

**HAZELWOOD OPEN CUT COAL MINE FIRE****BASIS FOR A RECOMMENDATION BY THE CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER TO LIFT TEMPORARY  
RELOCATION ADVICE**

The Chief Health Officer issued advice for sensitive groups to relocate from the southern part of Morwell on 28 February 2014 due to sustained poor air quality and advice from the Fire Services Commissioner that the coal mine fire would continue for at least another 10 days.


The basis for a recommendation by the Chief Health Officer to lift the temporary relocation advice, for reasons of public health protection, includes all of the following criteria:

- There is evidence that air quality has not reached the HIGH-general threshold for PM<sub>2.5</sub> (ie a rolling 24 hour average of 56 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), as long as the air quality has not improved only due to favourable wind conditions. This should be demonstrated by at least 4 days of air quality data and meteorological conditions.
- Fire suppression has reduced smoke and fire intensity and there is a high level of confidence that this is sustained and unlikely to change.
- Any change in fire fighting strategy or fire behaviour is unlikely to lead to worsening of air quality noting that there is the potential for continuing smouldering of hot spots.

Process

1. The EPA provides continuous air quality data summary and 24 Hour Air Quality Forecast/Outlook to the Chief Health Officer. This should include consideration of weather advice from Bureau of Meteorology on forecast conditions, wind direction and potential for temperature inversions in the Latrobe Valley.
2. The Chief Health Officer will consult with the State Controller as to the fire suppression status.
3. The Chief Health Officer will advise the SEMT, SCRC, Fire Commissioner and Chief Commissioner of Police when from a public health protection perspective, the temporary relocation advice should be lifted. This advice will also be provided to Government.
4. Once all the criteria have been met, the Chief Health Officer will issue an advisory that the conditions are now safe for sensitive groups to return.
5. This will also be subject to ongoing monitoring and review while fire continues to persist.

APPROVED

  
Dr Rosemary Lester PSM  
Chief Health Officer