, poorer 10.51AM  
26 health outcomes as was discussed yesterday and,  
27 importantly, lower internet connectivity.

28 MS RICHARDS: The internet connectivity in the Latrobe  
29 Valley is significantly lower than metropolitan  
30 Melbourne, is it not? You provide some figures in your 10.51AM  
31 report.

1 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, I can refer you to that.

2 PROF MACNAMARA: 60-something per cent.

3 MR DRUMMOND: Roughly speaking, Morwell's internet  
4 connectivity, I'm looking at exhibit 2 on 6.5.4 of my  
5 report. Having read Merita Tabain's statement, Morwell 10.52AM  
6 internet connectivity is around 67 per cent as compared  
7 to I think 79 per cent for Victoria generally.

8 MS RICHARDS: So there's 12 per cent of the population who  
9 you simply won't reach through the internet?

10 MR DRUMMOND: Yes. If I could just continue on that point? 10.52AM

11 MS RICHARDS: Yes, please do.

12 MR DRUMMOND: What that means is that, whilst it's a useful  
13 channel and it will become an increasingly important  
14 channel, I think for this community it's particularly  
15 important to have a diversity of communications and I'd 10.52AM  
16 refer to more grassroots communications, door knocks,  
17 letterbox drops, use of the local newspaper and so  
18 forth as a way of maximising the reach of the message.

19 I'd also make one other point about social media  
20 in this situation, which is that it's my opinion that 10.53AM  
21 what happened was that communications were problematic,  
22 and we'll come to this I'm sure, perhaps inconsistent,  
23 problems with timeliness and so forth. To the extent  
24 that the community lost trust with the communications,  
25 social media tended to fill that void. What you then 10.53AM  
26 see is people on Facebook, Twitter and so forth within  
27 the community sending out their own messages and people  
28 looking to social media to see what's actually going  
29 on.

30 The problem with that is that, there is the 10.53AM  
31 opportunity or the possibility for misinformation. So

1 where there was a loss of control of messaging, social  
2 media filled that void to some extent I think in this  
3 case and potentially problematically.

4 PROF MACNAMARA: I fully endorse those comments. I very  
5 much commend social media but in this particular case 10.54AM  
6 it could only be part of the communication solution.

7 MS RICHARDS: Both of you comment on the fact that  
8 face-to-face communication was the most effective means  
9 of communication during the mine fire?

10 PROF MACNAMARA: It usually is in life actually, but in a 10.54AM  
11 crisis where emotions are heightened, people are under  
12 great pressure and tension it's more important; we need  
13 that human touch and to know that people are present,  
14 visible, doing their job, we need to see it and we need  
15 to feel it. So, yes, there's no substitute for 10.54AM  
16 face-to-face in a crisis.

17 MEMBER CATFORD: Could I pick up this point, again coming  
18 back to the two-way communication process. So if  
19 you're in a face-to-face dialogue, there's an  
20 opportunity, presumably, to collect information and 10.54AM  
21 responses and feed that back up the system. Would you  
22 want to comment on that, and I suppose, perhaps not  
23 jumping the gun, but to what extent was that loop being  
24 closed with the door knocks and the face-to-face  
25 communication? 10.55AM

26 PROF MACNAMARA: I don't think it was enough. I'm not  
27 suggesting it wasn't done, but certainly going back to  
28 the point about, there was a lot of information  
29 distribution. Communication by its nature is meant to  
30 be dialogic. We use the word without thinking of one 10.55AM  
31 way, but actually dialogic is essential. I'd have to



1 agree and say when I was critiquing communication I was  
2 seeing a lack of the two-way interactive process, a  
3 lack of listening, a lack of engaging with the  
4 community in a real true sense.

5 To some extent the very fact that these public 10.55AM  
6 concerns are there and in the media and expressed is a  
7 sign that we have failed to some extent, that's not  
8 suggesting everything was a failure, but the reason we  
9 use those case studies is for all of us it's about  
10 learning what we can do better and adapting it and I 10.55AM  
11 would say a lot of things were done well, clearly a  
12 number of things were not done well and dialogue and  
13 true communication by-in-large I believe was not done  
14 well.

15 MR DRUMMOND: Just in terms of closing that loop, if I could 10.56AM  
16 add that my sense, and someone might be able to correct  
17 me on this, is that the door knock wasn't completed  
18 until well into March.

19 PROF MACNAMARA: 14th.

20 MR DRUMMOND: 14 March. Now, that's five weeks roughly from 10.56AM  
21 the start of the event, so you've got people who  
22 potentially haven't had that ability to close the loop  
23 until five weeks after the event or the crisis started.

24 The second point I'd make about closing the loop  
25 is that, I think the first of the community meetings 10.56AM  
26 didn't occur until the 14th and I think there was one  
27 subsequently roughly a week later, 18th.

28 MS RICHARDS: Yes, which may have been an example of the  
29 loop being closed, it was a meeting at which there was  
30 a significant expression of anger, and it's described 10.56AM  
31 by Commissioner Lapsley in his statement as a turning

1 point in the Authority's response to the fire?

2 MR DRUMMOND: Indeed, and I think you're absolutely right to  
3 pick up Craig Lapsley's statement there, and it seemed  
4 that he recognised at that point that we needed to  
5 modify our approach in response to having listened to 10.57AM  
6 the community concerns. But my point is that the loop  
7 was closed, but it was five day - or it was beginning  
8 to be closed, if I could, but it happened five days  
9 later and I really don't think the opportunity or the  
10 channel existed adequately enough for community to feed 10.57AM  
11 back its concerns in a timely way.

12 MS RICHARDS: If I can move now to your joint report and ask  
13 you to start with your assessment of communications by  
14 the State Department and agencies. Mr Drummond, can  
15 you identify the positive aspects of communication by 10.58AM  
16 the State, in which I include the CFA, the police, the  
17 Department of Health, all of its agencies?

18 MR DRUMMOND: Sure. I think both Jim and I are in agreement  
19 in saying that relevant authorities and individuals  
20 were working hard under changeable and difficult 10.58AM  
21 circumstances and they're to be commended for some of  
22 the communications.

23 The communications that appeared to work best were  
24 those that were what we might call more traditional or  
25 grassroots communication such as the face-to-face 10.58AM  
26 contact, door knocks organised by Latrobe City Council.  
27 ABC Radio was particularly important to the community.

28 In putting this report together I looked at all of  
29 the community consultation videos and distilled all of  
30 that down and looked at what people in those 10.58AM  
31 consultations were saying was done well with respect to

1 the communications.

2 The community meetings were also a very good  
3 channel and opportunity - were regarded by the  
4 community as being good communications. The CFA was  
5 singled out by affected communities as performing 10.59AM  
6 particularly well, and I think that's indicative of the  
7 fact that the CFA in regional and rural communities is  
8 typically embedded in the community and therefore has a  
9 higher level of trust right from the start. Handouts  
10 and leaflets, another example of good communications, 10.59AM  
11 and then some specific individuals.

12 I note in looking at those community consultations  
13 that a senior person from Ambulance Victoria was  
14 identified as being very good. If I can quote from my  
15 report, I'm on page 8 at 6.2.6, "The Incident 10.59AM  
16 Controller reports that the public meetings were really  
17 good. Early on they said 'we don't know how long it  
18 will take', it was honest and felt trustworthy."

19 So, in summary, examples of good communications in  
20 this crisis, particularly to this community, it may not 11.00AM  
21 apply to all, were typically grassroots and through  
22 more traditional channels.

23 MS RICHARDS: Professor Macnamara, was there anything you  
24 wanted to add to the identification of things that  
25 worked well in Government communications? 11.00AM

26 PROF MACNAMARA: No. You said the ABC too, didn't you?  
27 Yes, we saw a number of things that worked well.

28 MS RICHARDS: Moving to the issues that you've identified.  
29 In your joint report the first of those issues is  
30 distribution and reach. Professor Macnamara, could you 11.00AM  
31 enlarge on that issue?

1 PROF MACNAMARA: That's the point that we have already  
2 talked about, is that whilst some of the handouts and  
3 leaflets were useful, there was a very heavy use of  
4 internet; a lot of the updates and smoke alerts  
5 et cetera were posted on the internet, and we've  
6 already talked about the lower internet connectivity in  
7 this area.

11.01AM

8 Also it's not just the actual connectivity. I  
9 make the point that a lot of what we call the digital  
10 divide, the reason that some people don't use the  
11 internet is cultural and educational and different  
12 groups and so on. So, even though there's 67 per cent  
13 connectivity, a lot of people in some groups aren't  
14 comfortable using the internet and so the actual use is  
15 probably lower than that. That was the point about  
16 distribution and reach, we didn't use enough of some of  
17 the things Lachlan was just speaking about,  
18 particularly some of the postings and updates coming  
19 from the Department of Health, they seemed to only be  
20 on the internet.

11.01AM

11.01AM

11.01AM

21 Some of the more detailed information you had to  
22 log in and go - in fact I went to all these sites and I  
23 had to go through four clicks to get to an actual piece  
24 of information. That's the first point and there are  
25 some others in there.

11.01AM

26 MS RICHARDS: The second issue identified is timing and  
27 tailoring. Mr Drummond, can I ask you to explain why  
28 that was an issue?

29 MR DRUMMOND: Absolutely. I'm going to talk here about  
30 timing and also timeliness, I'll make perhaps a  
31 distinction between the two. As I sat down and

11.02AM

1 analysed extremely carefully all of the community  
2 consultations, a large amount of video material, one of  
3 the things that struck me and one of the things that  
4 came out most strongly and came out first from concerns  
5 expressed by the community was the lateness of the 11.02AM  
6 communications; that is timing - communications  
7 appeared not to really ramp up until say week two.  
8 That's problematic because you've got people who are  
9 physically experiencing smoke and ash and so forth and  
10 seeing dust settling in their house, they're in 11.02AM  
11 heightened state of anxiety and they really have a need  
12 for communications. Many of the statements arising  
13 from those community consultations go to that.

14 If I could look at 6.3.1 in my report.

15 MS RICHARDS: Which is on page 9. 11.03AM

16 MR DRUMMOND: It's on page 9, yes. I just want to make a  
17 couple of points here. The quotes you're seeing here  
18 are de-identified quotes from people who participated  
19 in the community consultations. I'll just pick a  
20 snapshot of some of the things people were saying, "It 11.03AM  
21 took a week after the disaster before we heard anything  
22 substantive in an emergency response message from any  
23 of the Government agencies."

24 If I can go further down, "It took too long for  
25 the Government to acknowledge the health effects of 11.03AM  
26 short and long-term exposure."

27 MS RICHARDS: If I can just stop you there, you do identify  
28 in your joint report under issues of "Timing and  
29 tailoring", the timing of the announcement of, you say  
30 evacuation, others would say temporary relocation of 11.04AM  
31 vulnerable groups on Friday the 28th. From a

1 communications perspective, leave aside the health  
2 dimension, what's the issue with the timing of that?

3 MR DRUMMOND: That brings me to the point of timeliness. My  
4 strong sense from having assessed the community  
5 response to this is that it seemed a bit arbitrary; 11.04AM  
6 that is, what had changed between Thursday the 27th or  
7 Tuesday the 26th and Friday the 28th? (sic)

8 So, the community were strongly of the opinion  
9 that it seemed arbitrary and it occurred late in the  
10 afternoon on Friday the 28th, and some community 11.04AM  
11 members expressed that this was unfortunate in terms of  
12 being able to enact particular plans or get organised  
13 or communicate with others.

14 Late in the afternoon on a Friday I wouldn't  
15 regard as being particularly appropriate in terms of 11.04AM  
16 timeliness, particularly given that the community  
17 believed or interpreted this as being somewhat  
18 arbitrary and that there was apparently no material  
19 change in events one, two, three days before.

20 MS RICHARDS: Professor Macnamara, did you want to add 11.05AM  
21 anything to that issue of timing and tailoring that you  
22 have both identified?

23 PROF MACNAMARA: No, only to say the timing, that was one  
24 particular instance. But I looked at the date of the  
25 first of a number of things; the first letterbox drop, 11.05AM  
26 door knocking, not only did it not finish - and I do  
27 realise the council in particular had limited  
28 resources - but it didn't begin until 25 February, you  
29 know, that's quite some considerable time.

30 The meetings - each of the key communication 11.05AM  
31 things, as much as they were important, (a) they were

1 information more than communication; secondly, they  
2 were happening a bit too late.

3 MR DRUMMOND: Finally, if I could add on that, that it  
4 appeared that there was no specific communications plan  
5 and strategy for the affected communities and that in 11.06AM  
6 fact needed to be written.

7 PROF MACNAMARA: It wasn't available until 24 February, so I  
8 do find it very surprising that there wasn't a  
9 communications strategy, they were actually writing it,  
10 and it was distributed on 24 February. That seems, 11.06AM  
11 given that this mine's been here a long time, to me it  
12 would be reasonable to think that there could be a  
13 problem. Why wouldn't we have a community engagement  
14 and communication strategy in place years ago?

15 MR DRUMMOND: And writing it on the run doesn't strike me as 11.06AM  
16 best practice.

17 MS RICHARDS: You next identify poor fit with community  
18 profile. Mr Drummond, this is your particular issue,  
19 is there anything you want to add to what you've  
20 already said about the particular profile of the 11.06AM  
21 Morwell and Latrobe Valley community and the  
22 communications during the fire?

23 MR DRUMMOND: I think we've pretty much covered it, but my  
24 sense is that this is a community that is different in  
25 a number of ways and needs communications tailored to 11.07AM  
26 that. The Morwell community has characteristics, it  
27 typically has smaller households, lower level of  
28 education, blue collar employment. I want to hasten to  
29 add, this doesn't affect how you - it's more about the  
30 reach and distribution in taking this into account, it 11.07AM  
31 doesn't mean that you speak to these people any

1 differently, you speak to them plain, simple language.

2 PROF MACNAMARA: Technical language doesn't work, for  
3 example, you need to translate. We all have trouble  
4 with the technical language.

5 MR DRUMMOND: Speak in an honest and plain manner as you 11.07AM  
6 would to any community.

7 MS RICHARDS: The next issue you identify is disconnect.  
8 Mr Drummond, you introduced a concept of cognitive  
9 dissonance that I think comes from psychological  
10 literature. You illustrated the point that you make by 11.08AM  
11 a diagram that appears on page 30 of your report. Can  
12 we have that on the screen, please. What do you mean  
13 by cognitive dissonance in a communications context?

14 MR DRUMMOND: If I could start at the top of that diagram  
15 and work through it and I'll give you a definition of 11.08AM  
16 cognitive dissonance. Another way of thinking about  
17 this, as we've said in this joint report, is what we  
18 saw as a disconnect.

19 As we've discussed at the start of this,  
20 communications aren't necessarily or certainly not 11.08AM  
21 always verbal. If you look on the left there, what the  
22 community were seeing was some actions from  
23 authorities. If we just quickly walk through those.  
24 Firstly the community is seeing that firefighters are  
25 being treated for carbon monoxide exposure. I think 11.08AM

26 that sends an alarming message to the community. They  
27 also see that the CFA pulls crews out due to toxic gas,  
28 and then on 15 February you've got a hazardous  
29 materials declaration and firefighters being reduced to  
30 two-hour shifts. Then you also have a watch and act 11.09AM  
31 alert with respect to carbon monoxide.



1 MS RICHARDS: This was on 15 February, the Saturday  
2 afternoon?

3 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, that's correct. Putting all that  
4 together, I think it's absolutely reasonable that the  
5 community would interpret that as being, we've got a 11.09AM  
6 serious incident/issue/crisis on our doorstep and this  
7 is generating anxiety, fear and concern because these  
8 are the actions I'm seeing, these are the physical  
9 communication, if you will, from what the various  
10 authorities are doing. 11.09AM

11 In addition, the residents themselves are  
12 experiencing adverse health effects, coughing, wheezing  
13 blood noses and so forth, the ash and dust fall out in  
14 their properties and they have many questions for which  
15 they're either not getting answers or receiving 11.10AM  
16 inadequate answers.

17 If you put those two things together what you get  
18 is a message take out, that is one of anxiety, fear,  
19 concern that there's a serious issue. On the other  
20 hand, and to the box on the right, what we see in terms 11.10AM  
21 of communications, and particularly from I think the  
22 Chief Health Officer, that is that there's no need to  
23 evaluate, we're seeking further advice, vulnerable  
24 groups take care, enact your asthma management plans  
25 and so forth. What also I regard as being somewhat 11.10AM  
26 repetitive, self-evident and uninformative statements,  
27 and I'm referring there to the smoke advisories,  
28 numerous smoke advisories. Now, the people of Morwell  
29 as they told me loud and clear as I looked at these  
30 community consultations was, they only had to go 11.10AM  
31 outside to see what the smoke was like.

1           What we have on the one hand is anxiety, fear and  
2 concern and a genuine belief that they're dealing with  
3 a serious issue, and that doesn't match with the  
4 message being sent out by the relevant authorities;  
5 that is, take minor precautions, just enact your asthma     11.11AM  
6 management plan.

7           What that leads to is something that we call  
8 cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance is a  
9 well-established psychological theory put forward by  
10 Festinger in 1957. Summarising it, it's the feeling a     11.11AM  
11 person experiences when they hold two conflicting  
12 viewpoints and attempt to reconcile those viewpoints.

13           Finally, I would say that in the reconciliation of  
14 those viewpoints you can go one of two ways, and in the  
15 case of the affected communities in this region, you     11.11AM  
16 can either reject what authorities are saying - that  
17 is, you don't believe it, it doesn't accord with what  
18 you're experiencing - or it can leave to self-doubt.  
19 My major concern is that, when you're dealing with a  
20 lower socio-economic status community, a vulnerable     11.11AM  
21 community, a community with poorer health outcomes,  
22 lower levels of education and so forth, it's more  
23 likely to lead to self-doubt; to people questioning,  
24 saying, well, hang on, I'm feeling one way and yet  
25 authorities who I place trust in and who I'm relying on     11.12AM  
26 to help me are telling me something completely  
27 different.

28           If I could just finish this point with a quote  
29 from Lisa Wilson's witness statement on page 29 of my  
30 report just immediately above that diagram, I think     11.12AM  
31 this summarises cognitive dissonance very well. If I

1 can quote, Lisa says, "I am well educated and have  
2 travelled, yet my experiences during this period made  
3 me feel stupid and disheartened."

4 MS RICHARDS: There's a possible example of communications  
5 that contributed to this cognitive dissonance that 11.12AM  
6 you've identified both on 28 February; there was a high  
7 level smoke advisory issued by the EPA that afternoon,  
8 and this is the kind of communication that you've  
9 identified as repetitive and perhaps not suitable to  
10 the crisis as it had developed by this time? 11.13AM

11 MR DRUMMOND: Repetitive communications at one level are  
12 important, but what happens is, if you are issuing  
13 100-plus smoke advisories, EPA smoke advisories, one of  
14 the issues with that is that people tend to tune out  
15 and if you have people tuning out from your messaging 11.13AM  
16 in a crisis, I think that's a major problem. It's not  
17 about quantity but rather about quality. What we  
18 tended to see with the smoke advisories was that it  
19 tended to say the same thing on an ongoing basis and  
20 didn't really add much to the conversation or the 11.13AM  
21 communications that was going on.

22 MS RICHARDS: I'm not sure if both of you can see the two  
23 documents that have come up on the screen. There are  
24 two communications that were issued, one by the Chief  
25 Health Officer and one by the Environment Protection 11.14AM  
26 Authority both on the afternoon of 28 February. We'll  
27 just arrange for hard copies to be provided to you.  
28 I'm sorry, I should have organised for this to happen  
29 earlier. We have an EPA high level smoke advisory  
30 that, as you've identified, have been issued a number 11.14AM  
31 of times, it's in a standard format, it quotes the

1 Chief Health Officer as advising that excessive smoke  
2 can aggravate existing conditions, that people should  
3 avoid prolonged and heavy physical activity, and that  
4 people should take their medication, consult their  
5 doctor.

11.14AM

6 At the same time the Chief Health Officer issued a  
7 community update and along with this went a news  
8 release that advised people in vulnerable groups to  
9 consider temporarily relocating from Morwell, and  
10 that's a message direct from the Chief Health Officer  
11 who's also quoted in the EPA media release. We'll just  
12 arrange for you to have both of those documents in  
13 front of you.

11.15AM

14 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, I think I'm across these and have seen  
15 them before.

11.16AM

16 MS RICHARDS: Is that an example of the disconnect that  
17 you've identified as an issue?

18 MR DRUMMOND: Just taking the temporary relocation firstly,  
19 my sense on that is that it came late in on the 28th,  
20 and to your point about a disconnect, you've got people  
21 who have been living with this issue from the 9th until  
22 the 28th feeling serious adverse health effects and  
23 consequences, but it's only on the 28th, and as I said  
24 earlier on a somewhat apparently arbitrary basis that  
25 they're asked to relocate or vulnerable people are  
26 asked to are relocate. I think that's an example -  
27 it's probably an example of acknowledgment of the  
28 seriousness of the event. At one level this might go  
29 to reconciling that cognitive dissonance, but I think  
30 the way it was handled probably wasn't ideal.

11.16AM

11.16AM

11.17AM

31 To the EPA smoke advisories, of which there were

1 many, I think they're important but I don't believe  
2 that issuing as many as they did, saying things like  
3 people with asthma should follow their asthma  
4 management plan, I think to some extent, say it once or  
5 twice, but it's self-evident and the community had more 11.17AM  
6 fundamental questions like, how do I manage animals and  
7 livestock. Granted some of these questions were  
8 answered, but is tank water safe to drink, how do I  
9 remove ash from pools, these were questions that were  
10 there virtually from day one, but instead we're seeing 11.17AM  
11 things like be aware that there's smoke in the area.

12 MS RICHARDS: Professor Macnamara, did you have any comment  
13 you wanted to make on these two almost simultaneous  
14 communications?

15 PROF MACNAMARA: No, I think it's been mostly covered, and 11.18AM  
16 also the context is important; there were high smoke  
17 alerts issued long before that, so why suddenly we've  
18 had high smoke, high smoke, extreme high smoke even  
19 before this and then suddenly with one high smoke alert  
20 we've got a temporary relocation, and it seemed late 11.18AM  
21 and then on a Friday afternoon, yes.

22 People that I talked to, there was a feeling that  
23 this was fulfilling a legal or bureaucratic requirement  
24 to get something out rather than actually talking to  
25 people. 11.18AM

26 MEMBER CATFORD: Can I just ask: Wouldn't you expect,  
27 though, each would refer to the other or you'd have a  
28 combined release?

29 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes. There is evidence that there was a  
30 lot of cooperation and collaboration, but any crisis 11.18AM  
31 I've ever been associated with is, you've got to get

1 people in the one room and you've got to lock them away  
2 often and there's got to be very intensive  
3 co-operation, so there's some signs there wasn't enough  
4 because there was inconsistency. Bearing in mind in  
5 the same period the mine had issued statements and put 11.19AM  
6 out a full page ad, and the second paragraph, as I  
7 recall, actually used the words, "This is the most  
8 serious event that's ever confronted the mine". So  
9 people are reading that and going, "Holy hell, the  
10 mine's saying this is the most serious thing to ever 11.19AM  
11 happen; we're being told to watch and wait in our  
12 homes, what's going on?" I mean, if I saw that  
13 statement in the mine, I'd be heading out of town real  
14 quick.

15 MR DRUMMOND: And Professor Catford, I agree with your 11.19AM  
16 point, looking at the timing of this, 1745 on Friday  
17 the 28th, the EPA media release has gone out after the  
18 temporary relocation advice, therefore you would think  
19 it would be making some reference to it from the point  
20 that we've made all the way along this submission in 11.19AM  
21 terms of distribution and reach, everybody needs to be  
22 saying the same thing. So that, if you only receive  
23 the smoke advisory, it points to the temporary  
24 relocation advice, which it did.

25 MS RICHARDS: If I can move to the second of the questions 11.20AM  
26 that we asked you to address in your joint report which  
27 was whether you consider that GDF Suez had engaged in  
28 appropriate communication strategies during the fire.  
29 Professor Macnamara, could you talk about the opinion  
30 that you've expressed there, which is a stark, no? 11.20AM

31 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes. Not everyone may agree with it, but

1 the things I looked at was the fundamental principle in  
2 crisis all over the world is, the senior management's  
3 got to be visible to the community and showing concern.  
4 I read the explanation of why the company didn't attend  
5 some of the public meetings, I read that; it's not a 11.20AM  
6 sufficient reason. I mean, any time the CEO was not  
7 present in any crisis around the world there's been  
8 criticism of it. Even if you're standing there and  
9 saying, visibly we're supporting the authorities, we're  
10 working with the authorities, so the visibility of the 11.21AM  
11 company sends the message that they might have been  
12 caring, but the message is, they didn't.

13 The full page advertisements that came eventually,  
14 as I said the second paragraph, to me was quite  
15 alarming and at the same time the Government 11.21AM  
16 authorities were saying it's all okay; that was  
17 concerning. Criticism I've levelled at many of the  
18 authorities, in fact all of them in the company is  
19 that, apart from very occasional statements such as,  
20 "We understand the inconvenience", I think that was in 11.21AM  
21 one of the statements, there was no real deep  
22 expression serious of concern for the community, no  
23 expressions of empathy and, again, that's a fundamental  
24 principle. If something's gone wrong you do not take  
25 legal responsibility necessarily, but you say, "We are 11.21AM  
26 concerned, we're absolutely sorry about this", you  
27 know, you express that, so I didn't see that as well.

28 Then the final, the revised Morwell initiative. I  
29 accept that's debatable whether that's good practice or  
30 not, but to me it came too late. It addressed a 11.22AM  
31 relatively small financial amount to individuals,

1           albeit I do accept that \$670,000 in a community in a  
2           business sense would be quite significant, but it's  
3           money. Again, if people are no longer trusting and  
4           people are angry, I tend to find money doesn't get you  
5           out of trouble, money can even backfire. So I think  
6           again there was focussing on operational things and  
7           offering people a bit of money belatedly, when actually  
8           what they wanted was a lot more demonstration of care  
9           and communication and engagement and listening weeks  
10          and weeks before.

11.22AM

11.22AM

11                 That was the basis of my concern again. It's not  
12           about information, it's not about the operational  
13           performance, that may have been excellent, it's about  
14           the communication.

15   MS RICHARDS: Mr Drummond, was there anything you'd like to  
16           add to that?

11.22AM

17   MR DRUMMOND: In terms of the money GDF Suez gave to local  
18           community members?

19   MS RICHARDS: In terms of the overall assessment that its  
20           communication strategy was not appropriate?

11.23AM

21   MR DRUMMOND: I agree with that. I'll make one point to  
22           follow-up on Jim's. I think the timing of the giving  
23           of the money to the community is interesting, occurring  
24           I think only last week or the week before as opposed to  
25           perhaps when they needed it, right in the middle of the  
26           crisis.

11.23AM

27                 I make one other point. I noted strongly in the  
28           community consultations that the way in which the State  
29           Government gave money to affected communities via the  
30           healthcare card scheme I think created some division  
31           that some people got the money and some people didn't

11.23AM



1 and I think that was problematic.

2 My concern with the way in which GDF Suez has  
3 approached this is that, in giving money again, there  
4 will always be some who receive it and some who miss  
5 out, and I think that has the potential at least to 11.23AM  
6 exacerbate divisions in the community.

7 Perhaps my final point on GDF Suez might be to  
8 just quote from my report on the bottom of page 19 at  
9 6.4.5, and this is a community member saying this,  
10 "Lack of representation from Hazelwood Mine at the 11.24AM  
11 first two community meetings when they said they  
12 thought it was all to do with health and therefore  
13 didn't deem it necessary to attend."

14 PROF MACNAMARA: That in itself is a communication and it  
15 sends a message. 11.24AM

16 MS RICHARDS: Which you've identified, yes. If we can move  
17 now to the recommendations that you make in your joint  
18 report for improvements in the event of similar crises  
19 in future. Professor Macnamara, if we can start with  
20 your recommendations. The first of those is a review 11.24AM  
21 by GDF Suez of its crisis management and crisis  
22 communications strategy. Is there anything you want to  
23 add to what you've already said as to why that's  
24 recommended?

25 PROF MACNAMARA: I feel that's a very reasonable thing to 11.25AM  
26 do, in fact I would argue that after any incident you  
27 should have a review and see what you did well and what  
28 you didn't do well. I've never met an organisation  
29 that can't improve, so I'm suggesting a review and to  
30 take on board things that might come out of this 11.25AM  
31 Inquiry and out of the reports; it's not telling them

1           what to do, I don't have enough specific knowledge, but  
2           a review seems very eminently sensible.

3   MS RICHARDS: The next one relates to Government and the  
4           need for speedier communication?

5   PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, and I think we've both noted that all           11.25AM  
6           along. There just was five, seven, nine, 10, 15 days'  
7           delay in a lot of the postings of information online,  
8           the door knocking and a range of those things, and it  
9           is difficult, I understand that, but you've just got to  
10          get into the community more quickly. We keep hearing           11.25AM  
11          that they didn't realise it was a community problem,  
12          well, that's a planning issue, because I don't know how  
13          you have a coal mine within hundreds of metres of a  
14          town, a brown coal mine, and not anticipate that there  
15          might be a problem at some stage.                                 11.26AM

16   MS RICHARDS: Then you talk about the need for crisis  
17          communication training?

18   PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, and that relates probably - I haven't  
19          had the opportunity to read the actual plans that they  
20          have, and they may be comprehensive, but what was           11.26AM  
21          evident in this instance was the lack of the human  
22          element; the lack of - you know, this demographic data  
23          that Lachlan talked about, that's been available, ABS,  
24          Bureau stats, has that data. We know all this data and  
25          yet they were gathering that data post the fire. So           11.26AM  
26          clearly there needs to be a speeding up in a number of  
27          things, I would think, and I have read a statement, and  
28          I think it's in Mr Ms Tabain's statement where it talks  
29          about the risk to energy supply diminished and  
30          community effects came to light, and this is around           11.27AM  
31          about 16-20 February this is occurring. Now, community

1 effects came to light? One would have thought you'd  
2 know there'd be community effects from day one. It's  
3 symbolic of what I think is in a lot of documents that,  
4 it was a bushfire, then it became an industrial  
5 problem, and then it was an afterthought, oh my 11.27AM  
6 goodness there's a community problem, and planning  
7 would have endeavoured to address all of those  
8 together.

9 MEMBER PETERING: Professor Macnamara, I think to be fair  
10 your recommendation talks about the relevant Government 11.27AM  
11 authorities and I think we've heard your evidence that  
12 there were authorities, in particular representatives  
13 of those authorities that actually communicated quite  
14 well, and so I think there's various levels of crisis  
15 communication training that are required by different 11.27AM  
16 Government authorities rather than just putting them  
17 all in the one bucket. Would you like to elaborate  
18 without being too particular?

19 PROF MACNAMARA: I completely take that point and I'm  
20 worried about who might meet me outside afterwards, but 11.28AM  
21 I think we've both made it clear that the fire is  
22 visible and on the ground, and the CFA - and of course  
23 the CFA does a have a lead role during the fire, and it  
24 is hard to detect how much support is being given by  
25 EPA and Health behind that that we couldn't see, and I 11.28AM  
26 accept that was happening. But certainly some of the  
27 statements and the online postings from the Department  
28 of Health and some of those were areas that we did  
29 criticise as being - you know, I don't think I could  
30 find a word of empathy and caring expressed. It was 11.28AM  
31 very much like someone was reading a protocol and

1 following the manual.

2 MS RICHARDS: Then the last two recommendations that you  
3 highlight both relate to community relations. Can you  
4 explain those, please?

5 PROF MACNAMARA: I could be wrong or missed something on 11.28AM

6 this, because I read later in some of the data that  
7 there were community engagement people involved, but I  
8 didn't hear that in any of the statements that I read.

9 One of my recommendations was, given that senior  
10 management and health officers and others are busy at 11.29AM

11 the higher level, and given the council lacked  
12 resources and appeared to - the door knock didn't start  
13 until 25 February, and what I've seen happen elsewhere

14 is there are specialist community relations people and  
15 they are trained psychologists usually, they are people 11.29AM

16 who deal with people, getting into the community  
17 straight away and acting as an interpreter between the  
18 technical information and the Departments doing their  
19 job and on the street. I recommended that because I  
20 couldn't see enough of it. 11.29AM

21 The final part was, working at grassroots,  
22 I believe that Voices of the Valley started during the  
23 crisis. We often overlook these groups, and again it's  
24 just a matter for the councils and others to think  
25 about, but embracing those groups rather than just 11.29AM

26 simply leaving them out there as the opposition in a  
27 way; those are ready made voices of the community,  
28 bring them in, listen to them and ask them, how can we  
29 help, what can we do together, so more partnering with  
30 some of those groups would have helped. And if we 11.30AM  
31 didn't do it then, do it now for the next time.

1 MS RICHARDS: That segues neatly into the recommendations  
2 that you have made, Mr Drummond, particularly the  
3 second one, "Facilitating two-way communications  
4 through the establishment of a community advocate  
5 group." What do you have in mind there?

11.30AM

6 MR DRUMMOND: The underlying recommendation here is that we  
7 need to give residents a voice. Residents need to have  
8 the ear of those in authority who are making decisions  
9 that affect their lives. Both Jim and I agree, as  
10 we've talked about, we didn't feel that that loop was  
11 adequately closed.

11.30AM

12 My recommendation here is that what we really need  
13 is to establish, faced with a similar crisis, establish  
14 a community advocate group that for example might have  
15 a single spokesperson, but it might have a body of  
16 four, five, six community leaders who give input to  
17 that single spokesperson; I would suggest that that  
18 single spokesperson should be standing alongside people  
19 like the Chief Health Officer or the Incident  
20 Controller so that it gives the very strong impression  
21 that the community has representation at the highest  
22 levels of decision-making.

11.31AM

11.31AM

23 MS RICHARDS: Is that not a role that you see being filled  
24 by Local Government?

25 MR DRUMMOND: It could be, and I think Local Government  
26 could inform that advocacy, but as my report points  
27 out, Local Government or communities like Morwell are  
28 typically distrustful of Government and therefore I  
29 would suggest that it's probably better to have Local  
30 Government to some extent at arm's-length; involved  
31 perhaps in assisting, but not necessarily a part of

11.31AM

11.31AM

1           that advocacy group.

2           CHAIRMAN:   Could I just interrupt too?   In your  
3           recommendations, Mr Drummond, you referred - not to the  
4           joint ones - but in the Recommendation 3 I think on  
5           page 36 refers to:    "An organisation like the CFA is           11.32AM  
6           trusted and respected, therefore a spokesperson from  
7           the organisation or even someone from a military  
8           background is likely to be better received."

9                        There's reference in the affidavit we've got -  
10           that we'll be hearing from a witness later in the day -           11.32AM  
11           which does talk about the development within the CFA of  
12           a community engagement program, which includes training  
13           for appropriate spokespersons.

14                       I take it that, your having a knowledge of the  
15           CFA, would consider that's something that ought to be           11.32AM  
16           developed because it potentially has the independence  
17           of Government.   If you've got the right local  
18           organisation, you won't be aware of whether they've got  
19           it; or it does seem from feedback that's come that  
20           Morwell has the right kind of organisation here, but           11.33AM  
21           the limitation would also be, as I think you'd be  
22           aware, that in some parts of Victoria the CFA is not as  
23           good at community engagement as it appears to be in  
24           Morwell?

25           MR DRUMMOND:   Yes, my sense is that the CFA in this           11.33AM  
26           community, and in most, is very well regarded, trusted,  
27           embedded and therefore the CFA would be a potential  
28           candidate for engagement and liaison with the local  
29           community so as to close that loop.

30           MEMBER PETERING:   Some of the evidence we've heard over the           11.33AM  
31           last eight days has spoken about this local trusted

1 networks and we can apply that to any community, and  
2 that you have those networks prepared, and I think  
3 you've spoken about that this morning, identifying I  
4 guess for various representative parts of the community  
5 so it could be Koori or the CALD, which I think stands 11.34AM  
6 for Communities with an Alternative Language - Sorry, I  
7 don't know the exact acronym.

8 PROF MACNAMARA: Culturally and linguistically diverse.

9 MEMBER PETERING: Thank you. Who was responsible for  
10 identifying those local networks, and I guess as a 11.34AM  
11 community how do we identify them so that there is some  
12 preparation beforehand and those people are identified?

13 MR DRUMMOND: I think it's critical, there are community  
14 groups, Koori in this area, CALD groups, among others.  
15 There almost needs to be an audit of particular groups 11.34AM  
16 and spokespeople identified within those groups. Now,  
17 to your question as to who should facilitate that, my  
18 sense is that council would have the knowledge of and  
19 the access to those groups and would probably be  
20 ideally positioned to manage that process. 11.35AM

21 MS RICHARDS: It occurs to me that different agencies may  
22 start identifying trusted networks in their own area of  
23 activity independently of one another; so for example,  
24 the Department of Health may identify their local GPs  
25 and have well-established channels of communication? 11.35AM

26 PROF MACNAMARA: Local GPs is a good example. My  
27 understanding from what I've read is that none of the  
28 local doctors were briefed or given information, and  
29 they would seem to be an absolutely key part that  
30 people would go to for advice. Now, I could be wrong, 11.35AM  
31 but that's what I - I can't find any evidence that

1 local GPs were brought into the loop; they seem an  
2 obvious group.

3 MS RICHARDS: Just two more of your recommendations,  
4 Mr Drummond, before I sit down and give someone else a  
5 turn. The third dot point under your recommendations 11.35AM  
6 is, "Ensure that communication is simple, meaningful,  
7 uses plain language and avoids jargon and acronyms."  
8 There's a real art to doing that, is there not? It's  
9 not a simple thing?

10 MR DRUMMOND: Of course. But PM 2.5, PM 10, foreign 11.36AM  
11 particulates, there are a whole - I don't have the  
12 language immediately to hand, but there were a whole  
13 lot of references. I acknowledge that it is a  
14 difficult situation because you are dealing with  
15 complex matters and in this case quite technical, but 11.36AM  
16 that doesn't preclude or mean that it's not absolutely  
17 fundamental to, in any community, not just in affected  
18 communities around Morwell, as both Jim and I have been  
19 saying, be direct, honest, use simple language and use  
20 the language of the people of the community to whom 11.36AM  
21 you're speaking.

22 MS RICHARDS: Then the last of the recommendations you've  
23 made that I'd like to highlight is the importance of  
24 using multiple channels, so it's necessary to  
25 concentrate both on traditional methods, face-to-face 11.37AM  
26 contact as well as social media and use of the  
27 internet?

28 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, and the point that I'd add to this or  
29 appears there is that it's critical that this happens  
30 early in the crisis and, whilst we had things like door 11.37AM  
31 knocks and leaflets and so forth, they tended to occur



1 later in the crisis, and by that stage you've got a  
2 community with heightened levels of anxiety and the  
3 sooner you can deal with this and get that reach and  
4 distribution, the better.

5 MS RICHARDS: Thank you, I have no further questions for 11.37AM  
6 either of you at this time. Mr Riordan has told me he  
7 has some questions, particularly for  
8 Professor Macnamara. Mr Riordan is senior counsel for  
9 GDF Suez and he will ask you some questions.

10 <CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR RIORDAN: 11.37AM

11 As was indicated by Counsel Assisting, I appear on behalf of  
12 the Hazelwood Mine and so my questions will tend to be  
13 directed to the matters that you found or the opinions  
14 you expressed with respect to the mine response.

15 Might I start by saying that the ultimate response 11.38AM  
16 from, I think you professor, that there should be a  
17 review is a given. Plainly enough, following these  
18 events and the Inquiry the mine will be undertaking a  
19 review as you suggest.

20 I did want to ask you some questions about the 11.38AM  
21 assumptions and premises that you relied upon in coming  
22 to your conclusions for the purposes of better  
23 understanding some of your comments and  
24 recommendations.

25 In your report you attach the letter you received 11.39AM  
26 from the principal legal advisor for the Inquiry at  
27 Appendix 1. I take it, you have that in front of you,  
28 professor?---Yes.

29 It's now on the screen. Essentially the letter requests  
30 that you identify or respond to five particular topics 11.39AM  
31 or questions. You were provided with access to media

1 monitoring in relation to the fire and then the  
2 Inquiry's requested a number of statements including  
3 from the Fire Service Commissioner and other people's  
4 outline, and saying they'll provide them to you when  
5 they become available. Did you have a list of the 11.40AM  
6 information which you had available at the time of your  
7 preparation of your first report?---Do I have a list of  
8 it?

9 Yes?---I received a lot of documentation sent to me. I also  
10 went on personally to everyone of the websites, I 11.40AM  
11 searched cached memory of websites and statements, I  
12 used a number of online searches. I would certainly  
13 concede there could have been print only documents that  
14 I may not have seen, but certainly if it was online - I  
15 did a lot of my own searching and own research and I 11.40AM  
16 used a research assistant to assist me in endeavouring  
17 to get copies of all of the relevant documents.

18 In some cases with GDF I notice that they had  
19 posted an online statement and then actually replaced  
20 it with a new version of the statement. I did manage 11.41AM  
21 to retrieve some of the earlier documents but some - I  
22 think I accessed most of what I - - -

23 My question at this stage was a more limited one. I was  
24 wondering whether you actually had a list of the  
25 information that you had available to you upon which 11.41AM  
26 you based the opinions in your first report, and I take  
27 it the answer to that question is, you did not, and  
28 you've attempted to describe what you did do; is that  
29 correct?---I don't have a single list of the topic or  
30 the title of documents, but I looked at approaching 11.41AM  
31 1,000 documents in the course of this.

1 I take it that, since your first report, you've been  
2 provided now with some additional documents which I  
3 think Counsel Assisting identified?---That is true.  
4 Is that the extent of the additional documents that you have  
5 had reference to since your first report, those which 11.41AM  
6 have been identified by Counsel Assisting?---Yes.  
7 If we go to your report and page 42 of it, I take it that  
8 what you've set out there was in effect the  
9 communication efforts which were undertaken by GDF as  
10 you understood them at the time of the preparation of 11.42AM  
11 the first report?---Yes.  
12 At that time you were aware of four media releases, the  
13 first of which occurred on 11 March, a month after the  
14 fire? Correct?---That's true.  
15 The second matter about which you were aware was that on 11.42AM  
16 22 May there were the \$100 gift vouchers that they'd  
17 undertaken after the event, and you were also able to  
18 pick up on the website one letter from George Graham  
19 that you referred to as well. Is that correct?---I  
20 picked up a number of updates on the website. That was 11.43AM  
21 one in particular that was one of the more extensive  
22 ones. I was aware of press advertisements and other  
23 matters as well.  
24 At that time?---Yes, just in the final days as we were  
25 revising the report. What I did find is, the full page 11.43AM  
26 press advertisements appeared to be the same copy that  
27 was in some of the update leaflets that I had already  
28 looked at.  
29 If that's right, why wouldn't you refer to them when in the  
30 paragraph you say that, "In this case little can be 11.43AM  
31 said about the mine operator in terms of public

1 communication during the crisis as there was relatively  
2 little specifically." Then you set out and you don't  
3 mention the advertisements?---The advertisements, I  
4 think it was in the final days of writing the report;  
5 perhaps I could have done, but the point I still come 11.44AM  
6 back to is what I said earlier, is that I was looking  
7 at communication, not necessarily information. When I  
8 discovered that the press advertisements were in fact a  
9 placement of an information sheet that I'd already  
10 looked at, I was focusing particularly on what 11.44AM  
11 communities were understanding from it.

12 But I think the actual copies in the newspaper I  
13 didn't see until either the day I was submitting or the  
14 day after, and I didn't specifically refer to press  
15 advertisements. I don't know that they tangibly change 11.44AM  
16 anything; they are a distribution of the same  
17 information I'd seen before.

18 Again, I don't want to dwell too long on this but I do want  
19 to understand what you knew about what the Hazelwood  
20 Mine was doing and saying. On page 43 you make 11.44AM  
21 reference to a posting on the website of George Graham  
22 on 20 February which, as you say, is in substance the  
23 same as the first full page add that was placed on the  
24 same day, but you don't refer to the follow-up  
25 advertisements, and again I was wondering whether that 11.45AM  
26 was because they hadn't been brought to your attention  
27 or for some other reason?---To answer the question as  
28 usefully as I can, there was some additional  
29 information that I was not aware of at the time of  
30 writing the report, so I'll accept there was more 11.45AM  
31 information issued by the mine company than I was aware

1 of. Was there more communication by the mine company,  
2 is the point that I would debate.

3 This is this point about whether or not when anybody sets up  
4 a full paged ad, that's communicational information;  
5 this is the distinction you're drawing, is it?---Yes, 11.45AM  
6 and particularly if that full paged ad is the same  
7 information that's already been distributed on the web  
8 and in updates.

9 Maybe I'll come to that in a moment and give you an  
10 opportunity to comment on that as a means of 11.46AM  
11 communication. The other matter that you appear to  
12 have done is assumed that the mine had not fulfilled  
13 the preparation best practices that you refer to in  
14 pages 9 and 10 of your report; is that correct?---I was  
15 not assuming anything, but I was looking for evidence 11.46AM  
16 of it, and I didn't find evidence of it because the  
17 mine company - for example, I was critical of not  
18 attending the public meetings because visibility and  
19 symbolic attendance and being present is a key  
20 principle in crisis communication, so my evidence was 11.46AM  
21 they were not following those principles.

22 We'll come back to that in a moment and I understand that  
23 you wish to make that point and I want to ask you about  
24 it and give you a chance to develop it. My question  
25 probably wasn't as clear as it should be, because you 11.47AM  
26 point out in the first four points, scenario  
27 development, preparation, monitoring, network/bridge  
28 building prior to the crisis occurring; correct?---Yes.

29 Did you assume or infer that in fact the Hazelwood Mine had  
30 not addressed substantially all of those four 11.47AM  
31 questions?---I don't think I've said that anywhere,

1           have I?

2           I think you do make comments about preparation, we might  
3           come to them. I'm just wondering whether or not you do  
4           say you've drawn that inference or not?---I think I've  
5           mainly talked about visibility, but if I've talked           11.47AM  
6           about that - - -

7           I'll take you to where you comment about preparation later.  
8           The point is that you weren't given access, were you,  
9           to the Hazelwood Emergency Response Plan, the Mine Fire  
10          Policy and Code of Practice - I can go through these           11.47AM  
11          singularly if you prefer - the Hazelwood Mine Fire  
12          Instructions, or the specific Mine Fire Preparedness  
13          and Mitigation Plan that was in place immediately prior  
14          to this fire, none of those things were given to  
15          you?---No, that's true.           11.48AM

16          That's where you would normally find preparedness, relevant  
17          persons who take control in the case of an emergency  
18          and the like, and this Inquiry's heard quite a bit of  
19          evidence about those features. So you're not in a  
20          position to comment on whether or not the Hazelwood           11.48AM  
21          Mine had substantially achieved those first four points  
22          of pre-crisis preparedness?---No, but you'll have to  
23          tell me where I commented on it not be prepared. I  
24          don't recall that I said they were not prepared in  
25          those four areas.           11.48AM

26          For these purposes, without going to that, you're not saying  
27          now in your evidence that they were not prepared in  
28          those four areas?---I think there was some lack of  
29          preparation, yes, because we're talking about the point  
30          I just made about being visible, attending public           11.49AM  
31          meetings, expressing concern; there's a number of

1 principles of crisis communication - bearing in mind  
2 I'm talking about preparedness in communication too, I  
3 don't dare comment on their operational preparedness.  
4 The first four points of course do talk about operational -  
5 you identify in your report - do go beyond 11.49AM  
6 communication preparedness, though, don't they?---They  
7 are crisis preparation, communication preparation  
8 steps.  
9 I'll suggest to you, without going to it, the fact is that  
10 I'd suggest to you that it goes beyond that in 11.49AM  
11 identifying potential risks and the like would be part  
12 of an overall emergency action plan, wouldn't it, not  
13 just a communication plan?---As I said earlier, yes, to  
14 some extent that's true, they have to dovetail together  
15 because the identification of risks and things of what 11.49AM  
16 happened link from overall operational plans, but all  
17 of those points that I outline on page 9 and 10 are  
18 specifically to do with crisis communication. The  
19 scenario development is development of the scenarios in  
20 relation to the community and in relation to the 11.50AM  
21 communication, how will it play out in the media, not  
22 just how do we put the fire out.  
23 That would normally be included in part of the structure.  
24 In an emergency structure you'll have the people  
25 handling the media and plainly enough you'll have the 11.50AM  
26 people handling in this case the fire but whatever the  
27 crisis might be; correct?---That's true.  
28 Could I ask you, whether or not you either assumed or became  
29 aware that in this State there was this one source, one  
30 message is the way it's been referred to, approach to 11.50AM  
31 communication - well, no, broader than that, I'm sorry,

1 I'll withdraw that. But there is meant to be a  
2 co-ordinated approach to crisis management?---Yes.  
3 And you're aware of that?---Yes.  
4 You're aware of the fact that that includes one source, one  
5 message and therefore ensuring that there was one 11.51AM  
6 message going out, in this case from the Incident  
7 Controller, who had taken control of the fire on the  
8 Sunday night, the 9th. Are you aware of that  
9 principle?---Yes.  
10 Are you aware that under that principle the Incident 11.51AM  
11 Controller takes control not only of the fire but also  
12 the communication with the public with respect to the  
13 fire?---I have been critical of the Government agencies  
14 as well, I point out, and the concept of co-ordination  
15 totally support that. The concept of one message; I 11.51AM  
16 mean, that's nonsense, there's multiple messages,  
17 there's health messages, there's safety messages,  
18 evacuation, there's multiple messages. Co-ordination  
19 and being consistent, which we both support, does not  
20 necessarily mean that the mine can't be present and 11.52AM  
21 visible and standing united, and that's what I was  
22 talking about; that's part of co-ordination.  
23 We'll come to that, but certainly you understood that there  
24 was a principle that the communication with respect to  
25 the fire should be directed through the Incident 11.52AM  
26 Controller?---I read that and I've also read the  
27 statement from the mine where they offer the  
28 explanation of why they didn't attend and, I think I've  
29 answered the question, I understand that principle.  
30 You understand it?---That doesn't mean to say they can't 11.52AM  
31 attend the public meeting and stand there and support



1           it.

2       We'll come to that. I just want to make sure that you

3           understand that's a principle and you also understand

4           that's a principle that affected them, that they

5           considered that they should in fact subordinate           11.52AM

6           themselves to the message as was put out by the

7           Incident Controller through the CFA, et cetera? Did

8           you understand that? That that was their view?---I can

9           accept that's their perception.

10       Can I also put it to you that we've heard from Commissioner           11.52AM

11           Lapsley who has agreed that he considered that to be

12           the appropriate approach. Now, having said that, do

13           you have a different view as to whether or not the mine

14           in this crisis management should subordinate itself to

15           the Incident Controller for the purposes of           11.53AM

16           communications with the public?---I think we're talking

17           around it a little bit because the word "subordinate",

18           we can use that word; I would understand that the mine

19           would not take a lead position and go out and start

20           issuing statements, and I haven't suggested that, I've           11.53AM

21           simply talked about, if there's a public meeting I

22           would advise every company to be visible, to be there

23           and stand up alongside and support; that could still be

24           subordinate. But when you're not there, as a

25           communication person the public's perception, I think,           11.53AM

26           is they're not interested, they're too busy doing

27           something else, it's a perception.

28       I understand the criticism and I'll come back to it; I just

29           want to make sure you understand some of the other

30           factors that were taken into account and some of the           11.54AM

31           other actions that were taken by the Hazelwood Mine at

1 the time.

2 Were you aware that the throughout this time,  
3 whilst they did subordinate themselves to the Incident  
4 Controller for the purposes of making public  
5 communications about the mine, at all times they had a 11.54AM  
6 media officer who responded in particular to any media  
7 requests throughout the course of the fire. Was that  
8 something that you were informed about?---I discovered  
9 that in some of the documents, yes.

10 You would have discovered that presumably in the statement 11.54AM  
11 that you got from Mr Harkins after completion of your  
12 first report?---Yes, I have read that now.

13 You would I agree, it's a desirable thing for the mine to  
14 do, to make itself available to the media to respond to  
15 questions as the media feels like they need some 11.54AM  
16 information?---Yes.

17 Can I suggest to you also that, because of the community  
18 concern, they established a hotline so that the  
19 community could contact Hazelwood Mine and have a  
20 response to their questions, and they had a particular 11.55AM  
21 advisor who took the responsibility of ensuring that  
22 people who wanted to contact the mine would get a  
23 response to any questions they had. Were you aware of  
24 that?---I think that was one that I was not aware of  
25 until probably the last few days. 11.55AM

26 Again, you would endorse that as being an appropriate  
27 approach and an application of your principle of  
28 listening to the community and responding to the  
29 particular concerns of the community, wouldn't  
30 you?---Yes, provided it is coordinated with the 11.55AM  
31 authorities.

1 Of course, yes. It's critically important, isn't it,  
2 because we've all had the experience with trying to  
3 find a telephone number to ring Telstra and we just  
4 can't talk to them. It's critically important that the  
5 community should feel that they have a number where 11.56AM  
6 they can contact the Hazelwood Mine at a time like this  
7 to voice their concerns and get responses to their  
8 concerns. You'd agree with that, wouldn't you?---Yes,  
9 mostly. I mean, I think my criticisms are elsewhere.  
10 I think the hotlines that are most important are the 11.56AM  
11 official Government hotlines where people would go to,  
12 so I think that's an okay thing to do, but I don't  
13 think the mine having a hotline would have been  
14 something I would have criticised if you didn't. There  
15 are a lot of hotlines that are available to the public 11.56AM  
16 to go to the authorities.

17 I understand your criticisms are elsewhere, I was hoping to  
18 get some bonus points, professor?---If it can help you,  
19 I certainly am conceding that there was more done by  
20 the mine in information than I was aware of. I would 11.56AM  
21 put that on the record and say there was a lot more  
22 done that I understood, but I still come back to my  
23 critique of the communication and the engagement issues  
24 like visibility and symbolic meanings.

25 I understand and we'll come to them. I also want to mention 11.57AM  
26 to you that you probably knew that there were multiple  
27 direct lines of communication from the management of  
28 the mine plainly enough with the Incident Controller,  
29 but also with community leaders and council, et cetera.  
30 These persons had strong lines of communication with 11.57AM  
31 the mine. You would have appreciated that was likely

1 to have happened?---I certainly assumed that there  
2 would be very strong communication between the mine and  
3 all the various authorities, and the evidence I saw  
4 suggested that was the case. I'm not aware of the mine  
5 having direct communication with community leaders 11.57AM  
6 during the crisis.

7 Again, that's all part of, when the message is put out by  
8 some single source to avoid the sorts of  
9 inconsistencies that Mr Drummond has highlighted as  
10 well, it's critically important that the mine be able 11.57AM  
11 to feed into that source so it's able to have some  
12 influence on the content of the message that goes out;  
13 correct?---Yes, correct.

14 Were you aware of the internal communications that the mine  
15 was putting out in the first instance to its some 800 11.58AM  
16 employees who are plainly also residents and members of  
17 family in the area; you would have seen that from  
18 Mr Harkins' second statement?---I read Mr Harkins'  
19 statement, yes, and in fact under communication it  
20 would seem that a lot of what was described was what 11.58AM  
21 I'd call the internal communications, so I would agree  
22 that was possibly excellent. My brief was to look at  
23 public communication of course.

24 Then again, as you identified, you would think that the mine  
25 would want to maintain good relations with employees as 11.58AM  
26 well, particularly since so many of the community are  
27 employees. That was something that they felt at  
28 liberty to do whilst still maintaining the one source,  
29 one message, and you would agree that it was very good  
30 to have a strong line of communication with its 11.59AM  
31 employees, many of whom were worrying about whether

1 they were going to have a job in the following month;  
2 that's plainly something the company should do?---It's  
3 plainly something the company should do. The only  
4 caution I'd add is, I know the company says they did  
5 it. I look at evidence. I actually haven't seen any 11.59AM  
6 evidence that those 800 employees felt there was good  
7 communication. So, neither of us have that  
8 information. Perhaps they didn't understand it either,  
9 I don't know, maybe they did.

10 Could the witness be shown Annexure 8? Did you have a look 11.59AM  
11 through these documents? They were exhibits to  
12 Mr Harkins' statement. Did you see them?---I have read  
13 a number of them.

14 This is Annexure 8 to Mr Harkins' statement, I should  
15 say?---I'm aware of all the things that were done. All 12.00PM  
16 I'm qualifying is, when you say there was good  
17 communication, I didn't read something to show that the  
18 employees felt it was good communication and that they  
19 were happy.

20 For that you'd need to do a survey of the employees, 12.00PM  
21 wouldn't you?---Yes, and I'm not suggesting you had to,  
22 but you were making the point to me that there was good  
23 communication internally.

24 Professor, you should be able to tell me whether it was good  
25 communication or not?---I think it's a good attempt. 12.00PM

26 That's as high as you're prepared to score it, is it?---But  
27 you're earning brownie points.

28 Certainly the motivation is right, the intention is good at  
29 the very least without doing an analysis of each of  
30 these particular - - -?---I'd be willing to accept that 12.00PM  
31 the internal communication intention was good and it

1           seemed to be quite detailed in Mr Harkins' report.  
2       For completeness, whilst they were directed very internally  
3           to employees, they also went to politicians, to the  
4           Department, to the CFA, all being part of this one  
5           source, one message, making sure that those persons who       12.01PM  
6           were responsible for getting out the message had all of  
7           the information, including information from the mine,  
8           and you'd agree that's something they should do if  
9           they're going to adopt this one source, one message  
10          approach?---Well, communication with Government and all       12.01PM  
11          the authorities is absolutely essential, but I come  
12          back to my point that I was really only looking at some  
13          specific public communication aspects and I'm very  
14          willing to accept - it may well be the mine did an  
15          excellent job in those areas of communication with       12.01PM  
16          Government employees.

17       MEMBER PETERING:   Excuse me, Mr Riordan, "Not for external  
18          distribution" up the top right-hand corner.

19       MR RIORDAN:        These particular ones were not for external  
20          distribution; they went to employees and they went to,       12.01PM  
21          as I say, politicians, a number of Departments, the  
22          CFA, stakeholders, such persons; that wasn't for  
23          general distribution.

24       MEMBER PETERING:   So, some external?

25       MR RIORDAN:        Not external.   Sorry?                               12.02PM

26       PROF MACNAMARA:   Not public.

27       MR RIORDAN:        They did not go public.

28       MEMBER PETERING:   CFA, Government and so forth would be  
29          external to GDF, though.

30       MR RIORDAN:        That's what I'm saying, they weren't external       12.02PM  
31          to the extent that they went to those particular

1 stakeholders and critical message senders, but they  
2 weren't distributed - - -

3 PROF MACNAMARA: To the general public.

4 MR RIORDAN: - - - to the general public, yes.

5 I was going to pick up on one thing you said, 12.02PM  
6 professor. Whilst you say you concentrated on public  
7 communications, the fact of the matter is, if you're  
8 communicating detail in a manner which you think is  
9 acceptable to 800 employees who live in the area, that  
10 is more than just an internal memo, isn't it, it's 12.02PM  
11 actually likely in a community like Morwell to get out  
12 into the community and to help educate the community as  
13 to things that are going on?---I accept that those 800  
14 employees are certainly members of the community, yes,  
15 but I think the community's 15,000 or so - - - 12.03PM

16 Oh, yes, it's not that - - -?--- - - - and direct  
17 communication is what we're also advocating.

18 There was of course initially with the fire, once the  
19 Incident Controller got appointed, there was then a  
20 delay whilst they pulled into line behind the Incident 12.03PM  
21 Controller; but you are aware that by 19 and  
22 20 February they felt the need to say something on  
23 their own behalf, presumably because they were sensing  
24 what you've identified, and that is that people were  
25 expecting the mine to have a greater presence and not 12.03PM  
26 just simply fall in behind Mr Lapsley - as I think  
27 Mr Drummond, I think your report refers to? It might  
28 have been yours, professor - that there was a  
29 perception that the mine was hiding behind Mr Lapsley?  
30 Is that correct?---I don't know if it was Mr Lapsley 12.04PM  
31 specifically, but not being visible to the general

1 public is almost always interpreted, rightly or wrongly  
2 by the public, as not being involved, not participating  
3 and not supporting, rightly or wrongly.

4 One gets to this tension, doesn't one, between being behind  
5 a single message and to what extent you're able to 12.04PM  
6 project your own image and your own message  
7 meaningfully is something that really needs to be  
8 better identified; is that so?---Look, it is a tension,  
9 it's a very delicate balance and that's why a lot of  
10 preparation and a lot of relationships in terms of how 12.04PM  
11 you'll handle things publicly has got to be worked out.

12 I deal with companies that work across  
13 transnational borders and with other Governments, but  
14 they still have to work out a way to be visible and  
15 protect the company publicly even though you're in the 12.05PM  
16 hands of a foreign Government. It can be done, but it  
17 is a tension.

18 It can be done, it's a tension, it's a question of just  
19 getting it right, but you've got the right amount of  
20 image but you're not sending out messages that may 12.05PM  
21 conflict. As we've seen already in evidence, messages  
22 did during the course of this fire. So I think you'd  
23 agree with that?---Yes, but I mean, I still don't know  
24 that it helped when we had Government authorities  
25 saying - you say you were working very closely but 12.05PM  
26 Government authorities were saying the smoke was sort  
27 of okay, don't leave, and we read that, "This is one of  
28 the most serious fire situations ever confronted at the  
29 Morwell Mine." And so, that's an alarming statement to  
30 the public that I think they could only interpret as, 12.05PM  
31 "this is really serious", and meanwhile some other



1 Departments are saying "stay in your homes".  
2 You gave evidence about that. I wonder if we could go to  
3 Annexure 5 of Mr Harkins' statement where we will see  
4 that reference?---It's probably the full page ad, is  
5 it? 12.06PM  
6 Yes?---I remember it.  
7 We'll just get it up on the screen so everybody can see  
8 it?---It's paragraph 2.  
9 Can I suggest to you that the statement there, "This is one  
10 of the most serious fire situations ever confronted at 12.06PM  
11 the Morwell Mine", and, "GDF Suez Hazelwood is working  
12 closely with the CFA and MFB to extinguish smouldering  
13 mine faces as quickly as we can", is not necessarily  
14 inconsistent with the Chief Health Officer saying that  
15 you don't need to leave town. You'd disagree with 12.06PM  
16 that, do you?---I do. If it's one of the most serious  
17 mine fires that's ever confronted the Morwell Mine -  
18 there's a lot of literature around on the internet  
19 about burning brown coal, there was comments starting  
20 to be made that this was going to burn for a long time, 12.07PM  
21 I think that had to be adding to community anxiety.  
22 And I'm not blaming GDF for this, I'm saying at the  
23 same time a number of Government agencies weren't  
24 responding quickly enough to public fear.  
25 I'll only ask you one question about it because people can 12.07PM  
26 have their own views, it's a matter about which minds  
27 can differ, but this is saying - which was the truth  
28 and is the evidence, this was the most serious fire  
29 that's ever occurred at Hazelwood or maybe any other  
30 mine in Australia - but what the Chief Health Officer 12.07PM  
31 was doing was talking about the effects of that fire on

1 the community. There was no serious suggestion that  
2 the fire was likely to escape from the mine to affect  
3 the community, the problem became one of airborne  
4 substances; correct?---Well, that's a typical  
5 characteristic of brown coal fires; things escape. 12.07PM  
6 They do. Anyway, you consider that when they did put their  
7 toe in the water, they sent a message which was  
8 inconsistent, by telling the truth and being  
9 open?---No, I comment on that in the context of some  
10 inconsistency between Departments and different 12.08PM  
11 messages the public were getting, which we made, and so  
12 that may well be the truth, but at the same time you're  
13 receiving that - I mean, maybe the criticism is more at  
14 the Government Departments saying everything's okay  
15 here. 12.08PM  
16 Except that might be the truth too. The Chief Health  
17 Officer may well have been right in saying that, yes,  
18 there's a fire there, but the airborne matter's not  
19 such as should require you to consider evacuating?---It  
20 could well be correct. They both could be correct, but 12.08PM  
21 we're talking about human communication here, that's my  
22 concern.  
23 You would say, though, it may well be better for them not to  
24 come out and tell the truth there because it may have  
25 concerned people listening to the Chief Health Officer 12.09PM  
26 for example at the same time?---I know you asked me,  
27 would I rewrite this statement; the question could be,  
28 what is the point of saying it's one of the most  
29 serious mine fires? If you're addressing the public,  
30 which this was, it was a newspaper advertisement, and 12.09PM  
31 if you feel it's not a matter of public concern why put

1           it in there? To me it seems to be alarming.

2       I thought it was your open and truthful approach to it,  
3           professor, that you wanted them to do. Don't downplay  
4           it?---Public communication is talking about matters of  
5           concern to the public, and you're just saying to me           12.09PM  
6           that the fact it's a serious fire in the mine doesn't  
7           mean it's a problem to the public. I'm saying, talk  
8           about matters of concern to the public and the internal  
9           matters talk about them internally. Perhaps I'm being  
10          semantic, but I'm coming back to this issue of           12.09PM  
11          communication and the interpretation of the community  
12          versus the internal workings of the company.

13       I think you're also critical, aren't you, of the next  
14          paragraph where they say, "We fully understand the  
15          inconvenience and concern that the smoke and the fires           12.10PM  
16          caused people for people living in surrounding areas."  
17          You're critical of that too, aren't you?---I was mildly  
18          critical of that because it's the only statement I  
19          found of any sort of empathy or compassion and  
20          "inconvenience" is the first word expressed.           12.10PM  
21          The community that I have read and listened to were talking  
22          more than inconvenience, so there was a perception  
23          issue here I think.

24       When you say it's the only one, it's a repeated theme in the  
25          ads, is it not?---I think the exact words were           12.10PM  
26          repeated, if I'm right.

27       So what, you would have rewritten that and said health  
28          concerns or health issues and sorry? How would you  
29          have done it?---I would have to give thought to how I  
30          would write those words, but the case studies suggest           12.10PM  
31          that organisations usually lead with a statement of

1 public support and, you know, the word "inconvenience"  
2 is probably a little bit weak; it's a bit more than  
3 inconvenience I think people were feeling, so I think  
4 the phrase could have been clearer, stronger. If the  
5 fact that it's the most serious mine fire is not the 12.11PM  
6 public issue, then talk about what the public issue is.  
7 Their statement that they're working hard to resolve the  
8 fire and reduce the level of smoke as quickly as we  
9 can, that's okay I presume?---That's all good. I'm not  
10 actually focusing only on that particular issue, I'm 12.11PM  
11 saying there just wasn't enough. There was missing  
12 elements of communication as much or more than I'm  
13 criticising what was said.  
14 We're just dealing with this at the moment. Then they go on  
15 and deal with a number of specific topics. They would 12.11PM  
16 be, I suggest to you, topics of concern, current status  
17 of the fire, what caused the fire, how it was able to  
18 spread, they were matters of genuine concern within the  
19 community which had been identified by the mine that it  
20 was appropriate for them to address, was it not?---They 12.12PM  
21 are matters of concern, yes.  
22 And it was appropriate for them to address in this  
23 way?---Yes, I believe so.  
24 This is a good way to address it too, isn't it? Not the  
25 only way but a good way to address it, is to put in the 12.12PM  
26 local paper an advertisement that they can control the  
27 message rather than a press release, and would have  
28 very good penetration into the community?---As  
29 courteously as I can say, we seem to be going round in  
30 circles, though, because I can accept - even if I said 12.12PM  
31 it was a perfectly good advertisement, it doesn't take

1 away from the comment that I was making, this same  
2 company has not been present at two public meetings  
3 that occurred before this, and that's a very strong  
4 visible symbolic signal to the community. That was a  
5 communication, the ad came later. 12.12PM

6 In fact they do address that in this statement?---Yes, what  
7 they need to address is why they weren't there.

8 And they address issues such as carbon monoxide which I  
9 think Mr Drummond identified as being one of the issues  
10 that was floating around the community; a good thing 12.13PM  
11 for the mine to address as well, wasn't it? A matter  
12 of concern within the community?

13 MR DRUMMOND: Are you asking that to me?

14 MR RIORDAN: Maybe to Mr Drummond?

15 MR DRUMMOND: I've listened to the last few minutes and my 12.13PM  
16 sense here is that, having listened and paid great  
17 attention to all of the community consultations, if the  
18 community believed that GDF Suez's communications were  
19 good, that would have come out in the community  
20 consultations. I didn't hear that in the community 12.13PM  
21 consultations, and the consultations, which I take as  
22 being a good indicator of the mood of the community,  
23 suggests that GDF Suez was noticeably absent. So we  
24 can look at this piece of information and say, well,  
25 it's addressing a range of issues and we think those 12.13PM  
26 issues are appropriate and I accept all of that, I make  
27 the point that the community, based on my analysis of  
28 it, would probably disagree.

29 MR RIORDAN: My question of course was a different one. My  
30 question was more limited, just that you identify 12.14PM  
31 carbon monoxide as an issue and it's an appropriate

1 thing for the mine to be addressing, however well  
2 they've addressed it at other times, you'd agree with  
3 that proposition?

4 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

5 MR RIORDAN: Dealing more generally, do you agree that the 12.14PM  
6 concern that you identified in the community about GDF  
7 Suez was principally about the fact that they were not  
8 prominent enough, particularly in the early stages.  
9 You agree with that?

10 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, I agree with that. 12.14PM

11 MR RIORDAN: You accept that that may well be the result of  
12 GDF Suez considering that the one source, one message  
13 policy required them to subordinate their position to  
14 the Incident Controller, whether or not they should  
15 have done that or not - - - 12.14PM

16 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, whether or not they should have done it  
17 is a matter that can be debated into the future. I  
18 understand how - - -

19 MR RIORDAN: It's a matter this Inquiry may well be able to  
20 make some recommendations about, how it might be 12.15PM  
21 handled to deal with the tension. You would agree with  
22 the professor that there is a real tension there  
23 between that one message and companies trying to  
24 impress upon their local community that they are in  
25 fact engaged with the problem? 12.15PM

26 PROF MACNAMARA: There is a tension there and I think we've  
27 acknowledged it.

28 MR RIORDAN: That's why I was addressing it to Mr Drummond  
29 on this occasion to see whether he agreed with you as  
30 well. 12.15PM

31 PROF MACNAMARA: Sorry.

1 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, look, I acknowledge that there is the  
2 potential for that tension; that is, if I understand  
3 this correctly, that GDF Suez wants to adopt the  
4 subordination approach and the one source, one message  
5 approach, and that potentially doesn't align with the 12.15PM  
6 needs of the community, and if that's what you're  
7 referring to by tension, then I accept that.

8 MR RIORDAN: I wasn't proposing to take you to all the  
9 advertisements because obviously they're progressive  
10 and they deal with updates, and I presume, apart from 12.16PM  
11 what you've identified, you didn't have any other  
12 problem with the regular advertisements that came  
13 through from Hazelwood Mine in the newspaper after that  
14 time?

15 PROF MACNAMARA: No specific problems, no. 12.16PM

16 MR RIORDAN: The critical issue that you come back to is the  
17 fact that there were two public meetings which they  
18 didn't attend.

19 PROF MACNAMARA: That was one of the issues, but I think  
20 we've also commented on, and it is a professional 12.16PM  
21 opinion, that the revived Morwell project/campaign  
22 we've also commented on that, that it was inappropriate  
23 in some respects to me.

24 We'll come to that too?---You asked me, was it the only one,  
25 so my answer is, no, it wasn't the only one. 12.16PM

26 Thank you, that's quite right. In that case then, the issue  
27 that there arises, and I'm wondering, is there any  
28 actual learning on this question: I'll ask you to  
29 assume for these purposes that the company is following  
30 the one source, one message approach and recognises 12.17PM  
31 this as being with respect to health, a matter about

1 which they don't have any sensible input, but when  
2 tossing up whether or not they should attend, whether  
3 they'll be concerned by the prospect that people may  
4 well expect them to respond to questions and to speak  
5 and whether or not they may cause greater aggravation 12.17PM  
6 by deferring to Lapsley and the CFA generally than  
7 absence, and whether absence of body in this instance  
8 might be presence of mind. Is there any learning on  
9 that, is my question?---I think there's a lot of  
10 learnings for everybody. I do point out in our 12.17PM  
11 supplementary report, Lachlan and I made a particular  
12 note that, while noting that GDF Suez public  
13 communication was deficient in some aspects, we go on  
14 and point out that Government Departments and  
15 authorities have the primary responsibility. So we do 12.18PM  
16 acknowledge a number of aspects of what you're saying.  
17 I can only go back to my own professional  
18 experience as well, and that is, every time there's a  
19 crisis the company needs to protect its own reputation,  
20 and to some extent you may have been a victim of 12.18PM  
21 certain policies and certain protocols, and that is,  
22 you've got to be visible, that's just a fundamental  
23 principle.  
24 Now, you can handle that meeting because I've done  
25 it, and that is you stand alongside and you negotiate 12.18PM  
26 with the Government authorities and you say, "We want  
27 to be there and we want to be alongside you. On  
28 matters of health, et cetera, we'll immediate refer to  
29 you and say we can't comment, but we support these  
30 authorities, we are working with them", and say that to 12.18PM  
31 the community. Be visible, be available.



1 I want to ask you one more question about this. How do you  
2 handle a position where you have potentially very  
3 concerned members of the community who want you to  
4 answer things with respect to the fire where you  
5 consider that you're subordinated to the position of 12.19PM  
6 the CFA? Then is there any learning on what the  
7 reaction of those people are when you say, well really,  
8 we're just going to be deferring to what the CFA says  
9 about that?--I find if meetings are well chaired and  
10 well coordinated the Chair can say to the public, on 12.19PM  
11 matters of health, it is the Department of Health that  
12 are the experts; on matters of fighting the fire the  
13 CFA; on matters to do with the company or its  
14 preparation or what it's doing are questions for you  
15 and the Chair direct, and I don't think the public has 12.19PM  
16 a problem with that. It does require co-ordination by  
17 the others and the Government agencies who work with  
18 you.

19 Maybe a good understanding of your local community  
20 too?---Absolutely. 12.19PM

21 And how they're likely to respond?---Yes.

22 On that topic, there was some mention I think in both your  
23 reports about understanding Morwell. Just speaking for  
24 the human faces of my client who are residents of  
25 Morwell, presumably you would defer to their judgment, 12.20PM  
26 much as it was at the time, as to what was appropriate  
27 for Morwell, being residents of Morwell.

28 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

29 PROF MACNAMARA: I would think the Government departments  
30 should have listened to community groups and probably 12.20PM  
31 your people as well, you are the locals. I'd support

1 that.

2 MR RIORDAN: So your comments were related to the people  
3 coming from outside?---I grew up in a small country  
4 town and I know, when a guy in a suit pops in from  
5 Melbourne or Sydney, I know what the locals think.

12.20PM

6 Sorry.

7 I wonder if they're thinking it now, professor?---I took my  
8 tie off, see.

9 MEMBER PETERING: I think, in your defence Mr Riordan, you  
10 grew up in a country town?

12.20PM

11 MR RIORDAN: We call it a "provincial city". Same place as  
12 the Chief Health Officer, by chance, Ms Petering.

13 Professor, if I could take you back possibly to your  
14 conclusions at page 42 of your statement. I wanted to  
15 make a couple of comments. The first bullet point,  
16 just to make it perfectly clear, it is true that the  
17 media releases commenced really at the stage when the  
18 fire was at least under control, was when the company  
19 took over media releases, but you acknowledge that  
20 prior to that there was public communication through  
21 the advertisements as we've discussed, so it wasn't  
22 their first dalliance into public communication;  
23 correct?---True.

12.21PM

12.21PM

24 The second one is, no express of regret, concern, empathy or  
25 compassion. Again we've dealt with that; they've said  
26 they've got concern, they understand. There is some  
27 expression, you say, that it didn't probably didn't go  
28 far enough; correct?---Yes, and we've levelled that  
29 criticism at Government agencies as well.

12.22PM

30 Then I think the next bullet point goes to the Revive  
31 Morwell, which was the provision of \$100 vouchers, and

12.22PM

1 you're critical of that. Let me first say to you, you  
2 would accept your criticism about that is really quite  
3 subjective?---It is, based on experience and some  
4 research, though.

5 If the big issue in the town at the end of the fire, not 12.22PM  
6 during the fire as I think Mr Lachlan referred to, at  
7 the end of the fire is this town is suffering by reason  
8 of the aftermath of the fire and the businesses are  
9 suffering, you would agree it's a perfectly appropriate  
10 thing for an industry such as the mine to attempt to 12.23PM  
11 inject some money back into the shops and the  
12 commercial heart of the town? You'd agree with that, a  
13 perfectly appropriate thing?---I believe that - I've  
14 said that in my report - as an economic gesture and  
15 particularly to the businesses of Morwell, \$670,000 is 12.23PM  
16 a significant amount of money, but my position would be  
17 that that mostly benefits local business and that's an  
18 important sector, but \$100 in the hands of residents  
19 isn't really a lot of money, and so to me it was a very  
20 good business initiative I would think, but less so 12.23PM  
21 with the public.

22 Can I suggest to you that, with respect, your analysis fails  
23 to understand that the public are concerned about the  
24 businesses of their town, and that therefore, whilst  
25 \$100 is plainly token in one sense, it was always 12.24PM  
26 intended to be for the purposes of promoting business,  
27 it was never for the purposes of providing  
28 compensation? Would you agree with that  
29 proposition?---Yes, to an extent but I just think,  
30 again I come back to the public perception of it; it is 12.24PM  
31 a relatively small amount of money, I think you had to

1 spend it within a week, you had to spend it on local  
2 businesses. And yes, I've noted that it's a  
3 significant amount of money into the economy. You  
4 know, "Revive Morwell's Economy" might be a good title  
5 for the logo, which could be redesigned, but I'm not  
6 sure it revives Morwell's spirits or Morwell's citizens  
7 et cetera.

12.24PM

8 And, it's dangerous to play with money in a  
9 crisis. I usually warn clients, don't offer money, it  
10 can backfire; offer to clean their houses for nothing  
11 or give them something tangible directly related to the  
12 problem. It is somewhat subjective.

12.25PM

13 You were thinking about compensation?---Yes.

14 You actually talk about it, don't you, in your first hyphen  
15 in that point, "\$100 per household is a relatively  
16 small amount of money for families who report  
17 potentially serious physical health effects as well as  
18 substantial mental health concerns caused by stress and  
19 anxiety during the crisis." Are you not relating the  
20 money there to the suffering that they've caused?---One  
21 can always improve one's words, but I was relating an  
22 amount of money to mental and physical issues. People  
23 were upset, people were concerned, people are worried,  
24 and offering money usually has the - you know, they're  
25 worried that their rainwater tanks are unusable or  
26 whatever.

12.25PM

12.25PM

12.25PM

27 I didn't use the word "compensation" at all, and  
28 people can be worried that that's somehow buying them  
29 off, whereas coming and cleaning their house or  
30 cleaning their rainwater tank might be more of a  
31 solution for them.

12.26PM

1 I hadn't given detailed thought to what should be  
2 done; I pointed out offering an amount of money is  
3 probably not how most crisis communication experts  
4 would advise the company.

5 You then seem to make a criticism of the spokesman on the 12.26PM  
6 basis of what he's quoted as saying in the newspaper on  
7 17 February. If I could just show you what that  
8 article was, and I presume you saw it, but if you could  
9 have a look at the article. Was it intended to be a  
10 criticism of Mr Rowe, the fact that he was quoted as he 12.27PM  
11 was?---No, it was pointing out - I was looking for  
12 where the mine was - where the public was reading  
13 something from the mine.

14 When they did in this particular case, and Mr Rowe  
15 might have been severely edited by journalists, I don't 12.27PM  
16 know, but he was talking about the internal workings of  
17 the mine, when the anger being expressed at meetings  
18 was all about their effects in the town and the ash and  
19 so forth, so in a way it was the wrong audience. If  
20 you're talking in the local newspaper, a lot of people 12.27PM  
21 would have been like, "I don't care about the mine  
22 right now, I'm worried about my house".

23 A perfectly reasonable point, but it's the difficulty with  
24 controlling the media, is it not?---I accept that.

25 Mr Rowe says that what happened was that he was rung up and 12.28PM  
26 said, "Tell us, what's the state of the fire at the  
27 moment?" As a good media point of contact he replied,  
28 and then they quoted right down the end of the story  
29 which is really principally about carbon monoxide, and  
30 his comment of course is unrelated?---I accept that 12.28PM  
31 happens.

1 Accepting that it's not the way the mine would like it to go  
2 forward as a representation of their concerns, you've  
3 got limited control over the press?---You do, that's  
4 why would you have got to get everything else right.  
5 But it is a reason why in these circumstances the full 12.28PM  
6 page advertisements do have the advantage that you can  
7 present it, for better or for worse, the way you want  
8 to present it?---Yes, they do.  
9 They also, do they not, indicate to the people when you do  
10 an ad of that size, that there's some level of concern 12.28PM  
11 within mine about the predicament that's engulfed the  
12 community?---Yes.  
13 You mention the long statement of George Graham, which is in  
14 fact, when they put the ads in, they put each of them  
15 on the website, which again you would say was an 12.29PM  
16 appropriate thing to do to reach a further audience;  
17 correct?---Yes.  
18 Plainly enough you make a comment towards the bottom of 45  
19 saying that you have to use a certain search function,  
20 but you would accept that these things get updated and 12.29PM  
21 moved around on the website, so the fact that when you  
22 were looking it was difficult to find wouldn't indicate  
23 that it was difficult to find at the time when it was  
24 released?---Look, most people these days make sure  
25 they've got a permanent record of all of their 12.29PM  
26 statements and keep them archived, so I would say  
27 that's just probably not best practice technique of  
28 keeping all your archive statements there for a record.  
29 Not much to do with crisis management, but just generally  
30 good recording?---Just good communication. Certainly 12.30PM  
31 in a crisis I'd like to keep a copy of every statement

1 I've written to show that.

2 Mr Chairman, could I tender that copy of the news report?

3 CHAIRMAN: Yes, the question is whether it's a submission.

4 MR RIORDAN: It could be part of the statement of the

5 professor. He does refer to it.

12.30PM

6 CHAIRMAN: We'll treat it as linked to the report; that

7 means it's part of exhibit 50.

8

9 #EXHIBIT 50 - (Addition) Newspaper article of 17 February.

10

12.30PM

11 MR RIORDAN: On a similar topic, professor, on page 46, and

12 you put this in a section where you're dealing with the

13 mine company, you comment or commence the comments by

14 saying, "While media reporting could not be taken as

15 always accurate or fair, or fully representative of all

12.31PM

16 views, a major editorial in Victorian's leading

17 newspaper, The Age, claim that there does not seem to

18 be any sense of urgency in dealing with the Hazelwood

19 Open Coal Mine Fire." You then attach the relevant

20 editorial. The section that you refer to, apart from

12.31PM

21 being highlighted at the end, in fact is about a third

22 of the way down the middle column, is it not?---If you

23 say it is, yes.

24 This article or editorial is really all about a criticism,

25 it would appear, of the Chief Health Officer and other

12.31PM

26 health authorities not acting promptly enough with

27 respect to the air quality. Would you agree with

28 that?---Yes and I mean, looking at my report, this was

29 in the very final stages of editing, I would accept

30 that that editorial does not only relate - it is

12.32PM

31 actually in the section related to GDF Suez, so it

1 actually relates to the whole - it probably needs a  
2 sub-heading of "summary" above it.

3 That was the simple point I was asking, and you could  
4 concede, this is not really directed to the mine at  
5 all; it's directed to the regulatory authorities not  
6 responding promptly enough to the health issues in  
7 Morwell. It's not a suggestion that certainly they  
8 weren't trying hard enough to put out the fire or  
9 anything like that?---No.

12.32PM

10 MR RIORDAN: Mr Drummond, I think most of the issues that  
11 I've dealt with the professor really more than covers  
12 what were at least in the content of your report with  
13 GDF Suez which is really on page 19 of your report,  
14 6.4.5. That's where you deal with GDF Suez?

12.33PM

15 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

12.33PM

16 I think you've already made reference to the comment by one  
17 Morwell resident, but you also focused on their failure  
18 to attend the meetings. So your recommendation should  
19 be that there should be clearer guidelines which make  
20 it plain that in these crisis management the one  
21 source, one message should still permit companies to be  
22 present - - -?---Absolutely.

12.33PM

23 - - - and maybe even present to enable them to - - -?---And  
24 that's why in this particular paragraph I use words  
25 like "appeared to show a lack of commitment and  
26 responsibility". The perception among the community  
27 and based on my analysis, the community consultation,  
28 supports that.

12.34PM

29 Nonetheless, much of your opinion highlighted the problems  
30 that arise as a result of inconsistent messages; you  
31 agree that's a priority to avoid?---Yes.

12.34PM



1 You'd agree with the professor, would you, that even if the  
2 public who attended a public meeting were of the view  
3 that the mine wasn't as forthcoming about certain  
4 issues where they had to defer to the CFA, your view  
5 would be, that would serve them better than being 12.34PM  
6 absent?---Yes. Avoiding inconsistent messages doesn't  
7 preclude them being engaged and at these meetings.  
8 But it may preclude them in saying all they want to  
9 say?---Yes, but I'd defer to Jim's point there which is  
10 a well managed run meeting. 12.35PM  
11 PROF MACNAMARA: From the very start.  
12 MR RIORDAN: A well managed, well run meeting in the course  
13 of a fire in Morwell may well be a bit more  
14 challenging, can I suggest to you. Thank you, no  
15 further questions. 12.35PM  
16 MS PETERING: Mr Riordan, could you remind me where the one  
17 source, one message policy fits?  
18 MR RIORDAN: Yes. Obviously, it's in the evidence of  
19 Commissioner Lapsley and I can give you the  
20 transcript - - - 12.35PM  
21 MS RICHARDS: I can assist.  
22 MR RIORDAN: There is in fact a document to that effect, is  
23 there not? I'll allow the Counsel Assisting, thank you  
24 very much Counsel Assisting.  
25 MS RICHARDS: If you'd like, I'll assist liberally today. 12.36PM  
26 It's in paragraph 150 of Mr Lapsley's first statement  
27 where he says, "Following the 2009 bushfires Victoria  
28 introduced an integrated warning system based on the  
29 principle of one source, one message. This provides  
30 warnings to communities through such means such as the 12.36PM  
31 emergency broadcasters website, social media channels,

1 the FireReady mobile application, the Victoria  
2 bushfires information line and the national emergency  
3 alert telephone warning system."

4 MEMBER PETERING: Thank you.

5 MR RIORDAN: Can I also suggest that at transcript page 129 12.36PM  
6 he elaborated on that on day one. Page 129 line 26  
7 onwards.

8 <CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR BURNS:

9 Professor Macnamara, your expertise is in communications,  
10 that's right? You have no expertise in Emergency 12.37PM  
11 Management per se.

12 PROF MACNAMARA: No.

13 MR BURNS: The same position with you, Mr Drummond?

14 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

15 MR BURNS: You're not in a position to second-guess any of 12.37PM  
16 the Incident Controllers or any of the commanders of  
17 the secondary response agencies, are you?

18 PROF MACNAMARA: I think the answer has to be, no. I mean,  
19 I've worked with those sorts of people in the past but  
20 not in this case. 12.37PM

21 MR BURNS: Professor, you talk about the community, and  
22 indeed both of you do; you talk about community  
23 perception as if it's a unified voice, but indeed it's  
24 not a unified voice, is it? You agree with that?

25 PROF MACNAMARA: That's true. 12.37PM

26 MR BURNS: What it is really is a collection of individual  
27 responses by people; that's right?

28 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.

29 MR DRUMMOND: I'm not sure I'd agree with that proposition.

30 When analysing community consultations I look for 12.37PM  
31 convergent validity, and what I mean by that is, I

1           won't put one quote in a report if it's only said by  
2           one person; I'm looking for consultancy of opinion  
3           before I give it sufficient weight to put in a report.  
4   MR BURNS: Consistency of opinion of those that responded?  
5   MR DRUMMOND: Of those that were at community consultations       12.38PM  
6           as well as the other matters and material I looked at.  
7   MR BURNS: Many people didn't go to community consultations?  
8   MR DRUMMOND: I accept that.  
9   MR BURNS: People are far more likely to be vocal if they  
10          have a complaint about something than if they wish to       12.38PM  
11          commend it; you'll agree with that?  
12   MR DRUMMOND: Yes, if you're saying it's a self-selective  
13          audience or there's a selection bias - that is, those  
14          who are more opinionated are more likely to attend  
15          those meetings, which is the point I think you're       12.38PM  
16          making.  
17   MR BURNS: It's reasonable to presume that there will be  
18          some people in the community who had sufficient access  
19          to information?  
20   MR DRUMMOND: Sorry?   12.38PM  
21   MR BURNS: It's reasonable to presume that there are people  
22          in this community that had sufficient access to  
23          information?  
24   MR DRUMMOND: As a general statement, yes.  
25   MR BURNS: Professor, you said that you had a difficulty       12.38PM  
26          with the word "unprecedented" which has been used by  
27          several people and you said this wasn't unprecedented.  
28          I suggest to you that it being the largest fire in more  
29          than 100 years of the operation of the mine, burning  
30          for 45 days and involving 7,000 firefighters, it was       12.39PM  
31          absolutely unprecedented in scale; you don't refute

1           that?

2       PROF MACNAMARA:  It was unprecedented by the literal meaning  
3           in Australia.  So it's not unprecedented if you look  
4           internationally, but the point we went on to make is,  
5           whether you use the literal meaning of "unprecedented",       12.39PM  
6           it was foreseeable.

7       MR BURNS:  They mean different things, don't they?

8       PROF MACNAMARA:  They do, and the foreseeability though is  
9           the issues that should inform planning, not whether  
10          there's a precedent.  We haven't been hit by a       12.39PM  
11          meteorite yet, but that doesn't mean we wouldn't plan  
12          an evacuation.

13       MR BURNS:  There was considerable plans in relation to  
14          Emergency Management; you accept that?

15       PROF MACNAMARA:  Yes.       12.39PM

16       MR BURNS:  Professor, indeed both of you, in the last dot  
17          point on your joint paper, timing and tailoring -  
18          perhaps I'll direct the question to you Mr Drummond -  
19          you understand there was never an announcement for  
20          evacuation?       12.40PM

21       MR DRUMMOND:  Sorry, I'll just find that.

22       CHAIRMAN:  Could I just interrupt, but there's an urgency in  
23          relation to a plane that's going to take  
24          Professor Macnamara away, and could I ask you to direct  
25          as many as possible of the questions that are       12.40PM  
26          appropriate to him ASAP?

27       MR BURNS:  Yes, sir.

28       PROF MACNAMARA:  I'm embarrassed, but it is an international  
29          connection.

30       MR BURNS:  Yes, I understand, thank you Mr Chairman.       12.40PM  
31          Perhaps I'll address this question to you then,

1 Professor Drummond. Do you understand there was never  
2 an announcement requiring evacuation?

3 PROF MACNAMARA: I understand there was a temporary  
4 relocation directive issued.

5 MR BURNS: Do you understand that the Chief Health Officer 12.40PM  
6 recommended that people in a particular part of Morwell  
7 relocate?

8 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.

9 MR BURNS: It's suggested in your joint paper, the last  
10 sentence, "Given the situation had not changed, the 12.41PM  
11 date and timing seemed arbitrary." Are you not aware  
12 of the basis on which the Chief Health Officer issued  
13 that recommendation on 28 February? Are you not aware  
14 of the situation that had changed?

15 PROF MACNAMARA: Probably not. I'm not. 12.41PM

16 MR DRUMMOND: Not in great detail, but the reason we make  
17 this point here is that that's the community's  
18 perception.

19 MR BURNS: You don't say that the community perception has  
20 changed, Mr Drummond; what you say is "given the 12.41PM  
21 situation had not" changed. Do you think there might  
22 be some information that you haven't had access to?

23 MR DRUMMOND: It's possible.

24 PROF MACNAMARA: But that was not communicated.

25 MR BURNS: Does the fact that the Chief Health Officer made 12.41PM  
26 that recommendation on the basis of the spike in the  
27 level of particulate matter, PM 2.5, on the 27th there  
28 had been a spike and it had got up to the dangerous  
29 level, and that it was that spike that precipitated her  
30 decision on the 27th, communicated on the 28th, to 12.42PM  
31 advise people to relocate in a particular area?

1 PROF MACNAMARA: That may be true, I have no knowledge. I'm  
2 thinking, she had it on the 27th; does it need 24-hours  
3 even to issue that?

4 MR DRUMMOND: And I'd suggest there were other spikes too  
5 and significant spikes that might have warranted making 12.42PM  
6 such a relocation earlier.

7 MR BURNS: I see. So you're second-guessing the Chief  
8 Health Officer about that, are you?

9 MR DRUMMOND: No.

10 MR BURNS: You criticise, Mr Drummond, the smoke advisories, 12.42PM  
11 you said there were too many. I think you said there  
12 were over 100 from the EPA; is that right?

13 MR DRUMMOND: Yes, I may have that number wrong but, yes.

14 MR BURNS: Indeed, there was 68.

15 PROF MACNAMARA: Okay. I still stand by that statement. I 12.43PM  
16 counted 76, but some have had different titles.

17 MR BURNS: Yes, but you say too many?

18 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

19 MR BURNS: Is there a position that, you can be damned if  
20 you do and damned if you don't? You're nodding, 12.43PM  
21 professor?

22 MR DRUMMOND: Yes.

23 MR BURNS: Yes, thank you.

24 PROF MACNAMARA: I mean, these things are difficult and  
25 that's why we keep coming back to, you've got to work 12.43PM  
26 dynamically with the community. I mean, you'd like me  
27 to say it's all perfect; it clearly wasn't, people were  
28 upset and people didn't understand things, so clearly  
29 we can do better.

30 MR BURNS: No dynamic situation involving 7,000 firefighters 12.43PM  
31 is going to be perfect, is it?

1 PROF MACNAMARA: No.

2 MR BURNS: Professor, you accept the government agencies  
3 were not the only groups communicating with the public  
4 during this incident?

5 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, they were primary sources though. 12.43PM

6 MR BURNS: There's often disparate parts of the community  
7 that may want to advocate a particular point specific  
8 to that group? You accept that some people during the  
9 course of the incident want to advocate a particular  
10 point? 12.43PM

11 PROF MACNAMARA: That happens in all cases, yes.

12 MR BURNS: People in different groups may source information  
13 from another jurisdiction, for argument's sake, which  
14 is inconsistent with the circumstances of Hazelwood.  
15 Do you accept that? 12.44PM

16 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.

17 MR BURNS: For argument's sake, the make-up of brown coal is  
18 very different in the United States than it is in the  
19 Latrobe Valley. Do you understand that?

20 PROF MACNAMARA: I believe so, yes. 12.44PM

21 MR BURNS: People reading that the makeup of brown coal and  
22 coal fires in the United States might have a very  
23 alarmist view about what's in that particular smoke in  
24 that it might be very different to what's in the smoke  
25 in the Latrobe Valley. Do you accept that? 12.44PM

26 PROF MACNAMARA: I do, but it has to be explained to the  
27 community if that's the case. And I can't comment  
28 about these technical issues; all I know is, a lot of  
29 the people didn't seem to understand those things.  
30 And, if there are dissenting voices in the community, 12.44PM  
31 that's where we come back to, you need clear, trusted

1 sources speaking out and working with the community.

2 MR BURNS: When people source their own information,  
3 sometimes that leads to a proliferation of rumour and  
4 misinformation on social media?

5 PROF MACNAMARA: It does in everything and it did in the 12.44PM  
6 Queensland floods as well.

7 MR BURNS: That makes the task of giving a unified and  
8 coherent message all the more difficult? That's right?

9 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes, and it requires good communication  
10 skills; extremely good communication planning and 12.45PM  
11 skills.

12 MR BURNS: All of these things heighten the risk that the  
13 message being received by the community is a mixed one?

14 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.

15 MR BURNS: That is, information coming from different 12.45PM  
16 groups, so that's why the one source, one message if it  
17 can be achieved is the best course, isn't it?

18 PROF MACNAMARA: Well, the one source, one message is a  
19 Government policy. I've already said I think having  
20 single authoritative sources can work, but one message, 12.45PM  
21 I think what they mean is consistency on messages on  
22 particular issues; there's more than one message to be  
23 put across.

24 MR BURNS: There's no single template for effective  
25 communication, is there? 12.45PM

26 PROF MACNAMARA: No.

27 MR BURNS: Indeed, where a particular community has  
28 undergone certain disadvantages, it's even harder to  
29 have a single template for effective communication,  
30 isn't it? 12.45PM

31 PROF MACNAMARA: Yes.



1 MR BURNS: Nothing further, thank you.

2 MS RICHARDS: I have no re-examination. May

3 Professor Macnamara and Mr Drummond be excused?

4 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you very much, you are excused.

5 <(THE WITNESSES WITHDREW) 12.46PM

6 MS RICHARDS: I've given a commitment to Brooke Burke, the

7 community witness for today, that she will be on at 2

8 so that she can manage her 10 week old baby, but we

9 thought it might be useful to at least start Merita

10 Tabain's evidence before lunch so that she can adopt 12.46PM

11 her statement and we can deal with the preliminaries.

12 MR ROZEN: I call Merita Tabain.

13 <MERITA LUCIJA TABAIN, affirmed and examined:

14 MR ROZEN: Good afternoon Ms Tabain. Can you please confirm

15 for the transcript your full name?---Merita Lucija 12.47PM

16 Tabain.

17 That's Tabain spelt T-A-B-A-I-N?---That's correct.

18 Your professional address is 637 Flinders Street, Docklands

19 in the State of Victoria?---That's correct.

20 Ms Tabain, you hold the position of Director, Media and 12.48PM

21 Corporate Communications with the Victorian

22 Police?---Yes, I do.

23 To use the language of the public service, that's your

24 substantive position; is that right?---Yes, it is.

25 But you're here today wearing a different hat. You're the 12.48PM

26 chair of the Emergency Management Joint Public

27 Information Committee?---Yes.

28 EMJPIC?---That's right.

29 There's been a bit of a debate about whether that's an

30 acronym as such. It's certainly well-known as 12.48PM

31 EMJPIC?---Yes.

1 You've held the position with the Victoria Police since May  
2 2012; is that right?---Yes.

3 With that position comes the role of chair of EMJPIC?---Yes.  
4 Does that mean we understand you've held both those roles  
5 since you started with the Victoria Police in May 12.49PM  
6 2012?---That's correct.

7 For the purposes of the Inquiry, you've made a witness  
8 statement dated 27 May 2014?---Yes.

9 Have you read through a copy of that statement before coming  
10 along to give evidence today?---Yes. 12.49PM

11 There are a couple of changes that you'd like to make to the  
12 statement?---Yes.

13 The first of those in paragraph 4 on the first page. Would  
14 you like to delete the words "by convention" at the  
15 beginning of that sentence and replace them with the 12.49PM  
16 words "under the Emergency Management Manual  
17 Victoria"?---Yes.

18 The other change relates to the date of a  
19 meeting?---Paragraph 110.

20 Paragraph 110 on page 22 of the statement, you there refer 12.50PM  
21 to a meeting which we've already heard quite a bit  
22 about today and which I will ask you about later at the  
23 Kernot Hall in Morwell. You describe that as having  
24 taken place on the evening of Wednesday, 18 February  
25 2014. Do you wish to change that to "Tuesday, 12.50PM  
26 18 February"?---Yes, I do.

27 With those changes, are the contents of your statement true  
28 and correct?---Yes, they are.

29 I'll tender the statement, together with two volumes of  
30 attachments. 12.50PM  
31

1 #EXHIBIT 53 - Statement of Merita Tabain with two volumes of  
2 attachments.

3 MR ROZEN: A little bit about your background Ms Tabain.  
4 Your qualifications are a Bachelor of Arts Degree from  
5 Monash University?---Yes. 12.50PM

6 Was there any particular part of that degree that dealt with  
7 communications issues?---No.

8 Do you have any qualifications or training relating  
9 specifically to communications over and above your  
10 BA?---I was a journalist for a number of years and 12.51PM  
11 moved into communication, so I've actually worked in  
12 the field for around 28 years.

13 I will ask you about that. Perhaps I can start with your  
14 time as a journalist. How long did you work as a  
15 journalist?---A long time ago now, probably about eight 12.51PM  
16 or nine years.

17 After that you've held several communications positions  
18 within Government Departments; is that right?---Yes.

19 Looking at paragraph 6 of your statement, for four years you  
20 were the Executive Director of Strategic Communications 12.51PM  
21 Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional  
22 Development?---Yes.

23 You've also held the position of General Manager,  
24 Communications and Marketing at Sustainability  
25 Victoria. All of that preceded your current role which 12.51PM  
26 is with Victoria Police?---Yes.

27 A little bit about EMJPIC, if we could. At paragraph 13 you  
28 describe EMJPIC as, "A committee of media and  
29 communications representatives from emergency and  
30 related agencies who work to ensure the most 12.52PM  
31 appropriate information is released during an emergency

1 through media and communications channels. In  
2 application this is done by taking advice from the  
3 relevant agencies in Government who are tasked with  
4 managing the events." It's important to appreciate for  
5 the Inquiry what the role of EMJPIC is. It's  
6 essentially a co-ordinating committee?---In effect.  
7 Co-ordinates and guides.

12.52PM

8 It doesn't have staff as such?---No.

9 You make that point at paragraph 56. Just perhaps if we can  
10 complete that, at paragraph 57 of your statement on  
11 page 9 you identify, "The foremost responsibility of  
12 EMJPIC is to ensure that public information is  
13 coordinated and distributed in a timely and accurate  
14 manner to inform and advise community members during a  
15 major emergency, as well as ensuring that media needs  
16 are met, through a coordinated multi-agency approach."  
17 You're happy to adopt that description, I take  
18 it?---Yes.

12.52PM

12.53PM

19 I'm interested in the word "coordinated", you've been in the  
20 hearing room throughout this morning when there's been  
21 some discussion about perceived lack of co-ordination  
22 between agencies in providing messages and that's  
23 certainly been a theme through the course of the  
24 Inquiry. How in a practical sense did EMJPIC seek to  
25 coordinate the messages during the course of  
26 this year's fire?---During this fire we met daily,  
27 sometimes twice daily as I've mentioned in my  
28 statement, and we would discuss issues, be it media  
29 issues, plans, things that were coming up.

12.53PM

12.54PM

30 In terms of the co-ordination, we would start  
31 every meeting with a feedback on what the situation was

12.54PM

1 physically down here in Morwell. We would seek  
2 feedback from the council when they came on board and  
3 from CFA people situated at the ICC on what was  
4 occurring and what the feedback was from the community  
5 and then we would discuss what the plans were for  
6 different agencies.

12.54PM

7 So, as issues with the EPA and their monitoring  
8 came up as issues around different levels, had that fed  
9 into the decision-making being made by the Department  
10 of Health, also then with the CFA and with Commissioner  
11 Lapsley. How those messages - and there could often be  
12 three different things that needed to be communicated;  
13 levels of air quality, situation, health and well-being  
14 situation for the community from the Department of  
15 Health and the fire situation, how we actually brought  
16 those three together in a way that didn't clash, that  
17 weren't contradictory, as best we could bring them  
18 together, either thing them together in joint media  
19 conferences which occurred quite regularly, or ensured  
20 that we didn't have two on the one day, that maybe one  
21 occurred the one day, one the next, that sort of thing.

12.55PM

12.55PM

12.55PM

22 Do you think, looking back on the communications that  
23 emerged during February and March, that you were  
24 successful in coordinating the messages?---I think in  
25 the main we were. It was a difficult and complex  
26 situation we were in. It was not like a simple fire,  
27 and I know there's been reference to that through the  
28 day.

12.56PM

29 A fire starts, everyone stands up and stands down.  
30 This was a situation that evolved and changed. I think  
31 in the main we actually - we did coordinate our

12.56PM

1 messages. We were able to distribute information  
2 through the different channels that we were using.  
3 Everyone was more or less working from the same pieces  
4 of information.

5 Over the period, was there possibly once or twice 12.56PM  
6 it didn't quite work? Absolutely, maybe there was, but  
7 I think in the main we were successful in that.

8 I'm thinking specifically of some evidence, and I think you  
9 would have seen it, the two communications on  
10 28 February that were up on the screen today where 12.56PM  
11 you've got Dr Lester giving a very significant piece of  
12 advice to the community about relocation and you've got  
13 the EPA putting out a release shortly afterwards on the  
14 same dealing with similar issues but making no  
15 reference to that advice having come out. Do you see 12.57PM  
16 how there might be a perception there's a lack of  
17 co-ordination in the messages?---On that day with that  
18 example, yes, actually I do.

19 I want to ask you a little bit about preparedness, and I've  
20 noticed it's three minutes to 1. Rather than perhaps 12.57PM  
21 starting on a new topic - - -

22 CHAIRMAN: If you are going to another topic, yes, this may  
23 be an appropriate time.

24 MEMBER PETERING: One question, Mr Rozen, on structure and I  
25 guess disseminating the information, I think the topic 12.57PM  
26 was around co-ordination. May I ask Ms Tabain about  
27 how internally those messages then were up to the  
28 individual agencies, were they, to disseminate those  
29 key messages? I'm talking for example about how  
30 members of the CFA responded to the community in their 12.58PM  
31 information trucks or whatever you call those, the

1 vans. Whose role was it to ensure that the key  
2 messages filtered - I'll say all the way down, but I  
3 don't mean that disrespectfully, across?---So what we  
4 would do is, so we had our meetings and throughout the  
5 day as things would change the different agencies would 12.58PM  
6 send through updates of information. So if, for  
7 example, the Department of Health had an update on  
8 their health messaging, they would send it into the  
9 secretariat, so into us, and that would be disseminated  
10 throughout the group, so that everyone at every point 12.58PM  
11 would have the same information. Some of those emails,  
12 there were a number of emails throughout the day, so  
13 there were days when there were four, five emails sent  
14 around to everyone who was on, in particular the EMJPIC  
15 that was around Hazelwood itself. 12.58PM

16 Because things were changing consistently, they  
17 were changing all the time, it was a challenge for us  
18 and the best we felt we could do was actually keep that  
19 information flowing, then it was up to the agencies to  
20 actually disseminate that to the people who were doing 12.59PM  
21 the engagements.

22 CHAIRMAN: We'll resume at 2 o'clock.

23 <(THE WITNESS WITHDREW).

24 LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT

25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31

1 UPON RESUMING AT 2.00 P.M.:

2 MS RICHARDS: Before I call Ms Burke, there's a change of  
3 appearance for the council.

4 MR SLATTERY: If the Board pleases, my name is Slattery and  
5 I'll be appearing on behalf of Latrobe City Council 02.02PM  
6 during sessions in which representatives of the council  
7 will be giving evidence.

8 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Slattery.

9 MS RICHARDS: Ms Brooke Burke is a community witness for  
10 this afternoon. I call Ms Burke. 02.02PM

11 <BROOKE KIMBERLEY BURKE, sworn and examined:

12 MS RICHARDS: Good afternoon, Ms Burke. Could you please  
13 state again your full name and your address?---Brooke  
14 Kimberley Burke and my address is 44 Tarwin Street,  
15 Morwell. 02.03PM

16 You've made a statement to the Inquiry, you have a copy of  
17 it there in front of you, it's a statement of 59  
18 paragraphs and with some photographs attached. Have  
19 you re-read it recently?---(No audible answer).

20 Are there any corrections you would like to make?---No. 02.03PM

21 Is it true and correct?---Yes.

22 I tender that.

23

24 #EXHIBIT 54 - Statement of Ms Brooke Burke.

25 02.04PM

26 MS RICHARDS: A little bit about yourself first, Ms Burke.

27 You live in Tarwin Street, Morwell, and you've lived in  
28 Morwell all your life you live with your husband and  
29 two small children?---Yes.

30 How old are your children?---I've got a 3-year-old and my 02.04PM  
31 baby is 11 weeks old.



1 You also work in Morwell, you have a business in Driffield  
2 Street?---Yes.

3 Tell us about the business?---I have a dance school in  
4 Driffield Road in Morwell. There's approximately 150  
5 students at the school and I run the business in a 02.04PM  
6 partnership with another dance teacher.

7 You are also a qualified primary teacher, currently on  
8 family leave, I gather?---I'm on family leave from an  
9 ongoing teaching position in Newborough, however I've  
10 been doing casual relief teaching around Gippsland, but 02.04PM  
11 mainly at Commercial Road Primary School in Morwell  
12 where the majority of last year I taught one day a week  
13 in a prep classroom.

14 Just for the benefit of those of us who are still becoming  
15 familiar with Morwell geography, can you point out 02.05PM  
16 Driffield Road where the dance school is and also  
17 Tarwin Street on the map? There's a ruler there just  
18 next to you, it might help extend your reach a  
19 bit?---Tarwin Street is here.

20 So just one street over from Hazelwood Road where we are 02.05PM  
21 now?---Yes, and we are approximately on the corner of  
22 Wallace and Tarwin, about three houses down, and my  
23 business is Driffield Road and it's in the middle of  
24 Driffield Road.

25 So right on the western edge of Morwell?---Yes. 02.05PM

26 On 9 February this year you were out of Morwell that  
27 afternoon, in Warragul, I understand?---Yes.

28 Your children were here in Morwell with your parents?---Yes.  
29 My son - - -

30 That's your son, your daughter isn't with us?--- - - - was 02.06PM  
31 with my mum.

1 Because you were pregnant still at that time, were you  
2 not?---Yes.

3 When was your baby due?---My baby was due 5 April.

4 During that afternoon you became aware that there was a fire  
5 in the area. How did you find out?---We were looking 02.06PM  
6 at homes, builders to build our new home as we have a  
7 block in Morwell and my mum rang and said that she was  
8 worried that we wouldn't be able to get back into  
9 Morwell because there was a large fire happening and  
10 that they'd closed off the freeway and we were trying 02.06PM  
11 to investigate ways of how to get home, whether that be  
12 through Boolarra or through Driffield or some other way  
13 to get back from Warragul, but we were in Warragul for  
14 quite a long time before we decided to take other  
15 tracks home. 02.07PM

16 You were able to find out through Facebook where the fire  
17 was located and you became aware that your studio was  
18 right in the area of town that might be affected. What  
19 did you do about the studio?---I had quite a few  
20 parents ring me and tell me that the studio was very 02.07PM  
21 close. One parent told me it was on fire, but they had  
22 mixed signals from obviously lots of things being put  
23 through social media. When I found out it was close I  
24 asked my dad to go and have a look. He went down as  
25 far as he could and at that time the road was blocked 02.07PM  
26 off and he wasn't allowed there, but then they opened  
27 that road up and he checked the studio and went into  
28 the backyard of the studio and saw that the fire was  
29 behind the studio, but at that stage not directly in  
30 line with the studio; it was close. He was quite 02.08PM  
31 worried about it so he went and picked my mum up and

1 came back and they tried to retrieve some of our  
2 costumes from the costume room, we've got about \$40,000  
3 worth of costumes; they are insured but the work  
4 involved in them, even what they're insured for  
5 probably wouldn't cover it, so they took some of the 02.08PM  
6 costumes, they couldn't take all of them because  
7 there's so many. They took a car load of costumes and  
8 took them home, and at that time the CFA told them that  
9 they needed to leave that area at that time.

10 You were able to get back to Morwell to your parents' house 02.08PM  
11 about 9.30 that evening?---Yes, we went through Mirboo  
12 North.

13 And you stayed there that evening?---Yes.

14 Did you return home to your place in Tarwin Street that next  
15 day?---We returned that evening, we got through to our 02.08PM  
16 home that evening about at 9 o'clock and it was quite  
17 smoky inside. We took a few possessions that mum and  
18 dad hadn't been able to fit in their car and went back  
19 to their house that night. I couldn't stay there, it  
20 was definitely too smoky and, yes, you could see the 02.09PM  
21 haze through the house probably to waist height .

22 When you went back the next day on the Monday, what was the  
23 smoke level like in your street?---It was pretty  
24 similar to what it was the day before. We live in an  
25 older style house, so obviously there's not as much 02.09PM  
26 ventilation as there would be in a new home, so we  
27 found that the smoke really was quite well contained in  
28 our home. Outside it was very dark and hazy, even  
29 driving down from my mum and dad's house on the other  
30 side of Morwell to our place you couldn't really see 02.09PM  
31 that far in front of you. You could see maybe

1 15 metres in front of you and then from there it was  
2 quite hazy and very dark.

3 What did you decide to do about your dance studio in that  
4 first week?---So, when the fire happened we weren't  
5 sure sort of where to go or what to do. There was 02.10PM  
6 quite a lot of hysteria on Facebook with parents saying  
7 that they weren't prepared to bring their students to  
8 class because they were concerned for their safety, so  
9 we didn't run the Monday after the fires, purely  
10 because of that. 02.10PM

11 Everything that we'd read, we didn't believe that  
12 there was anything telling us that we couldn't run the  
13 classes, so we commenced classes on the Tuesday from  
14 there, and in that time I'd contacted the EPA and tried  
15 to look for any other places I could contact to find 02.11PM  
16 out whether it was safe for us to be there. But it was  
17 very hard to find someone that could tell us if we were  
18 or weren't. Obviously not being a Government agency,  
19 we didn't have anyone in direct contact with us as to  
20 whether the building was safe to be in. 02.11PM

21 So, you continued your dance classes from the  
22 Tuesday?---Yes.

23 Were you living in your house in Tarwin Street during that  
24 week?---No. I went home a few days, probably  
25 45 minutes, that was long enough to be there, it was 02.11PM  
26 quite bad in our house and the smell and the smoke, you  
27 could just feel it straight away when you went into  
28 there that it was definitely more challenging to  
29 breath, and I wasn't going to bring my 2-year-old home  
30 to that. My husband went home to collect things more 02.11PM  
31 often than I did, just because being pregnant I wasn't

1           sure if it was safe or not. My mum and dad's home,  
2           even though still in Morwell, they live right on the  
3           other side towards Traralgon and their house was so  
4           much clearer than ours.

5           You say in paragraph 12 of your statement that after a few           02.12PM  
6           days you came home and you were going to try to stay at  
7           home that evening?---Yes, we did.

8           But you decided not to?---Yes, I'd worked that evening at  
9           the studio and I'd noticed on the way home that it was  
10           quite bad, driving home from the studio the smoke was           02.12PM  
11           quite bad, and when I got inside I just felt like it  
12           had got worse in the house. I said to my husband, "I  
13           don't want to stay here tonight." I woke up my son and  
14           we took him to my mum's and that was at about 10.30 at  
15           night. At the studio it was quite bad too by that time           02.12PM  
16           of night, there was a difference in the smoke and you  
17           could actually feel the smoke in the studio which  
18           wasn't present, I felt, the days before.

19           Each day was very different, so some days it was  
20           clear at the studio, some days it was very bad at home.           02.12PM  
21           Some days at home it was clear and some days it wasn't  
22           as good at the studio.

23           I'd like to ask you about the weekend of 15 and 16 February.

24           You had some rehearsals scheduled at the studio that  
25           weekend?---Yes.           02.13PM

26           About how many children were at the studio rehearsing on  
27           Saturday the 15th?---So there was approximately about  
28           70 students. At the beginning of the year we put out a  
29           rehearsal schedule for competition students and we'd  
30           called two days of rehearsals, the 15th and the 16th,           02.13PM  
31           they were all day rehearsals starting at 9 o'clock

1           until 5 p.m.

2           On the Saturday the students arrived in the  
3 morning and it was a pretty clear day, that's why we  
4 continued with the rehearsals, because Morwell looked  
5 like it normally did that morning. The kids came in           02.13PM  
6 and started practising and learning dancing, and then  
7 it got to about lunchtime and one of the parents came  
8 in and said, "There's something going on, there's fire  
9 trucks coming around telling people to close their  
10 doors and windows." And they'd actually yelled to           02.14PM  
11 somebody outside the studio, close all doors, and it  
12 was then that I got the CFA warning that there was  
13 higher levels of carbon monoxide in the air and that  
14 all residents were recommended that they went into  
15 their homes and shut all doors and windows.           02.14PM

16           We'd had all doors and windows open at the studio  
17 because prior to that we thought we would let air into  
18 the studio, thinking it's such a nice day, we'll let  
19 any sort of smoke out of the studio. However, once we  
20 heard that, we closed everything up. We kept going           02.14PM  
21 because the Fire Brigade said to us that it was safe to  
22 remain in the building, they said, "Just continue with  
23 what you're doing, and if there's any further concern  
24 we'll come back and let you know". But once we got  
25 that message my gut feeling was that, I don't want to           02.15PM  
26 be liable for anything that happens to these students  
27 while they're in my care, so myself and my business  
28 partner text messaged and rang parents to come and  
29 collect their students, some of which lived 45 minutes  
30 to an hour away because we have students from           02.15PM  
31 everywhere, we have students from (indistinct), we have

1 students from Rosedale, we have students from Erica, so  
2 kids were being picked up from far away.

3 So, once the parents found out, they picked their  
4 students up and by then the air level was definitely  
5 noticeable. I felt like I was having trouble 02.15PM  
6 breathing. I don't know whether it was a bit of  
7 anxiety too because it was a pretty stressful day, and  
8 the kids were sort of - you could see the difference in  
9 the kids. There was probably six kids that were there  
10 the longest and I noticed they were quite - but they 02.15PM  
11 were panicking as well, and I felt quite light-headed  
12 and a bit unusual, but I don't know whether that was  
13 the air or whether it was just me getting a bit worked  
14 up, being pregnant. So then, by about 2.30, 2.00-2.30  
15 we had all left the premises by then, myself and my 02.16PM  
16 business partner.

17 So that was about an hour and a half after the CFA watch and  
18 act message?---Yes.

19 Later that afternoon or early that evening you received a  
20 text message telling you that it was all right to open 02.16PM  
21 doors and windows?---Windows, yes.

22 Go outside?---Yes.

23 If you went outside at that point, what were the conditions  
24 like? What was the air quality like?---The air  
25 quality - I found from that point on the air quality 02.16PM  
26 was noticeably different. On some days it was  
27 definitely worse than others. Probably the smell was  
28 the thing that I noticed the most, that real smoky  
29 smell was something I think that, even though that may  
30 not have been I suppose representative of the actual 02.17PM  
31 air level, the smell was quite - it changed quite

1 significantly over the days.

2 The following day was still not great because that  
3 night, the night of the 15th my business partner and I  
4 decided to cancel the lessons for the following day  
5 because there was so many parents on social media 02.17PM  
6 saying, "Thank you for cancelling classes and putting  
7 our students' safety first", all that sort of stuff.  
8 So we thought it was just too - we hadn't been formally  
9 told that we couldn't and we had rung who we - we tried  
10 to ring who would be able to help us, but at that time 02.17PM  
11 there wasn't a lot of information about who to contact.  
12 So the only people that were contacted during that  
13 weekend and the following week were the EPA, who myself  
14 and my business partner, they were our No.1 group to  
15 call; we called them in regards to the air levels. 02.18PM

16 You contacted them either on the Sunday or the Monday the  
17 17th?---The Monday I definitely contacted them.

18 And you say that you spoke with a man from the EPA who said  
19 all's fine, levels were safe in the building but didn't  
20 recommend strenuous physical activity?---Yes. 02.18PM

21 I don't know how strenuous the dance classes you teach are,  
22 but how did you decide to go ahead with your dance  
23 classes?---That was quite challenging on the Monday  
24 because obviously with our business the students are  
25 all invoiced on a termly basis and the kids are all 02.18PM  
26 expected that they're going to have their classes. We  
27 had a lot of parents that were, I suppose, not wanting  
28 to bring their students because of putting them at  
29 risk. We had others saying, "I've paid for the  
30 classes, we're coming", you know, "I've paid my money,  
31 I want what I've paid for." 02.19PM



1           We didn't know where to stand because we wanted to  
2 run classes because we felt it was safe but we wanted  
3 to make sure that it was. We rung the EPA and he said  
4 that it was totally safe to be in the building, however  
5 physical activity was not recommended. I spoke to him 02.19PM  
6 about re-dividing the classes so that they would be  
7 less physically strenuous and he just said, "Look, at  
8 this stage just be careful with physical activity  
9 because of the air levels."

10           So we spoke to the parents and the students and we 02.19PM  
11 said that parents could send their children at their  
12 own discretion. If they felt that they would like to  
13 send their child, they could; if they didn't want to -  
14 and we took that lead from St Vincent's Primary School  
15 who's also in Morwell who wrote the same message on 02.20PM  
16 their web page to say that students could be sent to  
17 school at parents' discretion, because we had no-one  
18 else to contact at that time.

19           We lessened the physical activity, we did ballet  
20 classes instead of jazz classes those days and just, 02.20PM  
21 with the kids, did more working on technique, which  
22 obviously was sitting on the floor, stretching feet,  
23 working off the bar so that they weren't running around  
24 in the rooms and getting out of breath.

25           So, you continued with the dance school during the second 02.20PM  
26 week?---Yes.

27           And then the third week you and your family went on holiday  
28 to Merimbula where the air was fresher?---Much fresher,  
29 yes.

30           While you were away your business partner contacted you on 02.20PM  
31 the Thursday of that third week very concerned about

1           whether she should continue with the dance  
2           school?---Yes.

3       What discussion did you have with her that afternoon?---She  
4       messed me quite stressed, saying that many parents  
5       had mentioned to her that they weren't happy that the       02.21PM  
6       school was still open. At this stage the schools in  
7       Morwell were still running. I think Commercial Road  
8       may have been about to be relocated, but at that stage  
9       no-one had been relocated, so we were following primary  
10      schools pretty much with what we were doing.               02.21PM

11           So she rang me and said, "I think we're going to  
12      need to close because it's just getting ridiculous,  
13      parents are coughing and looking like they're sick."  
14      We had a teacher sent home because she was having  
15      headaches and felt sick; kids in class were saying they       02.21PM  
16      had headaches and felt like they were going to be sick,  
17      so she said, "It's getting a little bit scary now, I  
18      think we need to stop", so we stopped. That next day,  
19      we didn't run classes on the Friday.

20      So, you didn't run classes on Friday the 28th?---And that       02.21PM  
21      was the day that they announced Morwell residents in  
22      particular areas would be asked to relocate.

23      And your school is in that area and the children that you  
24      teach are in a vulnerable group?---Yes.

25      Were you able to find somewhere else to run your dance       02.22PM  
26      classes?---So Friday we stopped and closed. Over that  
27      weekend we investigated a heap of different halls in  
28      Gippsland and contacted lots of different places to  
29      find if we could get somewhere with three spaces  
30      because we have three studios, and we were lucky enough       02.22PM  
31      to find a hall in Yallourn North that had three

1 separate spaces, so we relocated the studio to Yallourn  
2 North and commenced classes on that Monday. Many  
3 kids - well, there was a significant amount of kids  
4 that weren't able to travel to Yallourn North because  
5 it was obviously too far from a lot of places from 02.22PM  
6 where they were coming from, so some students ceased  
7 dance for that period of time until we knew what we  
8 were doing from there.

9 Did that mean that you were paying rent on two separate  
10 spaces?---Yes. 02.23PM

11 How long did you continue in the new premises?---Three  
12 weeks.

13 And then, after the Chief Health Officer had lifted her  
14 advice that vulnerable groups should relocate, you  
15 returned?---Yes, in the third week my water actually 02.23PM  
16 broke at Yallourn North two and a half weeks early,  
17 nearly three weeks early. The third week we were at  
18 Yallourn North, the announcement was made on the Monday  
19 that it was suggested that people that relocated were  
20 safe to move back. We didn't find that out until late 02.23PM  
21 in the Monday afternoon and by then it was too late to  
22 tell patients we were back at the studio, but it was  
23 also still unsafe because the studio hadn't been  
24 cleaned yet, so we decided to continue that week in  
25 Yallourn North until we knew that our premises were 02.24PM  
26 safe to be back at and on the Wednesday of that week is  
27 when my water broke.

28 And then you were pre-occupied with other matters for a  
29 little while?---Yes.

30 And probably still are. Before we leave the effect on the 02.24PM  
31 dance school and the arrangements that you made to

1 relocate, I just want to ask you about the cost  
2 involved in that. Did it affect your business  
3 financially?---Yes. We applied for the grant that was  
4 offered to Morwell businesses. We added up our costs  
5 as best as we could and they came to approximately 02.24PM  
6 \$11,000, and of that we received a grant for \$5,000.  
7 So there's \$6,000 that the business is out of pocket?---Yes.  
8 Let me ask you now about your family situation. You gave  
9 birth to your daughter on, was it 20 March?---Yes, so  
10 the Thursday, yes. 02.25PM  
11 As you've mentioned, she was two and a half, three weeks  
12 before her due date?---Early, yes.  
13 That was just a couple of days after the Chief Health  
14 Officer had said that it was safe for vulnerable people  
15 to return home. How did you manage the return 02.25PM  
16 home?---The Monday we were told that we could return  
17 home. I wasn't obviously prepared to return home yet  
18 because it wasn't clean and I knew - we had relocated  
19 significantly so we hadn't been in and out of the  
20 house, we hadn't been opening it up or anything like 02.25PM  
21 that, so when we got home it was a real mess; there was  
22 ash and yes, it was still quite smoky in the house.  
23 I ended up ringing the shire on the Wednesday that  
24 I actually - my water broke Wednesday at 6.30 and I  
25 rang the shire at about, oh, I can't remember, must 02.26PM  
26 have been about 11 o'clock on the Wednesday to ask them  
27 if there was any assistance with cleaning because  
28 something had been put on the news to say that people  
29 might be offered some help with the cleaning. At the  
30 time they said they were only taking names of people 02.26PM  
31 and that, when they knew more about what funding they

1 were going to get, they would contact those people on  
2 that list.

3 So I left that and I needed my mum to go in and  
4 clean, so on that Wednesday I had Electrodry come in.  
5 I rang them and they came while I was in hospital and 02.26PM  
6 cleaned the carpet, curtains and couch and my mum did  
7 the rest.

8 You subsequently made some enquiries about having your roof  
9 space cleaned?---Yes.

10 Initially through your insurance company. What was the 02.26PM  
11 initial response to your enquiry?---So when I contacted  
12 GIO Insurance, which is my insurance company, they told  
13 me that any claims from Morwell would be declined  
14 because our policies only cover a fire that's within  
15 10 metres from the property and, as the mine fire 02.27PM  
16 wasn't 10 metres, that nothing would be covered.

17 It's close but not quite that close?---Yes. Then I rang  
18 them at the beginning of the mine fire to see if there  
19 was anything we were entitled to. I rang them a few  
20 weeks later and they continued to stand by that, that 02.27PM  
21 there was nothing offered. Then I had spoken to the  
22 shire and they had said that there was somebody  
23 collecting information about people whose insurance  
24 companies hadn't been offering anything and to take all  
25 information to them as they were building, I suppose, a 02.27PM  
26 case against insurance companies that weren't looking  
27 into it.

28 I met with them here and spoke to a lady who took  
29 down my story, and after that I rang GIO again to ask  
30 for a letter of decline. It was that day that, when I 02.28PM  
31 asked for the letter of decline, they said to me that

1 they would now - it would take five days for the letter  
2 to reach me. I was quite upset about that, so I said  
3 to them, "Okay, I'll wait five days." And then about  
4 two hours later they rang back and said that they would  
5 now send out an assessor, but the assessor wasn't sent 02.28PM  
6 out until my house was cleaned by my mum and everything  
7 else had been done, so my house was quite clean by the  
8 time the assessor came out. The only thing that wasn't  
9 was the roof cavity which the assessor didn't go and  
10 look at because he said that it would probably look 02.28PM  
11 like everybody else's in the street.

12 I had Kavacorp come and look at the roof before  
13 they came but didn't give them the quote, just so that  
14 I could get a second opinion on the roof, and Kavacorp  
15 checked my roof cavity and they told me that it would 02.29PM  
16 be just under \$6,000 to have cleaned and the insulation  
17 needed to be replaced as it was damaged with ash.

18 Why are you particularly concerned about cleaning the cavity  
19 of your roof?---Probably because we live in a  
20 Californian bungalow style of home, so the pitched 02.29PM  
21 roof, the roof is quite pitched. We have vents all  
22 around the house, quite high, and I just found my  
23 kids - it may not be the cause, I don't know that it  
24 is, but the kids have been sneezing a lot, and we were  
25 sneezing a lot and the kids were coughing, and with a 02.29PM  
26 new baby it just made me quite panicky that there was  
27 quite a bit of ash up there, so that was probably the  
28 first concern. But at that cost we couldn't afford to  
29 have that done.

30 When you made this statement you hadn't received a formal 02.29PM  
31 response from the insurance company. Still no

1 response?---I have had them contact me and they have  
2 provided us with a \$4,700 what they call goodwill  
3 payment, which was received I think two weeks ago; I'm  
4 not positive of that date. She told me that they had  
5 decided to give \$5,000 as a goodwill payment to the 02.30PM  
6 residents of Morwell, however it was not linked to your  
7 insurance policy, and that you needed to pay your  
8 excess and our excess was \$300.

9 The last thing I'd like to ask you about: You started the  
10 story by telling us that you were looking at building 02.30PM  
11 on a new block. Does it follow that you are also  
12 wanting to sell the house that you live in in Tarwin  
13 Street?---(No audible answer).

14 You had the house valued late last year or early  
15 this year?---Yes, January this year; \$185,000 to 02.30PM  
16 \$190,000. We don't have a backyard, so they said that  
17 that was pretty right for what our house would be  
18 worth, and now I don't know.

19 I suppose that's another reason why you would be wanting to  
20 clean the roof cavity?---Yes. 02.31PM

21 Thanks. I have no further questions for Ms Burke. Do any  
22 Members of the Board have questions?

23 MEMBER PETERING: Congratulations on your little  
24 girl?---Thank you.

25 MS RICHARDS: I've had no indication from anyone else that 02.31PM  
26 there are questions, so on that basis, could Ms Burke  
27 be excused?

28 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Thank you.

29 <(THE WITNESS WITHDREW)

30 MR ROZEN: I will recall Ms Tabain. 02.31PM

31

1 <MERITA LUCIJA TABAIN, recalled:

2 MR ROZEN: Ms Tabain, you've been present in the hearing  
3 room whilst the previous witness gave her evidence and  
4 it brings home, does it not, in a very practical way  
5 the importance of clear messages in emergency 02.32PM  
6 situations because, of course, it's not only the health  
7 and well-being of the recipient of the message that's  
8 important but they may have responsibility for others,  
9 for example children, that are looking to them for  
10 guidance. 02.32PM

11 Returning to your evidence, I think I'd reached a  
12 point where you told us about EMJPIC and its  
13 coordinating role and I was about to go on to a  
14 different topic, which is to get some sense from you  
15 about what pre-planning had taken place before 02.32PM  
16 9 February that enabled you to hit the ground running,  
17 so to speak, in relation to communications. I don't  
18 see anything in your statement about that. You do  
19 refer to a communications and stakeholder engagement  
20 strategy which was developed during the course of the 02.33PM  
21 fire and came into operation on 20 February, the 12th  
22 day of the fire.

23 The witnesses that gave evidence this morning, who  
24 I think you heard, Professor Macnamara and Mr Drummond,  
25 were critical of the absence of pre-planned 02.33PM  
26 communication strategy. Would you like to comment on  
27 that please?---So, in relation to preparation for the  
28 season, amongst the things that we do, we train media  
29 officers. So, there are a number of people throughout  
30 Government media relations that actually receive 02.33PM  
31 training on how to - what to do during an emergency.



1           There are some templates around communication  
2 strategies. We make sure that we have what we call a  
3 surge list, so we have people trained and ready to be  
4 deployed in case of an emergency. There are a number  
5 of things like that that we've actually done. Had we  
6 actually planned - had we thought about, if there's a  
7 coal fire in Morwell, we hadn't gone to that level of  
8 detail of planning. 02.34PM

9           What about the question of the identification of community  
10 leaders? This is something you refer to in your  
11 statement at paragraph 115. As I understand the  
12 evidence you're giving there, you say that you  
13 personally came down to Morwell on 21 February?---Yes,  
14 I did. 02.34PM

15          With others and the visit enabled you to identify some local  
16 leaders who could assist in communications and  
17 community engagement. Firstly, who were those people?  
18 Not necessarily their names, but what categories of  
19 people are you referring to there?---There was some  
20 people involved with coal communities - sorry, I have  
21 it in my notes which is in the car. We actually met,  
22 so myself and the Head of Department of Premier and  
23 Cabinet Communications, Liz Martin and Dr Geoff Russell  
24 and I, met with both council and spoke to them, their  
25 communications people, also with the editor of the  
26 Latrobe Valley Express, and actually talked about the  
27 different people that we could possibly engage with who  
28 we might be able to utilise for community meetings and  
29 as facilitators and to talk about different issues. 02.35PM

30           Some of that work had already been done. I know  
31 at the community meeting on the 18th a local GP was 02.35PM

1 actually in attendance and spoke but was - and I think  
2 the term that was fed back to me was, he was actually  
3 held down by the community. So that was a person with  
4 local experience, local knowledge; as she would say, a  
5 trusted source in the community, but the community 02.36PM  
6 wasn't actually receptive to what he was saying. In  
7 terms of relying solely on trusted local sources, it is  
8 not quite as simple as that.

9 I understand what you're saying, my question's a slightly  
10 different one. That's work that could be done in 02.36PM  
11 advance of an emergency, isn't it, the  
12 identification - - -?---It could.

13 - - - in a locality of those sources. Mr Lapsley in his  
14 statement in relation to communications, this is  
15 exhibit 1, says - I don't need this to be brought up 02.36PM  
16 but I'll just read it out to you. It's brief, he said,  
17 "One thing that did not work well [in respect of  
18 communications initially] was making use of established  
19 local community engagement structures and networks.  
20 This was a lesson learned for us." Was it a lesson 02.36PM  
21 learned for you as well, would you say?---There were  
22 many lessons I learnt through this process.

23 Let's just take it one at a time?---With this one in  
24 particular, there are many. So, in an ideal world with  
25 lots of resources, lots of staff and lots of capacity 02.37PM  
26 to do that kind of work, absolutely that is textbook  
27 work that you would be doing. If I had lots of staff  
28 that is exactly what we would do; we would have  
29 established - we would have staff who would be able to  
30 undertake that work and that would be ideal and I would 02.37PM  
31 love to have that. With my current staffing, and you

1 referred earlier to the fact that this operates on  
2 top - I do this on top of my regular job, my day job -  
3 I don't have additional staff that I can actually give  
4 to do that kind of pre-planning work. If I did and if  
5 other parts of Government did, that is exactly the sort 02.37PM  
6 of thing that you would do, and it would put us all in  
7 a better situation.

8 I'm thinking of your coordinating role, I'm not expecting  
9 you to be out doing a roadshow, Ms Tabain, but I'm  
10 thinking for example the CFA has as good a regional 02.38PM  
11 network of people, including information officers and  
12 others, and I'm thinking about the future and the way  
13 the Inquiry can contribute to help in the future with  
14 the sort of work you're doing. Isn't that a resource  
15 that you could draw upon so that you could come up with 02.38PM  
16 lists at least of local people who might be able to be  
17 called upon to assist, not on day 12 of a fire but  
18 perhaps earlier on in the course of some future  
19 emergency?---It would be certainly something we'd  
20 certainly be happy to look at, it's an area that I 02.38PM  
21 would certainly like to expand on, for sure.

22 CHAIRMAN: You do mention at paragraph 112 a couple of  
23 lines, the CFA having particular expertise and depth in  
24 community engagement, part of the business model. Is  
25 that something you are generally aware of or are you 02.38PM  
26 aware of the specifics of how they go about that and  
27 whether that can be enhanced in some way?---I am aware  
28 of it and it's certainly something that I'd like to  
29 utilise more.

30 So you'd need to know more as to whether it's worthwhile 02.39PM  
31 trying that particular avenue as against some

1 other?---It's one avenue. I would like to actually  
2 take a considered view rather than just simply saying  
3 that's necessarily the only way to go.

4 MEMBER CATFORD: Could I just come in there as well. Is  
5 there any pre-planning going on anywhere in the State? 02.39PM  
6 I'm just thinking that, you know, this is a critical  
7 strategic resource for the State, these open cut coal  
8 mines which are very near communities, so clearly they  
9 weren't a priority, but are there any preparedness  
10 plans of this nature at the moment?---To the best of my 02.39PM  
11 knowledge, there are some, maybe not necessarily around  
12 open cut mines; I couldn't tell you that for sure.  
13 Perhaps, could we find out where these plans exist and which  
14 communities?---Yes.

15 MR ROZEN: Just to pick up on Professor Catford's point, we 02.40PM  
16 know, and partly as a result of the Royal Commission  
17 into the Black Saturday bushfires, that a great deal of  
18 work has been done in terms of preparedness for having  
19 Incident Management Teams in place at particular  
20 locations in readiness for days like 9 February of 02.40PM  
21 this year?---Yes.

22 But there does seem to be a lot less, as I understand the  
23 evidence you're giving, less that seems to be done in  
24 terms of preparedness for meeting the Fire Services  
25 Commissioner's No.2 priority, which is this whole idea 02.40PM  
26 of communicating, messaging, warning and so on?---There  
27 certainly is and there are structures in place; that's  
28 why committees like EMJPIC actually exist. The focus  
29 with that question has been around fire and it's in  
30 that sense that we actually are quite prepared and 02.40PM  
31 there is a lot of work done. On 9 February as it was

1 there were a number of fires across the State. We were  
2 there - I and along with many of my colleagues were  
3 actually in the State Control Centre working. It was a  
4 day we were prepared for, so in terms of the stand up,  
5 stand down, quick fire situation, we actually are 02.41PM  
6 quite - we're very well prepared. So there is a  
7 preparedness plan, there's work that's done at the time  
8 and then there's relief and recovery. So, in that  
9 sense there is, but it is - it would be true to say it  
10 is really more focused on the quickly event of the fire 02.41PM  
11 rather than a longer term event such as this one.

12 Just before leaving this issue of preparedness, you include  
13 in your statement some statistics about the  
14 demographics associated with Morwell?---Yes.

15 This is starting at paragraph 31 on page 3. You say, and 02.42PM  
16 certainly the experts who gave evidence this morning  
17 would agree, that knowledge of Morwell's demographic  
18 characteristics was critical for effective  
19 communications; that's paragraph 31?---Yes.

20 Then you go on and say that some information was pulled 02.42PM  
21 together by DHS and it was provided to EMJPIC members  
22 on 17 February, so that's nine days into the fire.

23 This information was pulled together about the  
24 demographics and, as we've heard and as you set out in  
25 paragraph 34, there are some quite significant, not 02.42PM

26 unique, but significant characteristics about the local  
27 community which differentiate it from the rest of  
28 Victoria. We've heard about internet connectedness, if

29 that's a word, is one of those things. That's another  
30 thing that could be done in advance, isn't it, of an 02.42PM  
31 emergency like this? You could have that information

1 available to you, obviously not just about Morwell, but  
2 about communities throughout Victoria that could be  
3 immediately fed into a communications  
4 strategy?---Absolutely, it's one of the things - we've  
5 already had a lessons learnt session, we have a number 02.43PM  
6 of other sessions scheduled in, some other workshops,  
7 and pulling together of that sort of statistical  
8 information and having it ready and sitting there is  
9 one of the things that we are looking at doing.

10 However, I would just actually like to add, and 02.43PM  
11 this is one of the things in reflecting back because  
12 I've done a lot of reflecting back on the situation  
13 here in Morwell, a town, a community is a lot more than  
14 the statistics. So, we can sit here and say - and we  
15 did, we reacted and we changed, we adjusted what we did 02.43PM  
16 when we saw those statistics, but it's actually a lot  
17 more about its history, its experience. I would  
18 actually say we could do a lot of the same things we  
19 did in Morwell in another town had it not had the same  
20 history and issues that Morwell has had and they may 02.44PM  
21 very well be successful.

22 There are particular things that are unique to  
23 every town, and communities such as Morwell are more  
24 than a conglomeration of their statistics, as they are  
25 in the census and in the ABS, and a lot of that is 02.44PM  
26 around community history and shared experience.

27 MEMBER PETERING: Ms Tabain, probably Mr Rozen will address  
28 this, but you've just mentioned then that you've had a  
29 lessons learnt workshop?---Yes.

30 Are those matters articulated in your statement here?---Some 02.44PM  
31 of them are.

1 Is it an exclusive list, you've covered all of them or only  
2 just some?---No, only just some. There are quite a few  
3 and there are still things that we're working through.  
4 It's one of those situations where, when you're in the  
5 situation you're actually thinking to yourself, oh 02.44PM  
6 gosh, I wish I'd actually done this earlier, I wish I  
7 had done these things, you're in the middle of a  
8 situation, you're trying to work your way through it,  
9 and you're looking back, you're in week 2 or week 3,  
10 and you're thinking, why didn't we do this in day 5 02.45PM  
11 instead of day 10. As a professional, and as someone  
12 who cares, it's just a constant part of wanting to do  
13 these things better next time round.

14 So you are recording those to make sure those lessons are  
15 captured and utilised and implemented?---Yes, 02.45PM  
16 absolutely.

17 MR ROZEN: Not much happens in the Public Service without  
18 documents being produced. Is there a written record of  
19 that lessons learnt workshop?---Yes, there is.

20 Could that be provided to the Inquiry please?---Yes, it 02.45PM  
21 could.

22 Just before leaving the demographics, I need to ask you, why  
23 did it take nine days to pull that information  
24 together? You had EMJPIC meetings every day during  
25 that period, why did it take so long to get that basic 02.46PM  
26 demographic data together?---Actually as I said in the  
27 statement, really that first week of the fire, from my  
28 perspective and from EMJPIC's perspective, the issue of  
29 smoke and health and well-being of the community really  
30 wasn't an issue that was raised. For us, this is 02.46PM  
31 advice provided to us, it seemed the issue really was

1 around the fire in the mine, and the threat to power  
2 supply which is what most of the conversations seemed  
3 to be about. That weekend that's referred to, that is  
4 really when things started to shift and everyone  
5 understood that this is actually something different,  
6 and it's more than just a fire within a contained  
7 space, which is the understanding that we had.

02.46PM

8 Perhaps I should take you to paragraph 45 which is where you  
9 make that point in your statement. You refer to that  
10 weekend of 15 and 16 February, and we just heard  
11 Ms Burke talking about that weekend as well and the  
12 significance of it. You say that it was, "On that  
13 weekend the issue of smoke and haze at Morwell started  
14 coming to the fore as a matter of potential concern due  
15 to a warning issued by the Incident Controller around  
16 elevated carbon monoxide levels." Then you go on, "The  
17 following week [that's the week commencing Monday the  
18 17th] a greater understanding was gained around the  
19 raised levels of carbon monoxide as well as the  
20 particulate matter contained in the smoke and ash which  
21 was emanating from the mine."

02.47PM

02.47PM

02.47PM

22 Can I just take you to one document which seems  
23 somewhat at odds with what you're saying there and I  
24 just want to ask you to comment on it. This is a  
25 meeting of the state Emergency Management Team and it's  
26 an attachment to exhibit 36 which is a statement from  
27 Mr Pole, the Deputy Secretary with the Department of  
28 Education, specifically behind tab 42 which I hope is  
29 being put in front of you.

02.47PM

30 You were present at the State Emergency Management  
31 Team meetings during this first week of the fire, I

02.48PM



1 think?---At some of them, either myself or my Assistant  
2 Director was, yes.

3 As we've heard from Mr Lapsley and others, this is the  
4 senior most team that was meeting on a regular basis to  
5 share information about fires in general, and of course 02.48PM  
6 we're particularly concerned with Hazelwood. The  
7 structure, as we understand it, is that different  
8 departmental representatives gave situation reports to  
9 the meeting so that everyone had an understanding of  
10 the complete picture presumably. 02.48PM

11 Can I take you to the final page of this. This is  
12 a meeting of 14 February, so the Friday before that  
13 weekend. Do you see there's a report there, "EMJPIC.  
14 Report provided by EMJPIC", approved by you. Was the  
15 report provided by you or are you unable to say?---I'm 02.49PM  
16 sorry, I can't say.

17 Okay, it was either provided by you or your Deputy; is that  
18 right?---Yes.

19 Do you have that in front of you, it's the very last  
20 page before you get to the next tab, if I can put it 02.49PM  
21 that way. Do you see it there, "EMJPIC report provided  
22 by"?---Yes.

23 If we read that, there is a summary of it and I understand  
24 this is a summary, but it reads, "The rising number of  
25 firefighters who have been treated for carbon monoxide 02.49PM  
26 poisoning at the open cut mine has prompted increasing  
27 community concerns." What were those community  
28 concerns that you were reporting there to the meet, or  
29 that were being reported by EMJPIC?---From my recall it  
30 would have - I imagine it would have been media 02.50PM  
31 reports, I suspect.

1 But the concerns were concerns that, if the firefighters  
2 were being endangered by carbon monoxide, then perhaps  
3 we and the community of Morwell also might be. That  
4 was what you understood was emanating from Morwell,  
5 wasn't it? That was the concern?---Quite possibly at 02.50PM  
6 the time, yes.

7 It goes on, "This is being exacerbated by Fire Union  
8 complaints about unsafe work conditions. EMJPIC is  
9 coordinating a comms strategy to reassure the community  
10 and provide advice from Health and the EPA on how to 02.50PM  
11 mitigate the effects of the smoke."

12 It is the case, isn't it, that at the very latest  
13 when this report was being provided, which seems to be  
14 13 February if we look at the date, these issues were  
15 firmly on the agenda, weren't they, of both the SEMT, 02.50PM  
16 but more importantly of your coordinating  
17 committee?---Yes. But in terms of, I guess, the scale  
18 of it was really not something that we had grasped and  
19 understood.

20 I suppose what I'm wondering about is, how could that be the 02.51PM  
21 case? Looking at this report, and I don't want to take  
22 you through all the other reports that were being made  
23 at this meeting, but certainly by the middle of this  
24 week, towards the end of this week there was a great  
25 deal of discussion, wasn't there, around SEMT about 02.51PM  
26 community concerns about toxic smoke, particulate  
27 matter, carbon monoxide and so on?---From memory, the  
28 discussion really very much centered around the  
29 firefighters and within the contains of the mine rather  
30 than necessarily being broader, and again not being an 02.51PM  
31 expert, not being a firefighting, not being someone

1 that's knowledgeable in that area, the discussion from  
2 memory was that it really was - that it was people that  
3 were actually there dealing with the issue actually  
4 fighting the fire rather than it being widespread  
5 across the whole of the town. 02.52PM

6 Just before this, I need to take you to the bottom of that  
7 section, "Emerging issues", "Community concerns about  
8 'toxic' smoke impacting on residents near the open cut  
9 mine. EMJPIC is coordinating the media strategy."

10 It seems to suggest that the media strategy was 02.52PM  
11 informed by an understanding of those community  
12 concerns as at this stage. Do you agree with  
13 that?---To a point, yes.

14 If we can move on to some other matters that you talk about  
15 in your statement. I understand that you're not 02.52PM  
16 responsible for the content of messages, I think it's  
17 important, is it not, for the Inquiry to understand  
18 that. The agencies are putting out the messages,  
19 you're operating in a coordinating capacity, overall  
20 strategy and the like?---Yes. 02.53PM

21 At paragraph 83 of your statement, you say that, "The fire  
22 presented complex and unique public information  
23 challenges in comparison to other fires burning across  
24 the State." What were the complex and unique public  
25 information challenges that it presented?---As I 02.53PM  
26 alluded to before lunch actually, it being - as opposed  
27 to a simple - well, simple bushfire - as opposed to a  
28 bushfire where the issues really are around threat to  
29 life and damage to property. The situation with the  
30 fire here at Hazelwood presented issues around health 02.53PM  
31 and well-being. It presented issues around safety of

1 workplaces. It was not as simple as a threat to life,  
2 so you need to evacuate people because they're simply  
3 in danger of being burnt out? So it's across many  
4 different issues, many different agencies, it's a much  
5 more complex environment than a bushfire in a town. 02.54PM

6 You talk about the use of social media, and this starts at  
7 paragraph 100, the internet and social media.

8 Something I'd just like you to comment on, you say, "No  
9 new websites were created for this emergency", and you  
10 note the various departmental and agency websites. Is 02.54PM

11 that something that you've thought about in hindsight?  
12 Is there something to be said for a dedicated, I'm not  
13 sure what the technical term is, but a dedicated  
14 website for an event like this that enables people to  
15 go to one place and then perhaps be referred on for 02.55PM

16 more detailed information to departmental  
17 advices?---Absolutely, and the Emergency Victoria site  
18 is one that's being developed to be that site. It  
19 simply wasn't ready for this season. That's the  
20 intention, so that there would be one place that people 02.55PM

21 would have to go. We were very conscious that in the  
22 communications we were sending out to people, in the  
23 advertisements that we were running, that we would have  
24 sometimes two or three website links at the bottom of  
25 the pages and we knew that wasn't optimal. The 02.55PM

26 Emergency Victoria site is intended to be that one  
27 place for people to go.

28 Is that part of the transitioning to Mr Lapsley's new role  
29 as Emergency Services Commissioner?---Yes.

30 Emergency Management, I'm sorry, Emergency Management 02.55PM  
31 Commissioner.

1 MEMBER CATFORD: I wonder if I could just pick up the theme  
2 of social media since you're on this paragraph 103.  
3 You talk about establishing a social media command  
4 centre on 26 February. It goes without saying, that's  
5 a very long time after the commencement of the fire, 02.56PM  
6 and also linking it to the evidence we heard this  
7 morning from Professor Macnamara and particularly the  
8 Boston Marathon bombing where they actually established  
9 within 90 minutes of the bomb going off a social media  
10 communication system through the Police Department. So 02.56PM  
11 we have a very long period before we get some command  
12 centre going and that experience in the US - I mean, do  
13 you want to just unpack why it took so long or what  
14 your thinking was there?---There had been monitoring of  
15 social media up until that point and we had been 02.56PM  
16 utilising it through both, in particular CFA who has in  
17 excess of 300 followers on their Facebook page and  
18 Victoria Police who have in excess of 100,000, so we  
19 had been utilising it. The command centre was a bit  
20 different in as much as the intention there was to not 02.57PM  
21 only monitor but actually respond to in a factual way  
22 this information that was being promoted through the  
23 community.

24 Did it take too long? Yes, it did and it's  
25 something that in retrospect it's one of the things 02.57PM  
26 that I would do almost instantly rather than actually  
27 waiting. So, absolutely.

28 Thank you.

29 MR ROZEN: From new ways of communicating to old-fashioned  
30 ones, at paragraph 110 you talk about the community 02.57PM  
31 meeting that occurred on 18 February?---Yes.

1 We've heard a lot of evidence about that. I think it was  
2 raised earlier today, Mr Lapsley describing it as a  
3 turning point in his approach. I just want to ask you  
4 a couple of things about that. You list the people who  
5 were there, representatives of departments. You say 02.58PM  
6 that GDF Suez was present. Other evidence would seem  
7 to suggest that they weren't, and in fact that they  
8 were conspicuous by their absence seems to be the  
9 evidence we've heard today. What's the basis of you  
10 saying they were there?---My understanding from the 02.58PM  
11 communications person that was there at the meeting was  
12 that they were present but didn't actually speak, but  
13 didn't make themselves known.

14 I see?---That is my understanding and that's on the evidence  
15 that was given to me. 02.58PM

16 You weren't at the meeting of course?---No, I wasn't.  
17 So that was something that was being told to you?---Yes.

18 You identify that strong concerns were expressed by  
19 residents; that's a fairly polite way I think of  
20 describing what happened. People were quite angry, 02.58PM  
21 weren't they? That's what the Inquiry has been  
22 told?---Yes.

23 You give some explanation for why that might have been the  
24 case. You say at paragraph 111, "At that meeting there  
25 were not enough people present who were sufficiently 02.59PM  
26 senior to give definitive answers, and many local  
27 residents expressed their strong concern." Was there a  
28 particular area of concern raised that you're talking  
29 about, where there weren't authoritative people to  
30 answer the questions? In other words, was it 02.59PM  
31 firefighting, was it health, was it monitoring? Where

1 was the deficiency?---My understanding was, it was in  
2 particular around monitoring, air monitoring, and  
3 health at the time but, as I said, there was a GP  
4 there. It's that mix of - it's that balance of trying  
5 to actually engage local representatives and having 02.59PM  
6 experts at the same time. And, look, I'm completely in  
7 agreement with Mr Lapsley on that meeting being an  
8 absolutely turning point, but it was those two areas  
9 that were - from what was communicated to me, it was  
10 really the air monitoring and the health that was the 03.00PM  
11 worthy areas of concern.

12 One of the attachments to your statement that you've  
13 provided us with, and this is behind tab 59 which is in  
14 that folder ahead of you there, right towards the end.  
15 I think if I could ask you to look at that. From the 03.00PM  
16 date of the document at the top right-hand corner, the  
17 date on it appears to be 13 February 2014, do we take  
18 that as being an accurate date for when this was  
19 produced? It's a document, without having to go to it  
20 on the screen, it's signed off by Trevor White, Deputy 03.01PM  
21 State Controller, on that date. Was Mr White a member  
22 of the State Emergency Management Team? It's not a  
23 name that we've come across until now, but certainly it  
24 seems he was part of the command structure?---Yes.  
25 Possibly, yes. 03.01PM

26 It's headed, "Planning for and providing feedback from  
27 community meetings." Under the heading "Background",  
28 it tells us that that, "At the State Emergency  
29 Management Team on Thursday, 13 February 2014 [so some  
30 five days before this meeting that we're talking 03.01PM  
31 about], there was extensive discussion on the

1 importance of gathering accurate and timely feedback  
2 from community meetings. This is particularly  
3 important to ensure issues can be address at the level  
4 most appropriate in a timely manner."

5 Under the heading, "Issues highlighted", if I can 03.02PM  
6 draw your attention to No.2, "Having the experienced  
7 and senior members of local Government present to  
8 support the conduct of community meetings." Then  
9 further down that page under the heading, "General  
10 principles", second dot point, "Senior Government and 03.02PM  
11 relevant non-Government staff should attend to respond  
12 authoritatively and honestly to issues/questions."

13 My question is, given that level of foresight,  
14 apparently at the SEMT level about what was needed to  
15 ensure that community meetings ran properly, and given 03.02PM  
16 how important community meetings were to provide proper  
17 information, how is it that five days later, with an  
18 incident being managed by such a senior management team  
19 in Melbourne, we end up at a meeting in Morwell where  
20 there aren't sufficiently authoritative people to 03.02PM  
21 answer questions? How did that happen?---It's an  
22 answer I'd like to have myself. The meeting, as I make  
23 clear in my statement, community engagement is not  
24 strictly within the responsibilities of EMJPIC.

25 I understand?---The meeting that was organised, I believe it 03.03PM  
26 was organised locally, was it optimal? Obviously it  
27 wasn't, so we would really have to ask the Incident  
28 Controller or whoever it was that organised that  
29 meeting. I know communications staff were there, they  
30 assisted, it had been organised, and when people are 03.03PM  
31 there they have a number of things that they do, they



1 do media work but they will also assist in other  
2 things. They assisted in this meeting, as they would  
3 with others, but we weren't the primary organisers so I  
4 can't answer that one for you.

5 People like the previous witness, Ms Burke, and many others 03.03PM  
6 that we've heard from in this Inquiry, were crying out  
7 for information about a situation that was challenging,  
8 it was difficult, the air was full of smoke and here  
9 was an opportunity to engage and provide that  
10 information, and it's not surprising that there's anger 03.04PM  
11 in those circumstances if there aren't sufficiently  
12 authoritative people there?---I agree with you.

13 You'd have to agree with that?---No, I absolutely agree with  
14 you.

15 MEMBER PETERING: Who did chair the meeting, Ms Tabain?---It 03.04PM  
16 was, and I was a little horrified myself, one of the  
17 communications officers volunteered, "I'll help out",  
18 so he facilitated the meeting and I'm not sure if he  
19 would actually volunteer his services again. It was  
20 out of goodwill, he wasn't trained, he was there and 03.04PM  
21 said, "I'll help out."

22 MR ROZEN: If we can go back to your statement please at  
23 paragraph 117, you say that, "The CFA's community  
24 engagement team", and we've heard a good deal about  
25 that and generally positive I must say, "conducted 03.05PM  
26 regular surveys throughout Morwell in its face-to-face  
27 activities, the buses and trains so on."

28 It's the final sentence of that paragraph I want  
29 to ask you about, "The feedback from this activity  
30 eventually indicated most residents wanted simple, 03.05PM  
31 tailored information delivered to their letterbox or

1 via a door knock."

2 When did it eventually indicate that? At what  
3 point in this incident did that become clear, that  
4 people wanted face-to-face information along those  
5 lines?---This was one of the ways in which we actually 03.05PM  
6 obtained feedback, so one of the things that we did  
7 throughout our meetings, in particular when things  
8 became - as I said, when they moved from strictly being  
9 an issue of fire to really, as I said, health and  
10 well-being was, we started to ask for feedback as a 03.06PM  
11 regular part of the meeting. So, Latrobe City Council  
12 became a regular member of EMJPIC.

13 We would ask them to provide us any information on  
14 community feedback they received through their call  
15 centre or people who actually came to their counters. 03.06PM  
16 Members of the ICC or communications people from there,  
17 we would ask them to actually feed back into us any  
18 feedback that they received from the community,  
19 anything they were being told, anything that would  
20 assist us in actually tailoring to help us actually do 03.06PM  
21 our communications and do our work better.

22 So the exact type, it was a continuous process; to  
23 say there was a specific date would be difficult. It  
24 was a regular part of the way we actually did our  
25 business. As communicators you actually look for 03.06PM  
26 feedback that what you're doing is the right thing or  
27 the wrong thing and you adjust and you move.

28 It's possible, isn't it, that in an age where the internet  
29 and social media are omnipresent, that we can lose  
30 sight of the basics in relation to communication. This 03.07PM  
31 is something Mr Lapsley touched on when he first gave

1 evidence here and that is that there's a lot to be said  
2 for that face-to-face communication?---Absolutely.  
3 Because it enables two-way discussions?---Absolutely. I  
4 totally agree.

5 MEMBER CATFORD: While we're on paragraph 117, the  
6 paragraph before you do talk about a senior media  
7 officer being stationed at Traralgon?---Yes.

03.07PM

8 I'm not quite sure when that appointment was made or that  
9 decision was made, because clearly coordinating the  
10 communications roles between the various agencies is a  
11 pretty critical role. So, can you enlighten us?  
12 Presumably it's after 21 February, is it?---To the best  
13 of my recollection it was as part of a discussion that  
14 I had with Liz Martin on the day that we actually came  
15 down here to Morwell, it was really to help at a more  
16 local level.

03.07PM

03.08PM

17 One of the things that I refer to in the lessons  
18 learnt is the advantage of having a more senior person  
19 actually stationed within a centre rather than just  
20 operating from Melbourne. So, they'll be the officers  
21 that work down here who do a great job and work  
22 extraordinarily hard, but often having a senior person  
23 almost at an executive level who has the capacity to  
24 sympathise and understand and relay and sometimes  
25 actually also push back on ideas, on issues, I think  
26 would be, for me, one of the lessons moving forward.

03.08PM

03.09PM

27 If that person had been there a week earlier or even before  
28 that, that could have made a big difference, do you  
29 think, in terms of how all these messages would have  
30 all come together?---For me, one of my recommendations  
31 on a personal level would be that I would actually ask

03.09PM

1 to deploy a senior person there almost straight away.

2 MR ROZEN: Because we know, for example, that there were MFB  
3 firefighters down here within 24-48 hours, they were  
4 here. There was a recognition that the local CFA  
5 resources were inadequate. They were inadequate in 03.09PM  
6 numbers-wise, they were inadequate expertise-wise  
7 because it was a hazardous materials fire, so at that  
8 level the response was very prompt, and yet you've got  
9 this disconnect with the communications side of it to  
10 some extent; I think that's what we're interested 03.10PM  
11 in?---In a sense. Again the difference is, in a stand  
12 up, stand down quick situation the responses that we  
13 have are more than adequate. Often it's my own staff  
14 from police media that's down attending a fire and  
15 managing at a scene, they're quite expert at it. 03.10PM

16 This was one of these things where we've really  
17 not for a long time actually dealt with something  
18 that's of this length, and we didn't know that at the  
19 start; if we knew that at the start, we would have  
20 dealt with it quite differently, but we didn't. Like I 03.10PM  
21 said, it's certainly one of these things that I would  
22 like to do - for me, it's certainly something that I'd  
23 be recommending that it occurs straight away.

24 I must pursue that issue with you because we've had a number  
25 of witnesses, it happened yesterday when Dr Lester was 03.10PM  
26 giving evidence, this question of whether or not there  
27 was an awareness early on of the likely length of  
28 incident.

29 I think you've just said to us, "We didn't know it  
30 was going to last for as long as it did". Mr Lapsley's 03.11PM  
31 evidence and the documents, I can bring them up if need

1 be, were at the State Control Centre level, State  
2 Emergency Management Team as early as, I think  
3 12 February, advice being given by him that this was a  
4 30 day incident from his perspective. Was that  
5 something you weren't aware of in that first 03.11PM  
6 week?---Well, certainly not off the top of my - not  
7 that I can recall now, no, as a 30 day incident.  
8 I'll just see if we can bring it up. We have a situation  
9 report, this is exhibit 3, the bottom of page 3.

10 MEMBER PETERING: Just while Mr Rozen's finding that, who 03.12PM  
11 would be present at a State Control Centre? Is this  
12 document submitted to the State Emergency Management  
13 Team? Can you just give me a context of this document,  
14 who would write it and who reads it?

15 MR ROZEN: I think that's a question for you, Ms Tabain, if 03.12PM  
16 you are able to tell us?---Yes. So generally the  
17 person who attends the meeting would be providing the  
18 information. It goes to all centre members, so anyone  
19 who was there, so members of SEMT would receive it.  
20 So that would include you?---It would include me. 03.12PM  
21 So you'll see it there, the second dot point, after  
22 recognising there's a separate Incident Management  
23 Team, "The fire in the Hazelwood Coal Mine will burn  
24 for up to a month which has significant long-term  
25 implications for the community." That was something 03.13PM  
26 you were aware of, was it not?---This sounds like  
27 nit-picking; we actually weren't receiving - I wasn't  
28 receiving them, there was an issue with me actually  
29 obtaining - being sent these. So, whilst we were  
30 inputting in, we weren't receiving them back to read. 03.13PM  
31 And, it is as it is, I don't recall that.

1 This wasn't secret SCC business though?---No.  
2 There were public pronouncements being made by Mr Lapsley  
3 and others about the likely duration of this incident  
4 during the first week of the fire fight, were there  
5 not?---There was also information that there was 03.13PM  
6 success in fighting the fire, it was going to be more  
7 quickly extinguished than things turned out. Maybe I'm  
8 overly optimistic, but when someone - that was  
9 certainly the information. It varied. It varied.  
10 There were times in which there was information that 03.14PM  
11 was being given that it was something that the  
12 firefighters were being extraordinarily successful.  
13 And again, the information comes; I'm not an expert and  
14 when someone says it looks like it's going to be  
15 extinguished quickly, I'll take that. 03.14PM  
16 I know you're not an expert, no-one's suggesting you are,  
17 but Mr Lapsley is, isn't he?---Yes.  
18 And that statement's pretty unambiguous in terms of what his  
19 expectations were at that point in time. Are you  
20 suggesting he gave contradictory information to the 03.14PM  
21 SEMT on that issue?---Not necessarily. It's just that  
22 it changed at times. So, there was other information  
23 that would come through that the fire was, the fire  
24 fight was extremely successful and they were - and I  
25 know in some of the documentation there is that they 03.14PM  
26 had actually reached a point where they'd almost  
27 extinguished three-quarters of it. It was a two steps  
28 forward as it turned out and then one step back, or  
29 sometimes two or three steps back; it wasn't  
30 necessarily a linear process in terms of the fire 03.15PM  
31 fight.

1 Did Mr Lapsley ever say anything to the SEMT that  
2 contradicted that initial indication that he gave that  
3 you are able to point us to?---It was certainly in  
4 conversations, the report that the fire fight was  
5 possibly being more successful, less successful, it 03.15PM  
6 changed at times; as I said, this is not necessarily  
7 linear.

8 You've attached to your statement a number of - many  
9 messages that were sent out. You'll be happy to know  
10 I'm not going to take you to all of them, I only want 03.15PM  
11 to ask you about one of them because it does seem to  
12 exemplify a number of the issues that have arisen  
13 during the course of the Inquiry. It's behind tab 64  
14 and it's an EPA question and answer document that came  
15 out on 24 February 2014. I know you're not at the EPA, 03.16PM  
16 you didn't develop the content of this, I'm more  
17 interested in your observations about it from the point  
18 of view of a communications specialist, and  
19 particularly whether some of these issues I'm going to  
20 raise with you are part of your ongoing consideration 03.16PM  
21 that you've talked about at lessons.

22 I particularly want to ask you about the fourth  
23 page of this document. The document ends in 0217.  
24 Just a little context about this, this is a five-paged  
25 publication put out by the EPA, an FAQ, this is a 03.17PM  
26 standard sort of communication document where questions  
27 are raised and then answers are provided. From the  
28 date we can see, 24 February, reading through it we can  
29 see these are the sorts of questions that were being  
30 asked in the community and raised specifically with the 03.17PM  
31 EPA.

1           Go to the third page of the document, bottom  
2 right-hand corner, you'll see in bold, "You keep using  
3 technical, complicated language. Are you covering up  
4 by using this complex language?", asks the question.  
5 That was a recurring issue during this incident, wasn't it?---Yes. 03.17PM

7 We heard it talked about again this morning, that the  
8 problems with using jargon are that people zone out and  
9 they don't like it. The answer the document provides  
10 is, "We're doing our best to keep it simple - community 03.18PM  
11 safety is top of mind whenever we issue information -  
12 but this is a very complex fire involving lots of  
13 technical points." It's true, there is a balance to be  
14 struck, isn't there, between providing easily  
15 understood information but at the same time it's got to 03.18PM  
16 be technically and scientifically accurate and that's  
17 got to be a challenge that arises in an incident like  
18 this?---Yes, it is, yes.

19 But having said that they're keeping it simple, I then want  
20 to draw your attention halfway down the left-hand 03.18PM  
21 column of that page 4. The question is, "The data on  
22 EPA's website looks alarmingly as if we've exceeded air  
23 quality standards, is that right?", asks the question.  
24 There's a simple answer to that based on the evidence  
25 that we've heard, uncontradicted evidence over days, 03.19PM  
26 the simple answer was, yes. You know that, don't you?  
27 That's what the evidence that the Inquiry's heard  
28 indicates, levels 10, 20, even 30 times higher than the  
29 relevant standards of particulate matter. The answer  
30 that's provided, and we can all read it, is anything 03.19PM  
31 but simple, "Data readings are the actual scientific



1 measurements for each air pollutant. The data readings  
2 are recorded in different units of measure depending on  
3 the type of pollutant." Then there's a table. Then it  
4 goes on, "Data readings are converted into AQI values  
5 by using a formula; this means that the AQI is a 03.19PM  
6 derived value, that just means it's based on the  
7 formula. AQI for each pollutant." It goes on and on.  
8 We know what AQI means. This is not good  
9 communication, is it, Ms Tabain?---It's certainly not  
10 idea, no, it is not. 03.20PM

11 I could go on with that answer: It doesn't even answer the  
12 question about the levels. It gives what - it may  
13 perhaps be being impolite, but it's gobbledegook, isn't  
14 it?---Well, if you were to ask - - -

15 You can take that as a comment as someone on TV would say. 03.20PM  
16 The next question, if I can ask you about it, seems to  
17 raise another question, so if we can go up the page a  
18 little, "Why did it take you so long to start  
19 monitoring air quality?" Once again, that was a  
20 question that was being asked repeatedly during the 03.20PM  
21 course of this incident?---Yes.

22 We know in this Inquiry that it did take some time, several  
23 days before any monitoring was being done, up to a week  
24 before there was proper calibrated monitoring that was  
25 being done. What's the answer? "It didn't take us 03.20PM  
26 long." It goes on, "In fact, there are two permanent  
27 air monitoring stations in Morwell and Traralgon."

28 On one view that's quite misleading based on the  
29 evidence we've heard. The Morwell station had been  
30 decommissioned, it was not operating when this fire 03.21PM  
31 started and, whilst there was a station at Traralgon,

1 it was only monitoring PM 10.

2 I know this is highly technical for you. My point  
3 is, if you accept that that's right, if you accept that  
4 that is the situation as at this time, then it's not  
5 helpful to provide information that's of questionable 03.21PM  
6 accuracy, is it?---Absolutely not.

7 Then finally there's a question, "Where is the mine in all  
8 of this? Why aren't we hearing from them?" Once  
9 again, a question that people are asking repeatedly and  
10 it's a reasonable question, isn't it, for members of 03.21PM  
11 the community to ask?---Yes, it is.

12 Can you read the answer out to us aloud please?---"The  
13 Emergency Services are managing this fire in  
14 conjunction with the mine."

15 Does that answer the question in your view?---No, it 03.22PM  
16 doesn't.

17 It's a fudge, isn't it? That's a fudged answer?---It's  
18 certainly not answering the question.

19 I don't want to take you to document after document, but I  
20 think you've agreed there are problems with this style 03.22PM  
21 of communication on a number of levels?---Yes.

22 And I think you've indicated to us that part of your  
23 communications review of this incident is taking into  
24 account these sorts of issues?---Yes.

25 The final matter I want to ask you about is back in your 03.22PM  
26 statement at paragraph 123. You make reference there  
27 to some SEMC, you'll just have to remind me, State  
28 Emergency?---Management Centre, health and human  
29 services effectively. We referred to them earlier, so  
30 Health and Human Services Emergency Management 03.23PM  
31 Communications.

1 They organised and sponsored two workshops on 13 March 2014  
2 for people assisting and supporting the Morwell  
3 community, you go on and describe the nature of the  
4 workshops and that they were entitled, communicating  
5 with people in emergencies", and no one could criticise 03.23PM  
6 that the workshops were conducted, the question is, why  
7 13 March when the fire had been declared under control  
8 on 10 March? Wasn't that a bit late to be conducting  
9 those workshops?---Was it an ideal time? I mean, would  
10 it have been better earlier, absolutely. 03.24PM

11 There is one final matter having told you that was the last,  
12 there's one more and it concerns an issue that's been  
13 raised with us in community consultations and you may  
14 or may not be able to help us, but do you know and, if  
15 not, we can ask other witnesses, which Government 03.24PM  
16 agencies relocated out of Morwell during the course of  
17 this fire?---I wouldn't be able to give you an accurate  
18 answer on that one.

19 The only reason I'm asking you is because, we heard earlier  
20 today, I think you'd agree, that communication can take 03.24PM  
21 all sorts of forms, and relocating your staff out of an  
22 area is a form of communicating a concern about their  
23 health, would you not agree?---Yes.

24 They are the questions that I have of Ms Tabain. I am told  
25 Dr Wilson has some questions, but if any Members of the 03.24PM  
26 Board do?

27 MEMBER PETERING: Two matters please, Ms Tabain. Reading  
28 through your statement, and I think there's quite a  
29 number of parties involved. If I take you to page 4 of  
30 your statement, you were attempting to be helpful, and 03.25PM  
31 I thank you for that, about describing the

1 abbreviations and the acronyms used.

2 I might just call on you, Dr Wilson, to be able to  
3 assist perhaps with your colleagues there: I would  
4 find it really helpful if we had a diagrammatic  
5 structure of the parties involved, particularly these 03.25PM  
6 acronyms, to show I guess the interrelation between  
7 them, because I think that would describe sort of how  
8 complicated it is. I'm having trouble reading through  
9 the pages of information and I'm sure the community -  
10 well, I'm just taking a guess that the community may 03.25PM  
11 not be able to also follow that. Might that be  
12 something that someone could assist me with?---Yes.

13 DR WILSON: We'll do that.

14 MEMBER PETERING: Thank you. I guess also on your point  
15 Mr Rozen, and probably just for clarification, in 03.26PM  
16 relation to tab 39 of Ms Tabain's statement,  
17 VPOL.0003.001.0166, the air quality and health  
18 paragraph there. This is on 14 February at 6 p.m.,  
19 Community Information Newsletter, "The air quality and  
20 health tells me as a member of the community that the 03.26PM  
21 EPA has air monitoring in place for fine particles in  
22 Traralgon and now in Morwell to measure the impacts of  
23 the smoke." So, as a community member I'd be reading  
24 that and saying, that's good, someone's looking out and  
25 they'll tell me if things aren't going well. 03.27PM

26 This may not be a question for you, Ms Tabain, but  
27 in relation to communication, Dr Lester yesterday gave  
28 evidence to say that the early monitoring was not  
29 adequate data to make health decisions on. So, do you  
30 have a comment on the fact that you're telling the 03.27PM  
31 community, we're monitoring, but then the Chief Health

1 Officer is saying that that data is not sufficient to  
2 make a decision on?---All I can say is that, as  
3 communicators, we work with the information that we're  
4 given. All we can do is work from the information that  
5 we're provided with. So, if the EPA is saying, this is 03.27PM  
6 what's occurring, I have to take that on trust.

7 Do you think that there'd be a possibility the community  
8 would interpret that to say that there is an element of  
9 care in that, that it's being monitoring therefore I  
10 would be told if the level is high?---Absolutely. 03.28PM

11 Thank you.

12 MEMBER CATFORD: Could I just follow and, could I say, I  
13 very much appreciate your open and honest responses, we  
14 do appreciate that.

15 MEMBER PETERING: Thank you. 03.28PM

16 MEMBER CATFORD: I'm referring now to paragraphs 124 and 125  
17 of your statement and I'm just trying to pull this  
18 together in terms of, I suppose, what your take home  
19 message is to us. The way I read paragraphs 124 and  
20 125 is that essentially the Government was trying to 03.28PM  
21 push messages on the community, and it's about for  
22 instance at the bottom of page 125, alternative methods  
23 of telling people things, of assessing whether your  
24 messaging is getting through.

25 In terms of your responses and what we've heard 03.29PM  
26 this morning, it's not just about dumping messages, is  
27 it? What's your view or what is the mature best  
28 practice approach as we move forward in terms of  
29 communication?---This is one of the things obviously  
30 we'd look to in the future. As I said before, there 03.29PM  
31 really isn't a cookie-cutter approach to any community

1 in communicating with any community. There are  
2 principles and guides for best practice. It's often  
3 about striking a balance between providing information  
4 which the community is after and listening to what  
5 they're saying as well. There is an element of 03.30PM  
6 information provision, and you can't actually walk away  
7 from that, people want to know what is going on and we  
8 have to be able to provide that information to them,  
9 and obviously in the simplest and clearest way possible  
10 regardless of their demographics. No one likes to 03.30PM  
11 actually be reading technical, highly scientific  
12 information, it doesn't make sense to people.

13 So, in terms of the provision of information,  
14 absolutely in as plain English as possible. It's a  
15 fight that, as a communications person, and there would 03.30PM  
16 be very few communications people across private and  
17 public sector who wouldn't understand when I say that  
18 it's a fight that you have within every organisation;  
19 you get accused of dumbing things down when all you're  
20 actually trying to do is translate things into easily 03.30PM  
21 understandable English.

22 There is never ever one simple way to actually  
23 provide that information and to hear back. Actually,  
24 one of the good things about social media and one of  
25 the things that we - and this is where I actually would 03.31PM  
26 challenge some of the simple analysis around the data  
27 and statistics and the ABS Census data and we  
28 understood that we had to not simply rely on the web  
29 because the data was telling us that not everyone was  
30 connected. However, one of the things that did 03.31PM  
31 surprise us a little was the level of social activism,

1 because people have access through their phones, there  
2 are a number of different ways that people were able to  
3 communicate with each other. It was not necessarily  
4 just sitting at a computer, it was using their mobile  
5 phone.

03.31PM

6 One of the things that Government and all  
7 organisations I believe need to get better at is  
8 listening and hearing and using every method possible,  
9 being either community meetings, feedback that's  
10 provided as I said through - we were talking to council  
11 about what was coming through their channels, or  
12 through social media and listening, hearing what people  
13 are saying but actually understanding what they're  
14 actually meaning as well.

03.32PM

15 I'm not sure that anyone actually has it right,  
16 and I don't just mean here in Victoria, I mean  
17 internationally, I don't think that - the effect is  
18 what you call the architecture of listening, of  
19 actually being able to hear what people are saying and  
20 interpret it and understand what they're meaning, that  
21 anyone has got it absolutely spot on, it's a learning  
22 process for us all.

03.32PM

23 MR ROZEN: Thank you, there are questions for you from

24 Dr Wilson.

25 <CROSS-EXAMINED BY DR WILSON>:

03.32PM

26 Thank you, Ms Tabain. You were present this morning when  
27 you heard the two gentlemen sitting in the joint  
28 conclave about effective communication. In your  
29 witness statement you speak of the print media and you  
30 refer to the most effective print media method being  
31 the local newspaper. What was your experience as to

03.33PM

1 the success of that method of communication?---From the  
2 feedback we received, it was very good. It was well  
3 received. It's a highly and widely read publication in  
4 the community.

5 You've no doubt caught up with Dr Lester's evidence about 03.33PM  
6 the various methods of communication employed by her,  
7 from tweets to door-to-door contacts and everything in  
8 between?---Yes.

9 From your professional perspective, are they all in  
10 combination effective tools?---Yes, they are. 03.33PM

11 Is one or more better than others or is it necessary to use  
12 all of them in combination to be as effective as you  
13 can be?---As I've been saying, there is not a one size  
14 fits all and utilising every method of communication  
15 possible, particularly in an emergency or in a crisis 03.34PM  
16 situation like this, you can't leave any stone unturned  
17 so you have to use everything that's available to you.

18 You heard today that aspects of the local community were  
19 distrustful of information conveyed by Government  
20 agencies?---Yes. 03.34PM

21 No doubt you'd agree that getting a message across to people  
22 who are inherently suspicious of the message that you  
23 are seeking to convey presents its own obstacles?---(No  
24 audible answer).

25 If we proceed on the basis that effective communication is 03.34PM  
26 underpinned by trust in a community which may not  
27 exhibit trust for the information that you're giving,  
28 how do you overcome that?---This is a difficult  
29 situation. I would actually say that the level of  
30 trust in the community didn't exist - well, a level of 03.35PM  
31 distrust existed before the situation arose, before the



1 emergency arose. This is what I was referring to  
2 earlier about having a deeper understanding of the  
3 community with which you're working or communicating  
4 to. This is a community that's had a number of traumas  
5 and issues, problems with asbestos, this is not the 03.35PM  
6 first time there's been issues of health, risks to  
7 their health that they've experienced. This is a  
8 community that's actually had a lot of trauma and the  
9 level of distrust of authority figures, I would say,  
10 existed before this emergency occurred. 03.35PM

11 So in terms of actually trying to battle  
12 something, we were battling something that was there  
13 before we actually arrived. What do you do about it?  
14 This is not a simple solution, this is not something  
15 that can be done quickly, this is something that takes 03.36PM  
16 time, and it's not necessarily just a communications  
17 response either. This is something where community,  
18 Government figures, community leaders, people have to  
19 actually do things, say they're going to do something,  
20 do it, deliver on it and visibly deliver on it to start 03.36PM  
21 rebuilding the trust.

22 My view is that a lot of that level of trust had  
23 actually dissipated from this community before the fire  
24 actually occurred. It wasn't there to begin with, so a  
25 lot of the communications that we were giving them were 03.36PM  
26 actually, in my view, probably, now that I have a  
27 deeper understanding of the community, were always  
28 going to be struggled to be heard in the way that was  
29 actually being referred to this morning.

30 This might involve some crystal ball gazing, but how long do 03.37PM  
31 you estimate it could take before you could gain the

1 community's trust so that the message that you give to  
2 them will be received with open ears?---It is a little  
3 bit - it is crystal ball gazing; it could be a year, it  
4 could be two, it could be three. But this is not an  
5 issue, these are things that have occurred over a long 03.37PM  
6 period of time and you don't resolve these issues very  
7 quickly, you can't, and it's a term I absolutely  
8 loathe; but you can't spin your way out of these  
9 things. Trust has to be earned in a community and  
10 Government leaders, community leaders, business 03.37PM  
11 leaders, have to actually earn the trust of that  
12 community and this takes time.

13 CHAIRMAN: When it comes to distrust, as Dr Wilson's been  
14 referring, are there not a couple of examples of (1) a  
15 person, who shall be nameless but everyone will know 03.38PM  
16 who I'm talking about, who does not have that distrust  
17 and the community consultations reflected it and an  
18 organisation, both linked to Government, and to the  
19 CFA, I will name the CFA, who do have that trust and  
20 what these events did was to increase the level of 03.38PM  
21 trust? So it's not something that is totally lacking  
22 and needs to be found, but is there with some people  
23 who, for whatever reason, have gone about it in an  
24 appropriately positive way; you can't identify why it  
25 is that they are able to have that trust?---You can, 03.38PM  
26 and the CFA is actually a good example, and if the  
27 issues that we were dealing with here or trying to  
28 communicate here were solely around fire, we wouldn't  
29 possibly have had the problem. The issues were, as  
30 I've said, they were across different agencies, the 03.39PM  
31 issues were not simply ones around fire. The CFA have

1 actually - they are part of this community, this is a  
2 community where they are well regarded and they have  
3 worked well, they have delivered and they've always  
4 done what their charter says, they've actually put a  
5 fire out, so they do have a level of trust, but there  
6 are certainly other elements in the community that have  
7 other levels of decisions and other influences on the  
8 way the community works but don't have that level of  
9 trust.

03.39PM

10 MEMBER CATFORD: I think the Chairman is making a very good  
11 point here. If we were just to put the fire response  
12 and the CFA on one side and look at the remaining  
13 agencies, do you think the trust in this community has  
14 increased or decreased as a result of the events that  
15 occurred?---Like a lot of other people here, the only  
16 data I actually have available to me is through the  
17 community consultations and that is one element of the  
18 community.

03.39PM

03.40PM

19 This is a community of 14,000-15,000 people. At a  
20 shallow level, and this is really because it's only  
21 very much skimming the surface; I've not actually  
22 undertaken - there's been no research done that I'm  
23 aware of that would actually indicate a positive  
24 response - it doesn't seem to have, on the face of it,  
25 increased the level of trust from the community, but  
26 that is really only from the media reports that I've  
27 seen and the people that have actually presented at the  
28 community consultations. I'm not sure that is  
29 necessarily reflective of the whole community of  
30 Morwell. I'd have to see the evidence.

03.40PM

03.41PM

03.41PM

31 So you're saying it's probably got worse? Is that what

1 you're saying?---Indications from a very top line  
2 response is that it doesn't look like it has actually  
3 improved, no.

4 It leads to the obvious, so what is your assessment of the  
5 effectiveness of the communication then?---Of what we 03.41PM  
6 actually did?

7 If the trust is not any better and possibly has got  
8 worse?---In a situation such as this, and this is  
9 something, as I've said, I've actually been thinking  
10 about very hard since, we are - I'm not sure - we 03.41PM  
11 tried, we did the best we could, we really did the best  
12 we could. The amount of work that we did, the attempt  
13 to actually provide as much information as we could to  
14 the community was done with the best intentions. We  
15 tried to adapt as we went along, we tried to - we moved 03.42PM  
16 and changed and we've been reflecting on what we did  
17 right and what we did wrong since.

18 Again, as I referred to earlier, about getting a  
19 senior person in to do an assessment extremely early  
20 on, which is made up more than just analysing 03.42PM  
21 statistics and the census, but actually understanding  
22 the community at a more intelligent and emotional level  
23 as well, understanding its history, rather than just  
24 looking at the statistics that are presented, that is  
25 the sort of information that actually would guide a 03.43PM  
26 proper strategic approach to communications and an  
27 attempt to actually do it differently.

28 Thank you. Dr Wilson.

29 DR WILSON: Thank you, professor.

30 This morning you may have heard, Ms Tabain, that some 03.43PM  
31 criticism was levelled at the State for providing too

1 much information or information too often. Do you  
2 recall hearing that?---Yes, I do.

3 To use one of Mr Riordan's expressions, that created  
4 something of a tension because either you give too much  
5 information and people cease to read it, or you don't 03.43PM  
6 give enough information as the situation evolves and  
7 therefore the information you give ceases to be timely  
8 and accurate. In your professional view, which is the  
9 best way to proceed?---In a situation where it is  
10 constantly changing, you cannot hold back on 03.43PM  
11 information to the community. This situation was  
12 dynamic, it was changing day-by-day, and at times by  
13 the hour. To actually withhold information from the  
14 community on the situation in which the people were  
15 living and working I think would have been grossly 03.44PM  
16 inadequate and reprehensible quite honestly; you just  
17 cannot keep that sort of information from the  
18 community.

19 Of course you no doubt proceed on the assumption that some  
20 people welcome, are grateful for, can understand and 03.44PM  
21 process complicated information, whereas others,  
22 without dumbing it down, just want executive headline.  
23 Is that right?---Yes, they do.

24 Again, which method is best?---As I've said at other times,  
25 there is no one simple template. You have to use every 03.44PM  
26 channel, you have to use every means possible, and you  
27 have to provide the opportunities for people who  
28 actually want more information and more complex  
29 information to be able to find it if they so wish.

30 Because, no doubt you took the view that some members of the 03.45PM  
31 community could in fact understand that highly

1 scientific information that Mr Rozen took you to  
2 before; they will make their own decisions about it,  
3 form their own conclusions based on it, and react  
4 predicated upon it as well, and you can't deny them  
5 that?---Absolutely not and, as I said, a community's 03.45PM  
6 made up of much more than the statistics, so there are  
7 certainly people in this community who were - the  
8 website hits on the EPA sites and on the different  
9 sites that were providing the information tell their  
10 own story. There was a lot of people who actually went 03.45PM  
11 to those websites looking for that information and who  
12 wanted deeper information. To actually filter that and  
13 not make that available to them, again, would have been  
14 I think a very bad thing to have done.

15 Speaking of hits, in other information before the Board we 03.45PM  
16 know that there are 300,000 "likes" for the CFA  
17 Facebook in the relevant period. No doubt, that was  
18 reassuring to you?---Yes. We have more than 100,000 in  
19 the Victoria Police, not that we're comparing them, but  
20 we're catching up. 03.46PM

21 Just in case there's a single other person in the room who  
22 doesn't know what a "like" is, can you explain it for  
23 us?---It's a page that you follow on Facebook.

24 You heard this morning from the two communication people who  
25 told us their evidence about the need for empathy in 03.46PM  
26 communications. It's probably self-evident, do you  
27 believe that you and those through you and with you  
28 showed the requisite level of empathy when  
29 communicating to the community in the events with which  
30 we're concerned?---Absolutely. I actually think all 03.46PM  
31 the key spokespeople delivered their messages with

1 empathy. The question, as I said, really goes to the  
2 level of trust that existed beforehand. Dr Lester in  
3 many of her conferences spoke about understanding what  
4 people were going through. Certainly Craig Lapsley did  
5 as well. This was not something that people were 03.47PM  
6 ignorant to.

7 You were taken to certain EMJPIC information. Did we see  
8 that Suez was among the participants in that  
9 organisation?---No, they weren't.

10 You also spoke of the need to include business and industry 03.47PM  
11 in communications. What's the explanation for their  
12 absence?---So, DSDBI is the Government department that  
13 works with GDF Suez, so that's the Department of - now  
14 I'm going to actually - - -

15 Back up the acronyms?---Yes, essentially the Business and 03.48PM  
16 Innovation, so they are the key liaison point with GDF  
17 Suez and they were communicating with them. In terms  
18 of actually having them as a member of EMJPIC, as  
19 Government and as - whilst understanding the need to  
20 have - obviously it would be good if they were 03.48PM  
21 communicating, engaging and standing alongside us at  
22 times, Government and Industry may not have ended up on  
23 the same side in this situation.

24 You referred to a report of EMJPIC, 13 February, about  
25 increasing community concerns. Again, at the risk of 03.48PM  
26 the self-evident, people might be concerned about  
27 events for a huge range of issues, some of which you  
28 know, some of which are rational, others which may not  
29 be rational. I take it, you recognise that no amount  
30 of assurance and no amount of explanation can for some 03.49PM  
31 people allay the concerns that they

1 express?---Absolutely.

2 How do you get through to those people and how do you  
3 reassure them in the way that your information tells  
4 you they need or want?---This is difficult and I  
5 certainly had sympathy for the residents in this 03.49PM  
6 because they were living in a smoky environment, there  
7 was ash that was evident in their homes, on their cars,  
8 it was there and they were seeing one thing and being  
9 told another.

10 These things are never simple. The evidence that 03.50PM  
11 we were being provided was that it was safe. We had to  
12 keep working with that, understanding and empathising  
13 with the community that this was not necessarily the  
14 reality they were seeing. So, in respect for that, we  
15 actually suggested and a lot of activity was undertaken 03.50PM  
16 to give people an opportunity to leave the area.

17 V/Line actually were offering free trips, so there  
18 was something like 14,000 trips that were taken up,  
19 free entry to the zoo. We were looking around for  
20 community events that were outside of the area to give 03.50PM  
21 people an opportunity to leave. Health and Human  
22 Services had, there was a respite centre, there was a  
23 Health Centre, there was a number of activities and  
24 other ways in which people were given opportunities to  
25 seek information, be given information and actually 03.51PM  
26 leave the areas, if that's the way they so wished to  
27 do.

28 We've heard a lot about the effectiveness of social media in  
29 disseminating information to those who wanted it,  
30 Twitter of course was used and Facebook, but that's 03.51PM  
31 technology and systems that exist in the year 2014.



1 Project yourself ahead 10 years, we may not even  
2 perceive or comprehend what might be an effective tool,  
3 but are you taking steps to keep up with the evolution  
4 of technology to ensure that you get to those you need  
5 to get to?---As a communicator, I absolutely have to, 03.51PM  
6 that's an essential part of any of the work that I do.  
7 One of the projects that was in train anyway is  
8 actually looking at how we monitor social media  
9 overall, in an overarching way for Emergency Services.

10 It was suggested or faintly put that no attempt was made to 03.52PM  
11 understand the preferred method of communication for  
12 all of the 15,000-odd people of Morwell. Is it  
13 feasible to survey or somehow understand the preferred  
14 means of reaching individuals and, if it is, tell us  
15 how it might be done within reasonable bounds?---I 03.52PM  
16 actually would disagree with the statement that there  
17 wasn't an attempt to understand the preferred method of  
18 communication for the residents because we did, we  
19 tried.

20 So we adapted, we moved to the letterbox drops, we 03.52PM  
21 moved to a whole range of communications. There were  
22 live radio reads, there were between six to eight  
23 conducted a day, and the messages there were adapted  
24 and changed as the situation changed, so we actually  
25 did a lot of things. 03.52PM

26 To understand a preferred method of  
27 communications, I'd say there is not necessarily -  
28 there isn't one, so when you actually look at any  
29 community there would be people who were - young people  
30 who have one preferred way of communicating, there were 03.53PM  
31 people in the middle ages, the age bracket like myself,

1 who have another, and then there are elderly people who  
2 again like a different form. There is simply,  
3 particularly in this day and age, there is simply more  
4 communication, more information everywhere, there is  
5 simply not a one size fits all.

03.53PM

6 As I said, actually getting into a community,  
7 understanding the statistics that are there, but also  
8 understanding the history of a community and its  
9 cultures that are within it and what has developed in  
10 its history over time.

03.54PM

11 Thank you, Ms Tabain. Thank you, Board.

12 <RE-EXAMINED BY MR ROZEN:

13 Just one final matter, if I may, Ms Tabain. You were asked  
14 by my learned friend, Dr Wilson, about whether you  
15 should provide too much information or too little  
16 information. The issue is really quality, isn't it,  
17 rather than quantity?---In this situation I would say  
18 not - well, when you're in a situation that is  
19 changing, getting the information out is of paramount  
20 importance. Air quality was changing from  
21 hour-to-hour, day-to-day; the smoke situation was  
22 changing, it was variable, it was predicated on the  
23 weather at times.

03.54PM

03.54PM

24 The theories around communications in an ideal  
25 situation, or in a campaign sense away from an  
26 emergency, and absolutely the quality of your  
27 communications has to be spot on. And again, it's one  
28 of the things that I've said we're certainly looking at  
29 in the future, but to hold back information if it's new  
30 or different or changing, in a situation like this, I  
31 actually don't think is necessarily the right way to

03.55PM

03.55PM

1 go.

2 I'm not sure that anyone's suggesting that information be  
3 held back but I think you've answered my question about  
4 the quality. Unless the Members of the Board have any  
5 further questions of Ms Tabain? Yes, it looks like 03.55PM  
6 there might be one more.

7 MEMBER PETERING: One more, and I do appreciate the honest  
8 way that you've answered the questions, thank you very  
9 much.

10 The issue Dr Wilson raised was around the point of 03.55PM  
11 empathy. Would you agree, being an expert in  
12 communications, that empathy is what's received by the  
13 person receiving the information, not necessarily  
14 measured by the person delivering?---Look, yes, to an  
15 extent, yes, you're right, but as I said before, there 03.56PM  
16 are some times when some people won't necessarily  
17 accept what people are saying regardless. So, whilst  
18 someone might be actually exhibiting and saying things  
19 that indicate they actually have some understanding of  
20 the situation that people are in, if someone has 03.56PM  
21 literally put the shutters up, they won't hear it and  
22 it's very difficult to actually then break through that  
23 once those shutters have actually gone up.

24 Thank you.

25 MR ROZEN: Thank you, Ms Tabain. Could Ms Tabain please be 03.56PM  
26 excused?

27 CHAIRMAN: Yes, indeed.

28 <(THE WITNESS WITHDREW)

29 MS RICHARDS: The next witness is John Mitchell from the  
30 Latrobe City Council. Mr Mitchell. 03.57PM

31

1 <JOHN LESLIE MITCHELL, sworn and examined:  
2 MS RICHARDS: Good afternoon, Mr Mitchell?---Good afternoon.  
3 Can you please state your full name and your address?---John  
4 Leslie Mitchell, 16 Cross's Road, Traralgon.  
5 You are the acting Chief Executive Officer of the Latrobe 03.58PM  
6 City Council?---I am.  
7 You've had a long history in Local Government in the Latrobe  
8 Valley, broadly. You've been a long-term resident of  
9 Traralgon and for about 12 years you were Chief  
10 Executive Officer of the shire of Traralgon?---The city 03.58PM  
11 of Traralgon, yes.  
12 City of Traralgon, excuse me. You then spent some time as  
13 acting CEO of the Baw Baw Shire Council. You were the  
14 CEO on a more permanent basis of the Latrobe City  
15 Council from 1995-1997?---That's correct. 03.59PM  
16 Then you had some time, again about 12 years, as the  
17 Managing Director of Gippsland Water?---That's correct.  
18 So it's probably fair to say you know the region on  
19 thoroughly?---Well, I know it fairly well.  
20 You had a period from 2008 running your own consultancy?---I 03.59PM  
21 have.  
22 You were recalled to duty at the end of last year, asked to  
23 step up as the acting CEO of Latrobe City Council and  
24 since then you've been living in interesting  
25 times?---Yes, it has been interesting times. 03.59PM  
26 I should take you to the statement that you've made. You  
27 provided a statement to the Inquiry which you made some  
28 corrections to yesterday, and I understand that a  
29 revised version has been circulated to the parties in  
30 the course of this morning. Having done that, do you 03.59PM  
31 have any further corrections to make to your

1 statement?---No, I do not.  
2 It's a statement of 117 paragraphs and 11  
3 attachments?---Yes.  
4 Is your statement true and correct?---Yes, it is.  
5 I tender that, Your Honour. 04.00PM  
6  
7 #EXHIBIT 55 - Statement of John Mitchell.  
8  
9 MS RICHARDS: I'd like to go straight to the question of  
10 children's services operated by the council. You deal 04.00PM  
11 with this starting at page 3 of your statement under  
12 the heading, "Items 2 and 3"?---Yes.  
13 In paragraph 16 you tell us that there 24 preschools, three  
14 early learning centres and nine maternal and child  
15 health centres across the council municipality. Of 04.00PM  
16 course, that takes in more than Morwell, does it  
17 not?---It does, yes.  
18 How many preschools, early learning centres and maternal and  
19 child health centres are there in Morwell?---There's  
20 four. 04.01PM  
21 Four altogether?---There's four altogether, yes, and we've  
22 got an early childhood centre which is a combined  
23 centre with the Carinya Preschool.  
24 So there is one maternal and child health centre here in  
25 Morwell?---Yes. 04.01PM  
26 There is the Maryvale Early Learning Centre?---Yes.  
27 Then there are two pre-schools, one of which is  
28 Carinya?---Yes.  
29 Which also provides childcare for children below  
30 kindergarten age, so babies and toddlers?---Yes. 04.01PM  
31 You tell us in paragraph 17 that on the evening of the 9th a

1 decision was made to close all of those services across  
2 the municipality on 10 February?---That's correct.  
3 That was largely because of difficulties in simply the staff  
4 getting to them in view of the fires that had been  
5 burning on the 9th?---That's correct. 04.02PM  
6 I'd like to deal separately with Maryvale Early Learning  
7 Centre, mainly because of its location in such close  
8 proximity to the mine, and I'd like to deal with that  
9 before we come to the other facilities. Did Maryvale  
10 Early Learning Centre reopen at any stage after 04.02PM  
11 9 February?---No, it did not.  
12 The first time it reopened was after the fire had been  
13 declared safe?---That's correct.  
14 It's particularly important to identify that because there  
15 were levels of benzene detected at the early learning 04.02PM  
16 centre in late February, but just to be clear, there  
17 were not at any stage children attending that centre  
18 after the fire started to burn?---That's correct, yes.  
19 Can you outline the council's decision-making process in  
20 relation to the Maryvale Early Learning Centre?---The 04.03PM  
21 Maryvale Centre is of course located very close to the  
22 Morwell Mine; like, it's within probably 400 or  
23 500 metres.  
24 We could just get the map up and ask you to point that  
25 out?---It's down in here. 04.03PM  
26 We see directly below it, it's marked "open cut coal  
27 mine"?---That's correct.  
28 With the freeway in between. Are you able to enlighten the  
29 Board as to why it is that an early learning centre is  
30 located so close, not only to an open cut mine, but 04.03PM  
31 also a freeway?---No. Look, I have no knowledge about

1 why the location was made there, in terms of that area,  
2 but that particular preschool does service the southern  
3 area of the Morwell township. The location, I guess in  
4 terms of catchment area, would have been one of the  
5 criteria used, but why that specific site, I cannot  
6 answer that. 04.04PM

7 In any event, the council was conscious that it was very  
8 close to the mine and to the fire. Can you talk us  
9 through the decision-making process at council in  
10 relation to the Maryvale Crescent Early Learning 04.04PM  
11 Centre?---Because it was in an area that was very  
12 immediately impacted by the smoke and the particulate  
13 area, our director of the preschool area took the view  
14 that it was completely untenable to have children and  
15 staff within that Centre, and I guess, one of the 04.04PM  
16 principles which drove other decisions too about the  
17 subsequent closure of other pre-schools or relocation  
18 was the fact that there was the question of the quality  
19 of education or program, there was a question about the  
20 children being restless indoors, and the impacts on 04.05PM  
21 staff and also respite for the children. But certainly  
22 our director in terms of the Maryvale area said it just  
23 wasn't tenable to have that service conducted from that  
24 facility.

25 That call was made on 10 February, if I understood that 04.05PM  
26 correctly?---The decision was made on the evening  
27 before, on the 9th but, as you said before, it was  
28 closed from the 10th and it did not reopen.

29 Did your, ask the Director of Children's Services, is that  
30 the title?---Yes. 04.06PM

31 Did she or he feel the need to have access to air quality

1 monitoring data or other more specific information  
2 before making that decision?---No, I think the decision  
3 was made just on the visual impact. Like, we've had  
4 evidence previous to the Inquiry to indicate that the  
5 levels of smoke and the concerns about particulate and 04.06PM  
6 being so close to the mine, you could see visually the  
7 impact from the fallout, so I think our Director made a  
8 very good decision and one that was supported and to my  
9 knowledge was never ever questioned.

10 The Centre was able to be relocated or alternative premises 04.06PM  
11 were found, but that took some little time, did it  
12 not?---Yes, it did. The early childhood component of  
13 that was located at Moe place, the subsequent service.

14 There were two parts to the service, is that correct, the  
15 kindergarten and the early learning?---At Maryvale 04.07PM  
16 there was only the preschool area. Carinya had the  
17 early childhood part.

18 Forgive me. So that was relocated to Moe P.L.A.C.E in Moe  
19 from 24 February?---That's correct.

20 So, the service didn't operate at all for two weeks and then 04.07PM  
21 from 24 February operated from an alternate  
22 location?---That's correct.

23 The other children's services did reopen on 11 February,  
24 both Carinya and the other kindergarten?---Yes.

25 And also the maternal and child health centre?---That's 04.07PM  
26 right.

27 What decisions were made in relation to those services as  
28 the fire continued?---Well, as the fire continued, as I  
29 said before, they were actually - on resumption the  
30 services were actually conducted with an indoor program 04.08PM  
31 and I think, as the event went on and it became evident



1 that we were going to have sustained smoke, and I guess  
2 adverse conditions, the decision was made that we  
3 should actually transfer those services to other  
4 facilities.

5 Again, we might ask you to show us on the map where those 04.08PM  
6 other facilities are?---We've got the Elizabeth Wilmot  
7 Preschool up in this area. We've got the Parklands  
8 Preschool over in this area, and we've got Carinya  
9 which is down in this area here. So we've got  
10 basically a pattern like that. 04.09PM

11 The Elizabeth Wilmot Centre, if I've got that name right,  
12 that's the maternal and child health centre?---No, the  
13 Carinya is the early learning centre and preschool.  
14 That one's in here.

15 Which of the three locations that you pointed to is the 04.09PM  
16 maternal and child health centre?---The first three?  
17 Maternal child centres are over in this area, we've got  
18 one in here, that's just the Morwell maternal.

19 Yes, so children aren't cared for there, it's somewhere  
20 where parents - - -?---That's right. 04.10PM

21 More particularly mothers take newborn babies?---Yes.  
22 The children's services operated for a time with an indoor  
23 program?---Yes.

24 And then during the third week of the fire, on 26 February,  
25 Ms Pitkin, who's the Director of Child & Family 04.10PM  
26 Services, decided that those services should  
27 close?---Yes.

28 What were her reasons for making that decision?---I've  
29 already indicated that there was a question about the  
30 quality of the program, the fact that the children were 04.10PM  
31 running indoor programs, they were getting very

1 restless, so she had - again the quality of the program  
2 meant that we really had to get a facility where they  
3 weren't indoors all the time. I think the question of  
4 staff was also an issue, managing children indoors all  
5 day was a challenge for the staff, and then there was 04.11PM  
6 also the other principle about respite for both  
7 children and our teachers.

8 Were alternative arrangements made for children who were  
9 attending those centres?---Yes, there were. When you  
10 say alternative, after we made the closure - - - 04.11PM

11 Yes?--- - - - the services were transferred. So we had the  
12 situation where Elizabeth Wilmot was transferred to  
13 Churchill. We had the Parklands Preschool, that was  
14 transferred to Moe P.L.A.C.E. with the Carinya Early  
15 Learning Centre, that component of it was transferred 04.11PM  
16 to the Traralgon Early Learning Centre, and we had the  
17 preschool part transferred to Moe P.L.A.C.E, and then  
18 similarly with Maryvale, that was in Moe P.L.A.C.E from  
19 the start.

20 The Chief Health Officer lifted her advice that vulnerable 04.12PM  
21 people should relocate out of the southern part of  
22 Morwell on 17 March. How soon after that did normal  
23 operations resume at all of the children's services in  
24 Morwell?---I'm just trying to pick that up, on the  
25 date. I'm not sure, I'm just trying to pick it up from 04.12PM  
26 my statement. Can you help me?

27 Paragraph 39, I believe at the top of page 7?---Yes, on  
28 24 March. So that all pre-schools, early learning  
29 centres and maternal and child health centres in  
30 Morwell resumed those normal operations. 04.13PM

31 In the course of that discussion I've referred to the advice

1 of the Chief Health Officer that people in vulnerable  
2 groups, which included preschool-aged children, should  
3 temporarily relocate out of the southern part of  
4 Morwell. During her evidence yesterday Dr Lester  
5 referred to a discussion with the council on 04.13PM  
6 28 February where an appropriate dividing line was  
7 discussed for her advice. Were you aware of that  
8 discussion?---I was, I was present at it.

9 Who else was present?---There was the Victoria Fire  
10 Commissioner, Mr Craig Lapsley, there was the Chief 04.13PM  
11 Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, there was Dr Rosemary  
12 Lester, there was John Merritt from the EPA, and  
13 various other departmental representatives. The  
14 council was represented by our Mayor, Counsellor Sharon  
15 Gibson, myself and Emma Lewis, part of our 04.14PM  
16 communications team.

17 Did that meeting take place here in Morwell?---It did take  
18 place in Morwell, yes.

19 Was the meeting to discuss the advice that Dr Lester was  
20 about to give that vulnerable groups should consider 04.14PM  
21 temporary relocation?---Yes, it was.

22 Was that meeting minuted or recorded in any way?---I'm not  
23 aware at that it was minuted, and I can't say if it was  
24 recorded.

25 One of the issues discussed was the dividing line. Can you 04.14PM  
26 tell us about that discussion?---At the meeting there  
27 was a map which had been plotted in terms of  
28 particulate readings, and that map was discussed,  
29 together with the fact that it was, I guess, the  
30 catalyst, those readings, for the voluntary relocation 04.15PM  
31 order for vulnerable people. The question was, what

1 did the data and the plotting on the map tell the group  
2 and what aspects were to be considered in terms of  
3 security for people if they did relocate, and how would  
4 that be communicated and what area was going to be  
5 defined. 04.15PM

6 Did you keep a copy of that map?---No, we were never  
7 provided with a copy; it was a working map I would  
8 describe it as which was tabled.

9 Which of the various agencies represented had created that  
10 map?---Look, I'm not aware. My assumption would be 04.15PM  
11 that it was EPA data, so the plotting would have been  
12 undertaken by EPA staff, but again that's my  
13 assumption.

14 I would ask representatives for the State if that map could  
15 be located, and I would assume that the EPA is the 04.16PM  
16 first place to start, that it be provided to the Board?

17 DR WILSON: We'll make some enquiries.

18 MS RICHARDS: If we can have the map of Morwell back up on  
19 the screen. So, the plotting indicated where  
20 particulate levels above a certain level had been 04.16PM  
21 recorded; is that correct?---Well, clearly there was a  
22 very strong pattern within this area and there was  
23 another, like, little bit of a bubble in terms of  
24 McDonald Road area.

25 The import of Dr Lester's evidence yesterday was that the 04.17PM  
26 appropriateness of Commercial Road as a dividing line  
27 had been discussed with the council and the council had  
28 agreed that it was an appropriate dividing line. Is  
29 that an accurate representation of the  
30 discussion?---Well, I would describe it as, the council 04.17PM  
31 was involved in the consultation, but we were not the

1 decision-maker. The information was really about -  
2 like, it was essentially, I guess, the main  
3 participants in the conversation were the police,  
4 Mr Lapsley, Dr Lester and the EPA. It was discussion  
5 around - like, it was Dr Lester's call as the Chief  
6 Medical Officer to actually make the decision about the  
7 voluntary relocation order.

04.17PM

8 You indicated that there was an area north of the railway  
9 line extending up McDonald Road where there were  
10 recordings plotted, recordings of particulate matter  
11 plotted, did anybody raise a concern about that area  
12 not being in the area where relocation would be  
13 recommended?---Both Emma Lewis and I did ask the  
14 question, that if there was readings along part of  
15 McDonald Road, it wasn't a very long section of  
16 McDonald Road, then perhaps we should consider the  
17 issue of relocation advice within that area. But one  
18 of the complications I guess was, how do you actually  
19 provide a clear boundary for people in terms of the  
20 advisory orders, and I can't recall, if you like, the  
21 density of plotting within that little bit of a bubble.

04.18PM

04.18PM

04.18PM

22 MEMBER PETERING: Could I just clarify. Do you know what  
23 was being plotted on that map?---It was the particulate  
24 PM 2.5.

25 Do you know whether it was on an 8-hour average?---Well, I  
26 think - no, I don't, but the question of the reading  
27 plus duration was a conundrum, I think, right through  
28 this event.

04.19PM

29 MS RICHARDS: Apart from the difficulty in defining the area  
30 to which the recommendation would relate, were there  
31 any other concerns about extending the recommendation

04.19PM

1 to those living and working north of the railway  
2 line?---I don't know there was a lot of conversation  
3 about those working north of the railway line because  
4 the plot clearly, I think, was showing that cluster, if  
5 you like, south of the railway line; it was only a 04.20PM  
6 little bit of a bubble in the more residential area,  
7 and I think there's a couple of mixed use zones in the  
8 McDonald bit that I was talking to. So, from my memory  
9 there wasn't a lot of conversation regarding people  
10 working north of the railway line. 04.20PM

11 What about people living north of the railway line?---Well,  
12 again, the data suggested that the threshold which the  
13 Medical Officer of Health was going to use, that that  
14 threshold had not been reached for the residential  
15 areas north of the line. 04.20PM

16 You mentioned security concerns earlier, who raised those  
17 concerns in the meeting. That was a matter which was  
18 discussed by the police essentially, because they  
19 realised that, if people were going to relocate from  
20 their homes, there would have to be increased security 04.21PM  
21 within that area, and that was something which I guess  
22 was upper most with the fire, not only in residential  
23 terms, but also around the fire perimeter.

24 So there was a concern that the area be readily identified  
25 so that it could be patrolled by police?---Yes. 04.21PM

26 Was that a reason for not including that area to the north  
27 of Commercial Road in the recommendation?---My opinion  
28 is that it was one of the factors which led to, if you  
29 like, having a nice clean defined area.

30 Thank you. 04.21PM

31 MEMBER CATFORD: Could I ask, Mr Mitchell, thank you very

1 much for your statement. Were there discussions about  
2 which vulnerable groups should be included in the  
3 relocation?---Absolutely. So, it was people over the  
4 age of 65, people with respiratory issues, pregnant  
5 ladies and young people.

04.22PM

6 And school-aged children?---I think they had "young"; I  
7 can't precisely understand which, or I can't recall in  
8 terms of the actual age threshold, but certainly young  
9 children were mentioned, yes.

10 MS RICHARDS: In addition to the map that I've asked that  
11 the State provide if it can be found, if there are  
12 any minutes or notes of that meeting, I would also ask  
13 that they be produced to the Board.

04.22PM

14 The next area I would like to ask you about are  
15 the challenges that the council itself phased. We know  
16 that your offices are on Commercial Road?---Yes.

04.22PM

17 Possibly provided something of a break, a wind break or a  
18 smoke break where they are, but what were working  
19 conditions like in the Council offices during  
20 those - - -?---Look, they were very challenging.

04.23PM

21 From what stage? From the first week?---Well, they were  
22 challenging from the very next day work opened; like,  
23 the fire really got started on the 9th and from the  
24 10th there were challenging conditions within the  
25 office. I guess we were conscious, and I was conscious  
26 of our obligations in terms of health and safety, and I  
27 was also conscious of the need for the council to  
28 actually provide a service to the community and at the  
29 same time continue the business as usual functions of  
30 council as well.

04.23PM

04.23PM

31 Were you conscious of the message it would send to the

1 community if the council were to relocate its  
2 operations?---I was particularly conscious of that, and  
3 I think that's already perhaps been alluded to earlier  
4 this afternoon.

5 You had some competing considerations there, your 04.24PM

6 obligations to your own staff to provide them with a  
7 safe workplace and your obligation to the community.

8 How did you balance those considerations?---Well, I'd

9 like to think the record would show well. Certainly

10 from early in the week there were certain work groups 04.24PM

11 who were able to relocate and/or work from home, but as

12 the days progressed and we started to think about what

13 does our business continuity plan actually tell us and

14 guide us, it was then I actually engaged Professor

15 Arnold Dix to come in and help us with some of that 04.24PM

16 decision-making and provide advice to us.

17 He provided you with some practical suggestions, did he

18 not?---Yes, he did. Arnold is actually a specialist in

19 terms of managing special risks associated with life,

20 property and environment. He's a gentleman I've had a 04.25PM

21 fair bit of exposure to before. I think he helped us

22 normalise, if you like, some of the issues going on

23 around us. For example, Arnold recommended that we

24 actually have widespread use of pure fires to actually

25 remove - or, sorry, improve air quality by removing 04.25PM

26 particulate, and so he recommended that we should look

27 at air purifiers and he did a bit of research to help

28 determine what type of purifier we should be having,

29 and of course not only would it remove particulate but

30 it would also reduce the smoke nuisance and smell 04.25PM

31 within the facilities.



1 You sourced a number of those and used them in the Council  
2 offices. Did they alleviate the smell and the smoke in  
3 the offices?---Well, they certainly improved the  
4 amenity a lot, absolutely. So we had two big units  
5 within the council offices and we had one in the 04.26PM  
6 library, and we also, as a result of Professor Dix's  
7 recommendation, there was something like 30 smaller  
8 ones purchased and which were paid for by the State  
9 Government, and they were made available on loan to  
10 people who I guess you'd describe as vulnerable or 04.26PM  
11 having a particular respiratory illness. So we have a  
12 register of those and I think essentially now they've  
13 largely been returned to the offices.

14 Were they well used?---Well, they were certainly, I think we  
15 had 26 in all put out in terms of the community, but 04.26PM  
16 certainly they did their job in terms of the public  
17 facilities the council had and, as I said, they vastly  
18 improved the amenity, if you like, of the building and  
19 the working environment.

20 You tell us in paragraph 56 that you arranged for Dr Lester 04.27PM  
21 and Mr Merritt to address staff members about  
22 occupational health and safety matters on 24 February,  
23 the Monday?---That's right.

24 And that as a result of that briefing you arranged for  
25 further work sites to be made available for council 04.27PM  
26 staff, particularly those who fell into vulnerable  
27 groups, who might be pregnant or had a pre-existing  
28 respiratory condition?---Yes.

29 At what time did you relocate those vulnerable staff out of  
30 the Commercial Road office?---I think that took - the 04.27PM  
31 various managers made decisions in consultation with

1 the staff in terms of how they could relocate. Like,  
2 there were clearly women who were - they told us they  
3 were pregnant or obviously pregnant and there were  
4 those who we didn't know were pregnant, but all of  
5 those decisions were made by consultation with their 04.28PM  
6 immediate manager and the staff, but I guess the major  
7 reasons for providing both John Merritt and Dr Lester  
8 available to the staff was to, again, provide expert  
9 advice and so that the staff could be as well informed  
10 as possible. 04.28PM

11 Was it a meeting for all staff or all management staff?---It  
12 was a meeting for all those within the Civic Centre  
13 there in Morwell. Yes, so they were the ones I guess  
14 in the area which had the - I guess which were enduring  
15 the smoke and conditions very directly. 04.28PM

16 Just to be clear, was your decision to make alternative work  
17 sites available for those who were particularly  
18 vulnerable to the smoke made before or after  
19 28 February?---Some staff had relocated immediately  
20 after the fire, and the issue was that we had a 04.29PM  
21 discussion of how those decisions were made, again  
22 having regard to our business continuity plan. So  
23 there was some staff already working remotely, and then  
24 there were other decisions made where we rotated staff  
25 as well to actually provide respite to them. 04.29PM

26 I just understood that the 24 February briefing was a  
27 turning point or a critical point after which you then  
28 took steps to ensure that further work sites were  
29 available. Have I misunderstood that?---No. Just to  
30 be clear, we'd already made decisions about some staff 04.29PM  
31 and people relocating, but this one was about, based on

1 the advice now, we wanted to make sure that those who  
2 hadn't or who should relocate, we actually would  
3 provide that opportunity and to also rotate staff to  
4 provide respite.

5 That was advice from Dr Lester and Mr Merritt on 04.30PM  
6 24 February; is that correct?---No, the decision about  
7 rotating staff and that was ours. What I got Dr Lester  
8 and Mr Merritt to provide was just an update about what  
9 the data's telling us, you know, what you can do, what  
10 does it mean, and it was after that that the management 04.30PM  
11 said, well, okay, we will ensure that we rotate or  
12 relocate those staff who should be relocated or  
13 rotated.

14 I see we've reached 4.30. I'm going to be, I would  
15 estimate, another 15 minutes with Mr Mitchell. 04.30PM

16 CHAIRMAN: Do we have a better idea of what the program's  
17 like tomorrow and whether we are better to stop now and  
18 continue our normal hours or just keep going? It's a  
19 matter that you'll have a better idea than anyone else,  
20 unless there's anyone else that wants to? 04.31PM

21 DR WILSON: We have some questions for this witness, if the  
22 Board pleases, and I expect it will be in the vicinity  
23 of 15-20 minutes.

24 CHAIRMAN: Are you in favour of leaving it until tomorrow?

25 DR WILSON: Yes. Plus, we hopefully in the meantime can 04.31PM  
26 address some of the concerns of our friends and it  
27 might be suitable, if everyone thinks fit, to stop now.

28 MS RICHARDS: We don't have a heavy schedule for tomorrow.  
29 We have Mr Hall from the Department of Human Services,  
30 we have Mr Harkins who's building up his frequent 04.31PM  
31 witness points, and we have Karen Andrews, a community

1 witness.

2 CHAIRMAN: It sounds as if it might be better to adjourn  
3 now?

4 MS RICHARDS: Yes, and we know that Mr Mitchell just works  
5 up the road.

04.32PM

6 CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll adjourn now until 10 o'clock tomorrow  
7 morning.

8 <(THE WITNESS WITHDREW).

9 ADJOURNED UNTIL FRIDAY, 6 JUNE 2014

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