

Jolanta Steers

[REDACTED]
Morwell 384023rd April 2014

To

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au

On Sunday 9th February 2014 an out of control fire fanned by strong winds threatened the western side of the Morwell Township and subsequently got into the Hazelwood Coal Mine. The fire in the mine burnt for weeks and I believe that it is still burning. It is also my belief that there has been a fire burning in the same mine for the past forty years which mine management have not been able to extinguish.

As a result of the fire threatening Morwell the choking smoke and the close proximity of my house to the Hazelwood Mine is was forced to seek refuge at a friends' house on the other side of the Morwell Township.

I returned to my house at [REDACTED] Morwell on the following day and stayed one night. The house was full of ash, there was still a lot of smoke and I had difficulty in breathing. There was even hot ash under my bed. I was continually coughing as a result of the air quality. My son James also had the same problems as I did. There was a burning acidic smell throughout the house and outside the house as well. I ended up calling the ambulance as I had a nose bleed and they advised me to leave the house. I ended up staying at a friends' house at Churchill for a week.

After a week I returned from Churchill and the house was till full of ash. There was ash on the carpet curtains and everywhere in the house. The house smelt of burning material. The carpets and curtains could not be cleaned.

We were advised to stay in our houses during some of the time I was there because of the pollution and the risk to health but it is difficult to stay inside as animals have to be fed and the necessities of living have to be purchased.

Because of the length of the fire the ash problem continues for many weeks and air quality was terrible as well. Even the water tasted bad and at time smelt like sewerage.

My insurance company is not paying for any of the damages and the claim is being addressed by the Insurance Ombudsman. I am not hopeful of a successful outcome. The

only assistance I have had is the Latrobe Council sent a team of persons to clean my house on 22nd April 2014. They only cleaned the inside of my house due to the weather. There is still a lot of ash around and it is quite visible on the ground on my roof and the neighbour's roof. I have taken a number of photos of the ash and I have kept samples in a sealed container.

I have not received any compensation and the only assistance I have received is the cleaning from the Latrobe Council.

Yours sincerely

Jolanta Steers.