

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

Submission Cover Sheet

✉ **Post or email your submission with this cover sheet to:**

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry
PO Box 24
Flinders Lane Vic 8009

Email ✉ info@hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au

Title MS	First Name CHRISTINE	Surname HAMILTON
Organisation represented <i>(if applicable)</i>		
Email address [REDACTED]		
Postal address [REDACTED]		
Telephone [REDACTED]	Mobile [REDACTED]	

Content of submission (you can choose multiple)

- Anglesea Mine: Terms of Reference 11
- Health: Terms of Reference 6 and 7
- Mine Rehabilitation: Terms of Reference 8, 9 and 10
- Other (please state here)

Mostly emails evidence of being totally ignored by just about every minister and Rosemary Lester.

Confidentiality

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

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

Please select one of the following options

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

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

Submission Cover Sheet

Or

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

Acknowledgements

I understand that:

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



Signature _____

Date 23 / 07 /2015

CONTENTS

Introduction, background of how I became involved

Emergency Management Planning for Vulnerable people

Mental Health

Increase in Deaths

Masks/Health

Series of Emails covering toxicology testing, briefing of Doctors

Various other information relating to Coal Fire and Health

Fight for Data

My Recommendations

1.

Dear Members of the Board and the Honourable Justice Teague

Please accept my submission for the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Inquiry in relation to the Health impacts terms of reference.

I am making this submission in the hope I can give information and help bring about positive change for the people of The Latrobe Valley and in turn other areas in relation to health, safety and life in general when living so close to heavy industry.

My involvement in this began 2nd March 2014 when myself and my daughter in her 20s and her friends accompanied me to give support to the Latrobe Valley Community to attend a protest meeting at Kernot Hall.

After parking my car and walking across the grass to the hall I experienced breathing difficulty, out of breath, not able to talk and walk at same time, which is unusual for me, I felt dizzy, light headed also, I did not think too much about it, and only after realised it was more than likely an elevated level of CO that had done this.

After only about 3 hours in Morwell, on the way home I started experiencing symptoms of stinging watering eyes, burning nose, constant dry cough which steadily increased, continued through that night, I got very little sleep the symptoms eased by the next day late Monday afternoon.

By the time I got home to Dromana on the Sunday night after the protest meeting and checked the EPA website to get detailed information on what we had been breathing and realised that VOC analysis was not there I emailed EPA to ask for those, they told me that would be another 2 weeks.....in horror and disbelief, knowing that only 3 hours exposure caused my severe symptoms and all the people of The Latrobe Valley were exposed 24 hours a day, because I experienced it for myself, I knew what they were suffering, no doubt in my mind they were being POISONED.

I became involved and have kept going, seeing the need in this community for proper Health and Safety regulations.....it just saddens me beyond words the way things have been for this community, the way things still are and I want to help bring about proper change. **NO COMMUNITY SHOULD BE SACRIFICED FOR PROFIT OR ELECTRICITY GENERATION FOR THE REST OF THE STATE.**

My greatest fear is that we will see lung cancer in children and it will be misdiagnosed as asthma or bronchitis, and not followed up properly by unbriefed doctors.

2.

My submission is a series of emails, from me, to various Ministers, authorities, with no reply, only one reply to speak of from Rosemary Lester's assistant, but that took until June 2014

There are two audio files, Mine Fire Media Conference 24th February 2014, which is relevant so please listen to those, and actual facebook material and other evidence.

Firstly, and I wont say most importantly, because all of which I have included in this submission is important, the Council responsibility for emergency management planning for Home and Community Care, I had a look at the council plan for 2012, on paper looked wonderful, even mention of a vulnerable persons register, but all of that is pointless if transport has not been included for vulnerable people to be evacuated.

The residents at Maryvale Crescent Retirement Village were given the order by the police to evacuate.....HOW? Most did not have cars, taxi's did not come, no bus, everyone was panicking and trying to look after themselves,

An excerpt from the book "THE COAL FACE" By Tom Doig

NOBODY CAME

The afternoon the fire broke out, Michelle Gatt closed up her cafe, So Swish, and hurried back to her home on Ann Street in southern Morwell, less than a kilometre from the mine. From the windows of her second-floor living room, Michelle and her daughter Islynde watched in astonishment as a pillar of smoke rose up, "like Hiroshima" a few kilometres to the south, while another larger fire bore down on the town from the west, turning the whole sky grey. Michelle's husband Marc was outside, frantically trying to hose the house and garage in case the embers came.

At 3.30pm, Michelle noticed that the eight people who lived in a cul-de-sac of residential care units at the end of Maryvale Crescent were walking, or in a couple of cases riding in their motorised wheelchairs, down Ann Street. They were elderly or physically disabled or mentally ill with off-site carers who visited them once a day, and they had all just received the same automated phone call: it was a recorded voice message, telling them to evacuate. But they had no one to help them evacuate, and nowhere to evacuate to, so they just wandered up Maryvale Crescent onto Ann Street.

Michelle got them all to shelter in her garage. She handed out cups of tea and glasses of water, doing her best to take care of everyone, especially the very old, who were the most distressed. She took a couple of residents back to their units so they could get their address books and try to call someone to take care of them, but nobody came, **NOBODY CAME**.....NO CARERS, NO FAMILY, NO AMBULANCES, NO TAXIS. The emergency services were busy with the fire in the mine; the roads were blocked but no one had been told; no one could get through.

By 5.30pm the fire had reached the end of Maryvale Crescent and set the local German Club alight, which is next door to the residential facility. Michelle and her family were told by police they had to evacuate. They closed up their garage and reluctantly left their elderly and infirm neighbours to fend for themselves. ***END EXCERPT***

3.

The evacuation of residents was on the basis of immediate threat, but what were they breathing at this point? When GOVERNMENT AND COUNCIL allow a facility such as this to be built and occupied so close to a huge coal mine, there should have always been extra, above and beyond evacuation plans in place, THIS SHOULD NOT HAVE HAPPEND. I have so much conflict working in Community Health DHS.....until the Fire of 9th February 2014, and the events that followed, I felt proud to work in our Health System, now I feel ashamed, this has shown me that in reality, our system does not work, and people are not protected, on a large scale. In fact I do not know how our system can even allow such a facility to be built 400m from such a danger.....full stop. It is not an old facility.....its not like its been there for 50 years and the mine was further away when it was built.

At this point I will say **Yes I believe that the fire contributed to extra deaths, yes I do**

I and many others have not had access to data needed to prove this point, but someone needs to.

I would like to mention Mental Health now, my own, I have found it very hard emotionally and mentally to continue to be involved and try to help the Latrobe Valley community.

I can only imagine how Michelle Gatt is feeling.....first her poor dog, then having no choice but to LEAVE elderly people alone and frightened in her garage.....where is our system? in reality. What toll did all of that mental anguish take on her and her family?

I messaged Tom Doig this morning, to ask if he would like to include in my submission how this has affected him, this is his exact comment;

"After researching and writing The Coal Face, I have been diagnosed to be suffering from burnout and Vicarious Traumatization. I am taking two months sick leave from my University studies"

MORE ON MENTAL HEALTH

AN EXERPT FROM PUBLIC GROUP VOICES OF THE VALLEY

Simon Ellis *No I am glad I did it needs to be heard how people are dealing with it, I myself arrived back home last night after being away for three days and had not even been back three hours and I was already having breathing problems. 3 hrs · Like · 4*

Greg Giles *you sound like you need to see a doctor 3 hrs · Like*

Greg Giles *there's been spot fires burning in the cut for 35 years 3 hrs · Like*

Greg Giles *its nothing new 3 hrs · Like*

Mark A Cummins *It is a hard thing to hear about people being exposed to this kind of serious health threat. I believe your efforts are most valuable for many more people that have the same conditions living around smouldering coal sites. Please know that your work and sacrifices are appreciated. 3 hrs · Like · 3*

Simon Ellis *I have been to see my doc and he is the one that recommended to go away for a break I was also admitted to hospital and have records for this 3 hrs · Like · 3*

4.

Brad Lemon *If 'Old Faithful' has been burning for years, I don't know how they're going to deal with more (deep seated fires). I can only hope that because they're recent, they can still dig them out. 2 hrs · Like · 2*

Greg Giles *if you can get it documented that the fire caused this then you've got something good luck 2 hrs · Like*

Greg Giles *I must be lucky virtually no immune system on chemo and I feel fine 2 hrs · Like · 1*

Mark A Cummins *Greg, if someone was feeding you carcinogens and you found a cancer in your body ten year from now, how could you prove where the cancer came from. Are you aware that the carbon and the PAHs in the air and the ash contain carcinogens from the mine? 2 hrs · Edited · Like · 3*

Vicky Giles *He already has lots of cancer in his body 2 hrs · Like · 1*

Mark A Cummins *I am truly sorry to hear that, it bothers me a great deal to know that the mine had known about old faithful for a long time. There is no way for us to know of the extent or size of this underground fire until they are forced to share their information. 2 hrs · Like · 6*

Simon Ellis *Greg and Vicky I am sorry to hear about your medical troubles and wish you the best in the process and recovery that comes with having cancer. And thank you for your concerns with other peoples health and well being. 2 hrs · Like · 5*

Greg Giles *thanks Simon my problem is just that its mine and im not going to blame it on anything and getting a bit tired of people moaning about how sick they are and claiming the fire made them that way and not getting the medical evidence to back it its not good enough to just say im sick and blame the fire that's not good enough when it gets to an official inquiry 2 hrs · Like · 2*

Simon Ellis *I have not blamed the fire for me being sick 2 hrs · Like*

Mark A Cummins *Greg I respectfully disagree with you about people living around coal fires knowing a lot about those things. I'm sure you and your neighbours know a lot about breathing the coal dust but that is very different from breathing combustion products. You are right that I have not been to Morwell but I used to make my living around the coal fires all around the world and I have seen way too many good people, as you have said, moaning and dying with cancer. I don't know how to prove that the cancers were caused by the coal fires but I presume that if someone is breathing stuff that causes cancer then it is possible that it got started with the carcinogens they were breathing. This underground fire is a threat to your health and it needs to be extinguished, not just covered up. 2 hrs · Like · 6*

Wendy Mather *I can see where you're coming from Greg, and its a little harder than what should be the norm. many ppl are, yes, self diagnosing and have a good feature to blame for it, finding a dr who is willing to back that claim is something else, and i know im not going to trapse all over town looking for a dr who will back it up and make our job easier and all id want to do is crash in to bed. 2 hrs · Like · 3*

Greg Giles *Mark please dont condescend i was a boilermaker at yallourn and hazelwood coal burning around the place a daily thing and you think i know nothing about coal fires it*

5.

was part of our health and safety to know, as to people dying from cancer due to the coal fire its only been a couple of months bit soon for people to be dying from cancer just yet, growing up here we had briquette hot water, briquette heating, and stove my dad put the ash in the veggie patch the veggies were fine i,ll say again i dont need a lecture virtually everything that burns has harmful things in it 1 hr · Like · 1

Spinifex Dreaming I heard Simon on the radio this morning. Well done mate. You did a good job. After the interview they read out an announcement saying the fire is out....mind you, it was a bit hard to tell considering the brown shit coming out of Yallourn chimneys this afternoon...yes, the chimneys, not the cauldrons with their white steam clouds 1 hr · Like · 4

Robert Corser Thanks Mark A Cummins you're a wealth of knowledge. I appreciate your information and effort to help! 1 hr · Like · 4

Mark A Cummins Much obliged Robert, it is encouraging to see people learning about the hazards of combustion products and doing something productive about it. Your efforts will help many others follow your paths. 57 mins · Like · 2

Greg Giles another boiler clean spinifex 56 mins · Like

Mark A Cummins Greg if you are interested, I suggest that you might need to read up on how many molecules of a carcinogen it takes to mutate the DNA of a single human cell and how long it takes for that cell to grow into a cancer tumor. It takes only one. And it can takes years to be detected. If you are not interested you may as well just take it as it comes. I prefer to try to do all I can to prevent as much cancer as possible while I still can. I wish you luck with your health. 50 mins · Like · 2

Deearne Nicholson So Greg, I am a little confused. Is the coal smoke dangerous for our health?? 50 mins · Like

Greg Giles deearne never said it wasnt im just saying living here its always been part of living in morwell just saying i haven,t personally, seen anyone killed or made sick YET, thats speaking honestly . 41 mins · Like

Vicky Giles i dont see where he said he wasn't interested Mark A Cummins. We all know dangers of carcinogens., And dont need to be spoken to like we are illiterate fools. The damage to health□ has probably already been done, but noone will know for years.□ 37 mins · Like

Deearne Nicholson Maybe it's time for new information and new ideas to force some change on local mining practices. Just because things have always been that way, doesn't make it right, does it? We are learning new things all the time. Good time to apply it I reckon. 37 mins · Like · 1

Mark A Cummins Vickey the damage is still being done, if you can smell the products of combustion, there is still a smoldering fire underground that is releasing the carcinogens. I certainly don't think you are illiterate fools, but you do need to know more about what you are breathing. 33 mins · Like · 3

Vicky Giles □□Hopefully this inquest will force the information out there and those responsible held to account and to fix it and to make sure those medically effected are taken

6.

care of. But until then we have to take it as it comes, because nothing can be done till then. Everything is riding on this inquest □□□□□ 26 mins · Like

Wendy Mather *just what is the inquest about?* 25 mins · Like

Vicky Giles *accountability, liability.* 24 mins · Like · 1

Wendy Mather vicky are you from these parts? 19 mins · Like

Mark A Cummins *Just my own perception, if you lay down like a rug, you are likely to be walked all over by the corporate and government systems. Your complaints are what is driving the coal mine to remediate the damage.* 19 mins · Edited · Like · 2

Vicky Giles *i have live in morwell all my life, was born here* □ 19 mins · Like *Wendy Mather then i am surprised* 16 mins · Like

Vicky Giles *i dont think anyone is laying down like a rug, and noone is going to be walked over. If there isn't a satisfactory outcome from the inquest, then we have to decide where to take it from there. And why is that Wendy?* 15 mins · Like

Wendy Mather *that, vicky, through all of the pages i have read since feb that it has taken a major international occurance to try to change the ways of these businesses at the centre, not one of whom started out telling the truth, rather than at an earlier point in ppls lifetimes. are they interested in changing businesses for (jokingly) the better? or are they from a more caring side and being more concerned for those who have already contracted the worst illness known to man?* 10 mins · Like

Vicky Giles *what has that got to do with if i am a local?* 9 mins · Like

Greg Giles *Deearne im all for change, but for the moment until they find a replacement were stuck with it just a point the stuff that comes out the rear of our cars is full of nasties but we all drive them* 8 mins · Like · 2

Wendy Mather *i thought for a minute that you would have had the same frame of mind as i do as a non-local. some welcome to your (ha) beautiful city. even the locals can be blase about how they have been living* 6 mins · Like

Vicky Giles *still dont know what you are talking about* 5 mins · Like *Vicky Giles noone is blase about what has been happening* 4 mins · Like

Wendy Mather *good night* 3 mins · Like

Deearne Nicholson *Yes Greg, but we don't funnell the fumes into our childrens bedrooms 24/7 do we* 3 mins · Like

It is important at this point that I explain why I put this conversation in. This perfectly displays people strongly debating about CANCER, COAL SMOKE, HEALTH, which on a daily basis is a concern, let alone when a coal fire is burning.

7.

People were/are frightened of what that exposure has done to them.

Mark Cummins is an expert in this field warning the community about things that our authorities should have been warning them about, and removing them from the dangerous situation.

I hope this also perfectly displays, that while people in Melbourne were sitting down for a BBQ and a Beer on a hot afternoon and happily turning their light switches on, the people in the Latrobe Valley were suffering, more than they should, and all of this contributes to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and their mental state, not just their physical state.

This piece of conversation is just one of many many such conversations over a long period of time, and I will add, it has taken a toll on me also, working in Community Health, for DHS, I feel that the people of the Latrobe Valley have been so let down and abandoned im appalled, it has caused a conflict for me and disappointed me in our system that words cannot explain.

I believe the fire contributed to extra deaths for a number of reasons;

One of the first phone calls I made was to a Funeral service in Morwell, I purposely beat around the bush a bit, its all hard to talk about, the lady on the other end of phone quickly figured out my aim, she said to me "we have been flat out if that's what you are asking, a lot busier than usual" I estimate this call was made on around just before I sent my first email to ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics dated 4th March 2014 as the lady at the Funeral Directors advised me that Births Deaths Marriages would be able to help more, her hands were tied with confidentiality, privacy etc, so I carried on believing what she had conveyed to me. I tried ABS first, but was unable to get specific data I needed, then contacted BDM, with little success, that's when I realised Ron Ipsen was now working on this, so I felt he and Tara were more than doing well with all that so I turned my focus to other things.

People and animals were not evacuated or told to evacuate from the danger zones, and when they did leave they went to Moe, believing that Moe was safer when in actual fact there is every likelihood Moe was even more toxic and dangerous when the wind was blowing that way.

People were given masks which were not appropriate for proper protection and were lead to believe these masks "were" sufficient.

The clean up did not include toxic ash from roof spaces, so I believe this would still be putting people at risk, all this time after the initial fire and causing illness/death in some cases.

8.

MASKS

This picture supplied from a votv group member today 26 July 2015 clearly showing Dräger 1720 the lady still had this mask from the time of the fire and was happy to photograph it for me



PLEASE NOTE: the marking NR on the mask means " The mask can only be used for a maximum of one work shift (I wonder if the authorities were advising everyone at least get a new mask each day, I think that needs to be established)

TECHNICAL DATA

Dräger X-plore® 1700

Filter material CoolSAFE™ for protection against solid and liquid non-volatile particles

Odour versions With additional activated carbon layer against nuisance organic odours below the limit value

Approvals All versions meet the conditions of the EU guideline 89/686/EWG and are permitted as particle filtering half masks in accordance to the increased requirements of the revision of EN 149:2001+A1:2009 (test of filter performance for aerosol exposure with 120 mg paraffin oil). Australian Standard AS/NZS 1716:2003 certified (SAI Global)

Marking D Successfully passed the dolomite dust test against clogging

Marking NR The mask can only be used for a maximum of one work shift

http://www.draeger.com/sites/assets/PublishingImages/Products/com_x-plore_1700/Attachments/x-plore_1700_br_9046414_en.pdf

9.

ALSO PLEASE NOTE

2. What about vulnerable groups of people? Should they wear masks to protect themselves?

- The best form of protection for people with chronic lung or heart disease, elderly, and pregnant women is to avoid or minimize outdoor activity when the air quality is unhealthy (PSI > 200). If they have to be outdoors for several hours, they may reduce exposure by wearing a N95 mask.- You should take a break from using a N95 mask if you feel uncomfortable. Elderly, pregnant women and people with severe lung or heart problems who have difficulty breathing at rest or on exertion should consult their doctor as to whether they should use the N95 mask.

- Women in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy may already have reduced lung volumes or breathing issues. They should stop using a N95 mask if they feel uncomfortable.

3. Is the N95 mask an adequate protection against haze? Does it protect against PM2.5?

- N95 masks work only if there is a good fit with the face of the wearer. This way, most of the air that the wearer breathes in has to go through the filter and not through the gaps between the mask and the wearer's face. Haze can contain fine particles that are 2.5 microns or smaller (PM2.5), and studies have shown that N95 masks do provide good protection against particle pollutants as they are at least 95% efficient against fine particles that are about 0.1 – 0.3 microns.

4. What are the effects of wearing a N95 mask?

- The use of N95 masks increases effort in breathing. For some people, the use of N95 mask may cause discomfort in breathing, tiredness or headache. This may be due to the mask causing increased resistance to breathing, and a reduction in the volume of air breathed. For most people this is not serious.- Some elderly people, people with lung or heart conditions, and women in the later stages of pregnancy may already have reduced lung volumes or breathing issues.- You should take a break from using a N95 mask if you feel uncomfortable. Elderly, pregnant women and people with severe lung or heart problems who have difficulty breathing at rest or on exertion should consult their doctor as to whether they should use the N95 mask.

- Women in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy may already have reduced lung volumes or breathing issues. They should stop using a N95 mask if they feel uncomfortable.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH SINGAPORE

https://www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh_web/home/pressRoom/Current_Issues/2014/haze/faq--use-of-masks-and-availability-of-masks.html

10.

The obvious thing from the above is **VULNERABLE**..... there are many more vulnerable people living in the Latrobe Valley, with pre-existing heart lung problems, were they given this information about wearing a mask? pregnant women, were they given this information about wearing a mask?

MORE ON MASKS FROM <http://cleanairtas.com/air-monitoring/morwell-coal-fire.html>
from the previous Inquiry but I really wanted this to be looked at again.

It would seem Victorian authorities were sitting on their laurels for far too long and have been caught napping with the Morwell smoke. This coal fire started on February the 9th. Anyone would think the way this pollution event has been handled it is the first coal mine fire in the region but I am told there have been others (see link above). Smoke inhalation of this nature and duration will surely shorten lives.

The World Health Organisation has classified (all) outdoor air pollution to be carcinogenic, to cause lung cancer, and has a positive association with bladder cancer. They have classified Particulate Matter (PM) to be carcinogenic and both these findings were at the highest classification of any cancer group, i.e. Group 1. Smoke is made up mainly of PM.

The trigger figures the authorities used before evacuation took place was way too high and evacuation should have taken place much, much earlier. The Health department seemed to be stuck on carbon monoxide levels. I believe the public has been misled by Health for not mentioning earlier the harm PM's can cause.

It is not just about concentration or length of exposure...there is no minimum safe level of exposure.

Fact sheets for: Ash Fallout, Smoke and your Health, Face Masks - Q&A , Rain Water Tanks, Coal Ash and Smoke in the House, Carbon Monoxide, were not uploaded onto the Health website until the 17th - 21st of February. The facts sheets visible now may not be the ones that were placed on these dates and there was a long gap before they were published .

The 24 hour 'trigger figures' authorities adhered to corresponded to enormous amounts of particulate matter being inhaled by Morwell residents.

The Precautionary Principle should have been applied.

Smoke of this nature is harmful in minutes and hours, not days and weeks that it took authorities to respond.

It is common sense that if people can smell pernicious smoke then they would have to be breathing it into their lungs.

Go [here](#) to read about the harmful effects of particulate matter and Morwell residents were exposed to very high levels of PM.

PM2.5's travel deep into the lungs and stop there. Gaseous toxins attached to these particles are small enough to carry over into the blood stream and cause all sorts of other (usually not associated to the lay person) health problems. Authorities were actually allowing people's lungs to filter the air.

From what I have seen people are wearing the wrong types of face masks for this type of pollution.

There can be a latency period of up to 20 years in some people for today's smoke inhalation problems to show up.

11.

[According to Tasmania Fire Service we too were being subjected to Mainland smoke in Northern Tasmania.](#) When wind conditions are right for this to happen particulates have had to travel over 350Km. The lifetime of PM2.5 particle pollution is from days to weeks and their travel distance ranges from 100 to greater than 1000 kilometres.

Toxic levels reached approximately 140gm/m³ on the EPA indicative air monitoring instruments in Launceston this week; a city of about 100,000 people.

No amount of spin by the authorities is going to lessen people's health problems caused by this smoke. The smoke needs to be stopped at the source and in the meantime people need to be removed from it.

"Particulate pollution is the most important contaminant in our air...We know that when levels go up people die." - Joel Schwartz., Harvard School of Public Health

The smoke has been described as 'short term exposure'. Today (28.2.2014) it was described as 'medium term exposure'. In actual fact it should already be classed as 'long term exposure'.

It was in my opinion ill-informed for authorities to advise people to stay indoors during a fire of this nature and duration. The reasons can be found [here](#) and although in some places it reads 'woodsmoke' it is applicable because woodsmoke is made up primarily of PM 2.5 particulates; the same that were being inhaled at Morwell.

Asthma Foundation Victoria:

On the Asthma Foundation Victoria website:

Residents of Morwell -

The Asthma Foundation of Victoria in partnership with GSK, Bird Healthcare and The Pharmacy Guild of Australia are urging Morwell residents with asthma to monitor their condition closely. Residents are encouraged to visit their local pharmacy in Morwell to talk about their asthma and have the opportunity to receive a free reliever puffer and a spacer.

ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES ARE BEING ARRANGED AND WILL BE DELIVERED ON 17TH MARCH.

Please note, to receive the medication the following applies:

- Have to be diagnosed with asthma
- One per person
- For people living and/or working in Morwell

We will be reviewing this initiative early next week to determine the duration of this offer.

How many people missed out? How long before the 17th was this notice posted? Are those who were forced to relocate because of the smoke being given free inhalers? Are asthmatics being provided other free medication needed as a result of the smoke, not just the blue reliever?

Lisa's Comment Friday 7 March 2014 6:53 PM at [Assistance for Morwell Residents](#): "**Just to inform people that the Chemist Warehouse - Morwell, 2 Monash Way, are out of stock for the free reliever puffer and a spacer.**"

12.

HEALTH:

[Dr Rosemary Lester - Chief Health Officer for Victoria](#)

From: chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au>

Subject: Re: Fw: Hazelwood open-cut coal fire at Morwell

Sender: <Rosemary.Stewart@health.vic.gov.au>

Date: Fri, 21 Mar 2014 17:04:07 +1100

Thank you for your further email.

The community update page on the Department's website was last revised on 17 March and will continue to be updated as conditions change. The fact sheets were uploaded between the 17th and 21st of February. Some of the fact sheets have since been updated to include additional and more current information.

The face masks supplied were P2 and were from a number of sources. Please contact the Latrobe City Council regarding the face masks at

latrobe@latrobe.gov.au or on 1300 367 700. **See below: I have attempted to do this.**

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for monitoring and reporting against air quality standards. Please refer to the EPA website for

information www.epa.gov.au or call 1300 372 842. **See below: I have attempted to do this.**

For information regarding cleaning up after the fire please call 1800 017 777.

I hope that this information is helpful.

Regards, Rosemary

Note: Fact sheets for: Ash Fallout, Smoke and your Health, Face Masks - Q&A , Rain Water Tanks, Coal Ash and Smoke in the

House, Carbon Monoxide, were not uploaded onto the Health website until the 17th - 21st of February. The fire started on the 9th.

The facts sheets visible now may not be the ones that were actually placed on the Health website on these dates.

Health Victoria, Hazelwood Fire - Community Update 17 March 2014

"Long term health effects from air pollution usually occur after several years or a lifetime of exposure."

This is simply not true for all the following reasons:.

"Outdoor air pollution a leading environmental cause of cancer deaths." - IRAC 17/10/2013. The specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC),

announced today that it has classified outdoor air pollution as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1).

After thoroughly reviewing the latest available scientific literature, world leading experts convened by the IARC Monographs

Programme concluded that there is sufficient evidence that exposure to outdoor air pollution causes lung cancer (Group 1).

They also noted a positive association with an increased risk of bladder cancer.

Particulate matter, a major component of outdoor air pollution, was evaluated separately and was also classified as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that any length of casual exposure to particle pollution poses serious health

risks, such as early death, cancer and cardiovascular and respiratory harm.-(American Lung Association). And,

13.

Health effects from particulate matter occur after exposures of 2-4 hours or less in duration of wood smoke at the 12 - 29mcg/m3 range (Koenig et al. 1993) (wood smoke consists mainly of fine particulate matter that was being monitored from the Hazelwood fire by the EPA). And,

Recent epidemiological research suggests that there is no threshold at which health effects do not occur. - Australian Government, Dept. of Environment - National Pollution Inventory (NPI).

Health Update - Finally Acknowledging People Need to Relocate - February 28 2014

Health Victoria, Hazelwood Fire - Community Update 30 April 2014

"It is not necessary to clean the dust or ash out of your roof cavity to protect you or your family's health. The ash is non-hazardous and similar to that found in a typical fireplace."

This is wrong advice.

This dust will find its way into the house through loose or cracked cornices or plaster sheet, light fitting penetrations, or any other penetrations such as unsealed man holes, or around ducts or vents. It will easily find its way through pine lined ceilings or similar.

The ash is hazardous when breathed. It would not be advisable to breathe in dust from your fireplace and it is not advisable to breathe in Hazelwood fire dust.

Houses that have not been decontaminated in roof spaces should be made to be fitted with permanent signs to say they contain coal mine fire dust. This would protect people entering the roof space, drilling holes into the roof space, or purchasing the property at a later date. The Council should be made keep a permanent register of properties affected.

"Long term health effects from air pollution usually occur after several years or a lifetime of exposure."

Again this is not correct. Refer to the previous Community Update comments.

Decontamination:

Outdoor particulates would have been sucked into many homes as a result of negative pressure inside the buildings.

Many homes are going to have to be decontaminated before they are fit to live in **after the smoke and ash stops**. All soft furnishings will have to be hot laundered, walls will have to be scrubbed, hard floors will have to be scrubbed and sterilized. Roof spaces will have to be vacuumed.

Until decontamination, it is not advisable to place infants or let children play on carpeted floors as particulates settle out on them through what is known as the sink effect. The same can happen when a child is put to bed, or on a fabric couch, and these harmful fine particulates are unknowingly breathed in.

Everything has to be cleaned! This is a costly business when done properly by professionals. Who pays for this?

2/3/2014 - In an email to Dr Rosemary Lester I asked, "...c) Can you also indicate what decontamination program you propose to conduct on properties affected by the smoke/ash from the fire, and when will this be taking place?"

14.

Latrobe City Council in Victoria:

21/3/2014 - To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Morwell coal fire - respirator masks.

Date: Fri, 21 Mar 2014 23:14:02 +1100

I have been referred to you by the Chief Health Officer for Health in Victoria (Dr Rosemary Lester).

Could you please provide me with the following information:-

- i) The **make** of any face masks issued to the Morwell community please?
- ii) **Model #** ?
- iii) **Size and quantities**? Thank you.

28/3/2014 - To: <latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au>

Subject: Fw: Morwell coal fire - respirator masks. Urgent information please

Date: Fri, 28 Mar 2014 15:24:48 +1100

This is to confirm my telephone conversation with your Mr. Lance King, Coordinator, this afternoon.

Unfortunately, Mr King is not in receipt of my email [above] and is to find out where it was forwarded to.

In addition to the information requested [above], I asked Mr King for the following please:

- iv) **The date/s they were issued?**

Owing to the delay in a response to me I am asking if this information could be provided at your earliest convenience please.

Thank you.

31/3/2014 - From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 3:37 PM

Subject: Re: Morwell Mine Fire 2014 - request for information from Clive Stott regarding face masks provided to c...

In response to your request I can provide the following information

- i) The make of any face masks issued to the Morwell community please? Latrobe City passed on Drager and 3 M dust Masks all P2
- ii) Model # ? As these masks were issued by a number of agencies and organisations there are various models and types provided to the community that council does not have this relevant information.
- iii) Size and quantities? One size fits all. As these were issued by a number of agencies and organisations there are various models and types provided to the community and council does not have this relevant information that you require.

Regards

Lance King

Coordinator Emergency Management

Latrobe City Council

1/4/2014 - To: Mr Lance King

Sent: Tuesday April 1 2014

Good evening Mr. King.

Thank you for the information you provided.

- i) **Make:** Thank you. Latrobe City passed on Drager and 3M P2 dust masks
- ii) **Model #'s:** Re the above mask model #'s. Are you saying you do not know what masks these were that you passed on to be issued out by the other agencies and organisations?

You say there were various models and types provided to the community. What were they?

15.

This is like saying you gave away a car. You know it was a car but you don't have a clue what model or type it was. You must have some record of what you were doing, or you must have access to this information?

I am asking please what Model #'s the masks were that Latrobe City passed on?

iii) **Size:** Thank you. One size fits all.

Quantity: How many masks did Latrobe City pass on to be issued by these other agencies please? What quantity?

iv) **Date of issue:** I have asked separately what date/s were these masks passed on by Latrobe City to other agencies and organisations for issue?

Thank you.

Regards,

SMOKE ADVICE MESSAGE FOR NORTHERN TASMANIA

Issued At: 25/02/2014 3:21pm

There is a large volume of smoke across Northern Tasmania, particularly between the Tamar River, Fingal Valley and Musselroe Bay .

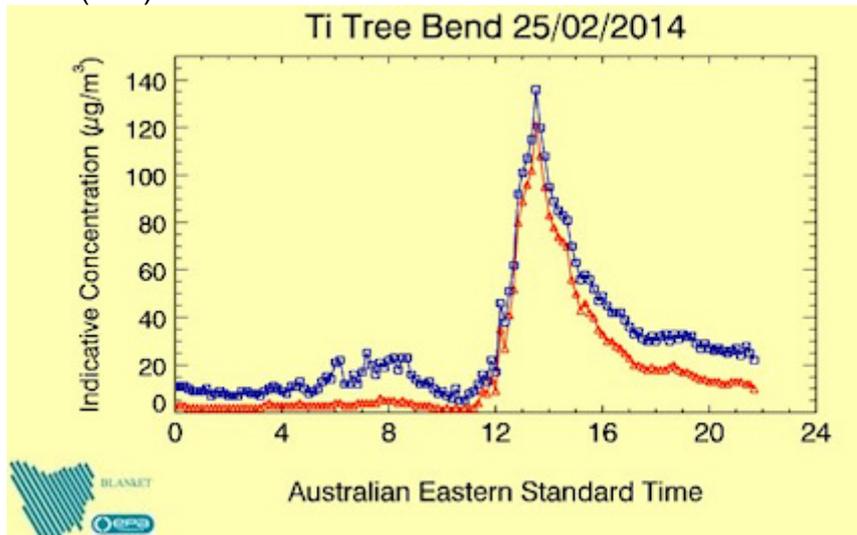
There is no immediate threat.

Current wind conditions has brought the smoke from fires on mainland Australia.

There may be visible smoke in the area for some time.

People travelling in the area should exercise caution if driving in smoke. Turn on your headlights and drive slowly.

If there is any fire activity causing you concern please report it to the TFS by calling triple zero (000).



Graph courtesy of EPA Air Tasmania.

Red plot = PM2.5 Blue plot = PM10

Ti Tree Bend is one of Launceston's air monitoring stations. Launceston is a city of about 100,000 people.

Gippsland and Morwell smoke from Victoria comes into Tasmania



A mother puts a mask on her young son in Morwell to protect him from smoke pollution from the Hazelwood mine fire.



17.

None; wrong type; wrong size; wrong fit?

8/4/2014 - To: <latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au>

Subject: Fw: Morwell Mine Fire 2014 - request for information from Clive Stott regarding face masks provided to the people of Morwell.

Date: Tue, 8 Apr 2014 16:35:07 +1000

And follow up phone call on **9/4/2014**

Good afternoon Latrobe City Council,

I am forwarding the email below again as I have not received a reply from either LCC or Mr Lance King.

Could you please advise where this matter is at?

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Sent: Wednesday, April 02, 2014 12:14 PM

To: latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au

Subject: Re: Morwell Mine Fire 2014 - request for information from Clive Stott regarding face masks provided to c...

Good morning Latrobe City Council,

Would you be so kind to make sure Mr. King received the following email sent yesterday and let me know?

Thank you.

Regards,

Sent: Tuesday, April 01, 2014 12:32 AM

To: [Lance King](#)

Subject: Re: Morwell Mine Fire 2014 - request for information from Clive Stott regarding face masks provided to c...

Good evening Mr. King.

Thank you for the information you provided.

i) Make: Thank you. Latrobe City passed on Drager and 3M P2 dust masks.

ii) Model #'s: Re the above mask model #'s. Are you saying you do not know what masks these were that you passed on to be issued out by the other agencies and organisations?

You say there were various models and types provided to the community. What were they?

This is like saying you gave away a car. You know it was a car but you don't have a clue what model or type it was. You must have some record of what you were doing, or you must have access to this information?

I am asking please what Model #'s the masks were that Latrobe City passed on?

iii) Size: Thank you. One size fits all.

Quantity: How many masks did Latrobe City pass on to be issued by these other agencies please? What quantity?

iv) Date of issue: I have asked separately what date/s were these masks passed on by Latrobe City to other agencies and organisations for issue?

Thank you.

Regards,

18.

To follow with emails I am trying to demonstrate again, like I did with my last submission into the first Inquiry, of just being totally ignored, no acknowledgement whatsoever.

[My Emails begin here;](#)



Subject: Morwell Mine Fire
Date: Fri, 14 Mar 2014 19:17:37 +1100

Hello Senator Brandis, and other Minister and Members of Federal =
Parliament cc.

I want to tell you a story, I have kept all emails and materials as =
evidence, all safe.

STORY BEGINS;

I am Christine Hamilton, of 69 Pier Street Dromana, vic, 3936.

[i have edited out my story here, same on first page, to shorten](#)

So I go to the EPA website, look at the hourly air report, (of which I =
have been taking screenshots every day now and saving on my pc) the =
hourly air report said, sulphur dioxide ZEROPM 2.5 =
particles in the red zone and 35.

OK I think where is the breakdown of the PM 2.5 particles? looking =
looking, cant find them, I wanted to know exactly what we had been =
breathing in.

I emailed the EPA on the Sunday night 2nd March to ask them to direct me =
to the link for breakdown of the PM 2.5 particles, being called from now =
the VOC (Volcanic Organic Compounds),

EPA emailed straight back next day HI CHRISTINE, WE ARE DOING VARIOUS =
TYPES OF TESTING, THE VOC RESULTS WILL BE AT LEAST 2 WEEKS.

I couldn't believe this, considering all other depts agencies are basing =
their decisions on the results and information that the EPA provides, I =
THOUGHT , THIS IS JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

So I emailed an independent testing lab, in QLD, asking, how long does =
it take from time of samples taken to get VOC results. The answer next =
day was, routine testing for VOCs 10 day turn around, priority testing 5 =

19.

day turn around, and im guessing then EMERGENCY TESTING maybe 2-3 day = turnaround if that.

At this point I have had enough, I contact every media outlet I can, = John Faine's producers called me, said, we have Denis Napthine on at = 8.30, we will get you on before him, and get some answers to this.

I got home that night from work, checked my email, and guess what, A = MAGIC LINK FROM EPA, to voc test results samples taken on 18th feb, I am = in disbelief.

STILL THOUGH, IT TOOK 9 DAYS FOR THEM TO EVEN TAKE A SAMPLE TO BE = TESTED, NOT ACCEPTABLE.

Even though the broad hourly testing can give reading in the black and = 100, the voc testing results were ALL LEVELS WELL BELOWS ACCEPATABLE.

I call the independent lab to discuss, he says, its impossible for the = sulphur dioxide level to be zero when large quantities of coal are = burning, he also says quite a few other things.

I contact John Faines producers and say I wont be talking yet, and will = work further on this.

I also send all to the Ombudsman Victoria, who has since advised me that = because the EPA responded to me, they cannot do anything.

I call Shine Lawyers, lengthy conversation, she tells me, we cannot do = anything until someone is injured, I say, Simon Ellis one of the main = committee for voices in the valley has at least 1500 health impact = statements, isn't that enough, she says no.

I contact the DPI, to ask about a mine warden to be appointed, I have to = read to the man on the phone from their website to explain to him what a = mine warden is.

AT THIS POINT I WANT TO SAY.....IF SOMEONE IS
BEING MURDERED AND YOU CALL 000 THE POLICE COME QUICK AND HOPEFULLY
INTERVENE AND STOP THE MURDER
I CANNOT FIND ANYONE TO INTERVENE in Morwell,

AN INQUIRY WILL BE COMPLETED BY AUGUST, THE PEOPLE NEED HELP NOW,
THEY ARE BEING POISONED NOW.

I went to Parliament on Tuesday, finished work early jumped on train and = sat in the gallery, the speaker said to the gallery, WE HAVE BEEN VERY = TOLERANT OF THE CAUGHING, BUT IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GO AND GET A GLASS
OF WATER, then ministers were chuckling like schoolboys making fun of someone, I was
appalled. Just 3 hours I spent breathing their air, and =
I couldn't stop coughing all night and into the next day and believe me a =
glass of water didn't help my coughing.

20.

I HONESTLY DONT KNOW HOW SO MANY PEOPLE ARE STILL ALIVE DOWN THERE, there are babies being born at Latrobe Valley Hospital, its appalling.

This is Australia, not China or India where there is clearly no regard for human health or life.

One of the committee in Morwell contacted EPA and asked for more voc test results, SHE WAS TOLD SHE COULD APPLY FOR THEM AND PAY FOR THEM UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, that also is appalling.

At this point I am totally disgusted and feeling hopeless and depressed at this situation.

I am trying to keep pressure up to EPA, I emailed day before yesterday asking for their daily voc test results link on their website and also have they appointed a mine warden in accordance with the Environmental act 1970, they replied with, a customer support officer will get back to you and case number IR192882. I fwd the request again yesterday, no reply today, so I fwd it again today.

I am a totally honest person, I work in community health, group supervisor for planned activity groups for Central Bayside Community Health, I am upstanding citizen, and would never exaggerate or fabricate anything I PROMISE YOU THAT everything that I am telling you is honest fact.

There are people in the Valley, who do not qualify for govt assistance, the have a mortgage, if they leave to take their children away from the toxic air and don't work, lose their house, its all too hard, if the govt was serious about people leaving, the banks would be forced to just put those peoples loans on temporary hold. Everyone would get assistance to leave, and help to find somewhere to go to.

One other thing that is so important, besides breathing in toxic air, the stress on these people is unimaginable, the suicide rate is going to skyrocket and not really much effort of counselling etc is being made, from what I can gather.

I have learned much from people, on facebook, I am now part of many many conversations, there are some very learned people down there, one thing = I have been told, GDF Suez paid a \$15 million bond to the government, so = then they don't have to pay for any damages, in the mines act 1958 it = clearly states the mine owner responsible for impacts of dust, noise etc = on the public, but with the bond it cancels that out.

Also, the closest house to the mine is about 400m, apparently when the = sec sold the mine, the town was going to have to be relocated like = Newborough, but when sold to private enterprise, they didn't want the cost = of moving the town so just extended the mine in another direction.

I don't care what started the fire, I don't care about the practices that = were not followed, all I care about is right now, this minute, and if = you look on [https://www. \[REDACTED\] group_activity](https://www. [REDACTED] group_activity) you can read for yourself the impact it is having, and how hard people =

21.

are working to try to prove they are being poisoned, there are 900 = members of the above group now, please please please I beg of you, read = through, and use your power to intervene.

Sir, Auditor General, if we don't get this right now, with Morwell and = this incident, the duty of care and the practices and policies to = protect people, in the future, with the mining leases already approved = and the ones projected for the future, Australia is going to be of the = large part a uranium mine, it wont just be toxic coal matter that we are = breathing it will be Radon Gas also, we have to do something now and get = this right for all of our sakes, FOR AUSTRALIAS SAKE.

I am now praying to God that this email will have an impact.

Please all of you feel free to pass this email on to whoever needs it = and I am happy to provide any supporting evidence eg. emails to and from = EPA.

I am 48 years old, born in Lilydale Victoria, I have loved my country = and the people who live here, I have felt that we have justice PLEASE = PROVE THIS TO STILL BE THE CASE, PLEASE DONT LET THESE PEOPLE DOWN.

Kind Regards
Christine Hamilton.

////////////////////////////////////

From: [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Fw: toxicology, carbon monoxide testing morwell

Date: Wed, 7 May 2014 21:22:44 +1000

Hello,

I work in Community Health.

Tonight I was shocked, speaking with Morwell Residents about symptoms = they are experiencing and finding out that they had not yet been = routinely tested for heavy metals or carbon monoxide.

One lady spoke about her two children collapsing, another spoke about = her children being unusually aggressive, lethargic and so it goes on, = this is just a couple.

I suggested they get tested and they had no idea really where to begin.

I would have thought, since the EPA monitoring of air quality was so so = slow to get going, that testing of individuals, residents would have = been the next best way to establish if it was dangerous levels of toxins = in the air or not.

22.

Throughout this whole event, not in my wildest dreams did I think that = routine testing would not have been carried out yet and that people = would not have been encouraged, prompted to get along to the hospital = and get themselves tested.

Please correct me if I have the wrong impression on this.

Can you please follow this up, and get some sort of campaign going ASAP, = and make damn sure that the residents are ok.

Kind Regards
Christine Hamilton.

AGAIN I FORWARDED THE ABOVE still no replies at all only the standard form email response, "we have received your email thank you"

From: [REDACTED]

Subject: Fw: toxicology, carbon monoxide testing morwell
Date: Thu, 8 May 2014 20:54:17 +1000

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]
To: chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au
Cc: dp&c@dpc.vic.gov.au ; russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au ;
tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au
Sent: Wednesday, May 07, 2014 9:22 PM
Subject: Fw: toxicology, carbon monoxide testing Morwell

Included in this email is an excerpt from facebook, Julie Brown, Morwell resident today 12 May 2014 (Julie Brown has given permission for me to include this in my submission)

From: [REDACTED]

To: <ama@ama.com.au>Cc: <chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au>,
<catherine.king.mp@aph.gov.au><Peter.Dutton.MP@aph.gov.au>,
<tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au><russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Subject: heavy metal testing for Latrobe valley residents
Date: Mon, 12 May 2014 18:50:10 +1000

Hello,
Please help
a.. 8 hrs =B7 Like

b.. Julie Brown I have been ringing around trying to find out what costs are involved with getting tests done. I have had no luck,
Pathology centres are not able to tell me unless I know exactly what is being tested for.
Doctors appointment is at 12:40, then I will be able to find out and will let you know.
6 hrs =B7 Like

23.

c.. **Julie Brown** Quite disappointed that the doctor didn't know what metals to test for and unfortunately I went in unprepared so the test is only for a couple of metals. I was advised to go before 11am to get the sample taken, and that the results were likely to take until the end of

next week to come back.

3 hrs =B7 Like =B7 1

My response to Julie

a.. 3 hrs =B7 Like =B7 1

b.. **Christine Hamilton** oh my lord Julie Brown that is just unbelievable, mostly doctors now have a computer on their desk, quite often they look something up, I find it astonishing the doctor couldn't look up what to write on the referral for the blood test, unbelievable, or he could have called up THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, to be briefed on this, while you were waiting, but the way I think, YOU WOULD THINK ALL THE DOCTORS IN THE LATROBE VALLEY would have already been briefed on this subject, and should have known what to test for, can you send an email to the Australian Medical Association explaining this fiasco ama@ama.com.au maybe they will be a bit more helpful and also send email cc to Rosemary Lester, so she can see you aint happy, I will send one also, come on people THIS IS JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH, This is an email I have been sending to Rosemary Lester but still no reply

From: [REDACTED]

To: <chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au>

Subject: Fw: toxicology, carbon monoxide testing Morwell

Date: Thursday, 8 May 2014 8:54 PM

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]

To: chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au

Cc: dp&c@dpc.vic.gov.au ; russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au ; tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au

Sent: Wednesday, May 07, 2014 9:22 PM

Subject: Fw: toxicology, carbon monoxide testing Morwell

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]

To: chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au

Cc: dp&c@dpc.vic.gov.au ; russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au ; tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au=20

Sent: Wednesday, May 07, 2014 12:13 AM

Subject: toxicology, carbon monoxide testing Morwell

Hello,

I work in Community Health.

Tonight I was shocked, speaking with Morwell Residents about symptoms they are experiencing and finding out that they had not yet been routinely tested for heavy metals or carbon monoxide.

One lady spoke about her two children collapsing, another spoke about her children being unusually aggressive, lethargic and so it goes on, this is just a couple.

24.

I suggested they get tested and they had no idea really where to begin.

I would have thought, since the EPA monitoring of air quality was so so slow to get going, that testing of individuals, residents would have been the next best way to establish if it was dangerous levels of toxins in the air or not.

Throughout this whole event, not in my wildest dreams did I think that routine testing would not have been carried out yet and that people would not have been encouraged, prompted to get along to the hospital and get themselves tested.

Please correct me if I have the wrong impression on this.
Can you please follow this up, and get some sort of campaign going ASAP, and make damn sure that the residents are ok.

Kind Regards

Christine Hamilton.

In Spite of what most of you think, I am not a trouble maker, or stirrer, but this is very serious and I am in disbelief that every precaution is not being taken, I AM HORRIFIED

I THEN FORWARDED THE ABOVE ON AGAIN

----- Original Message -----

From:

To: ama@ama.com.au

Cc: chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au ; catherine.king.mp@aph.gov.au ;
Peter.Dutton.MP@aph.gov.au ; tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au ;
russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au

Sent: Monday, May 12, 2014 6:50 PM

Subject: heavy metal testing for Latrobe valley residents

25.

So I got this reply.....which was not helping the people immediately



**Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Bushfire Response**

Level 16
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
GPO Box 4335
Melbourne Victoria 3001
Telephone: (03) 8663 7811
Facsimile: (03) 8684 7810
DX 210077

Our ref: CDY14-0152389
MG14/2096

Ms Christine Hamilton

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Hamilton

Hazelwood coal mine fires

Thank you for your email of 2 April 2014 addressed to the Premier of Victoria, the Honourable Dr Denis Napthine MP, expressing your concerns regarding the Hazelwood coal mine fires. As the matters raised fall under my portfolio responsibilities, I am responding on his behalf.

On 11 March 2014, the Victorian Government announced the establishment of an independent inquiry into the Hazelwood Mine Fire. The Board of Inquiry comprises three members, headed by Justice Bernard Teague AO.

The Inquiry's terms of reference include investigating the circumstances of the Hazelwood Mine Fire, including the emergency response and the support provided to Morwell residents and other affected communities. The Board is seeking input from the community, particularly those who have been directly affected, to ensure this type of situation does not occur again.

Additional information is available on the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry website at www.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au or through the Inquiry office on 1300 442 972.

I trust this information assists in addressing your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

KIM WELLS MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Bushfire Response

19/5/14

Cc: The Hon. Dr Denis Napthine MP, Premier of Victoria



26.

I FORWARDED THE TOXICOLOGY EMAIL AGAIN AS STILL NO REPLY

From: [REDACTED]
To: <chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au>
Cc: <catherine.king.mp@aph.gov.au>, <Peter.Dutton.MP@aph.gov.au>, <tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au>, <russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au>, <dp&c@dpc.vic.gov.au>, <ama@ama.com.au>
Subject: Fw: heavy metal testing for latrobe valley residents
Date: Thu, 29 May 2014 23:44:43 +1000

YOU KNOW ITS BEYOND ME, THAT NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON THINKS THIS IS = IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO REPLY TO.....

----- Original Message -----

From: [REDACTED]
To: chief.healthofficer@health.vic.gov.au
Cc: catherine.king.mp@aph.gov.au ;
Peter.Dutton.MP@aph.gov.au ;tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au ;
russell.northe@parliament.vic.gov.au
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2014 9:14 PM
Subject: Fw: heavy metal testing for latrobe valley residents

FINALLY I GOT A REPLY (meant to be from Rosemary Lester, but sender actually Jane Wiebushch)

Sender: [REDACTED] dhs.vic.gov.au>
Date: Thu, 19 Jun 2014 15:13:53 +1000

Dear Ms Hamilton

Thank you for your emails of 7, 8, 19 and 29 May 2014 in relation to the Hazelwood mine fire. I regret the delay that has occurred in responding to your emails. The Department of Health understands that the smoke and ash from the mine fire caused considerable discomfort and inconvenience for a large number of Morwell residents.

During and subsequent to the fire, EPA monitored and publicised air, water, soil and ash testing results for the Morwell and Traralgon areas, and the details and EPA's assessment of the results and future intentions can be accessed at the EPA's website - <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/latrobe-valley-mine-fire/other-testing>

During this period the Department provided and updated health advice which is summarised on the Chief Health Officer's webpage at <http://health.vic.gov.au/chiefhealthofficer/advisories/advisory-2014-02-hazelwood-open-cut-mine-fire.htm> The Community Health Assessment Centre at Morwell provided support to the community through basic health checks and advice from 21 February to 30 March 2014, and clinical advice, assessment and/or management were available if required through local general practitioners and the Latrobe Regional Hospital.

27.

The Department developed fact sheets in response to community concerns regarding the smoke and ash from the fire and these may be accessed at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood/smoke.htm> and <http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Ash-fall-out--Hazelwood-open-cut-mine-fires> should you wish to refer to them.

Routine testing of residents for heavy metals and carbon monoxide was not considered necessary, however carbon monoxide testing was available at the Community Health Assessment Centre.

I hope this information assists you. You may also wish to monitor the following websites - www.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au and www.health.vic.gov.au/hazelwood for updates regarding the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry and Hazelwood Mine Fire Health Study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rosemary Lester PSM
Chief Health Officer

Well this letter only makes things worse....." The Department of Health understands that the smoke and ash from the mine fire caused considerable discomfort and inconvenience for a large number of Morwell residents" It was more than just uncomfortable and inconvenient, it was down right TOXIC,

and "Routine testing of residents for heavy metals and carbon monoxide was not considered necessary, however carbon monoxide testing was available at the Community Health Assessment Centre". **CLEARLY IT WAS NECESSARY.....AND IF IT HAD BEEN DONE, SHORTLY AFTER THE FIRE STARTED, MAYBE ALL THE PEOPLE BEING DIAGNOSED WITH LUNG CANCER AND LEUKEMIA NOW, MAY NOT BE IF THEY HAD BEEN EVACUATED, OR MINE WORKERS AT LEAST GIVEN BREATHING APPARATUS TO KEEP THE POWER STATION GOING.**

AUDIO MINE FIRE MEDIA CONFERENCE PART 1 & 2 IS ATTACHED

I don't think I need to make comment here, accept, "Nothing nasty in the ash" , "the masks do not protect against CO or gases, but will filter out fine particulate matter if fitted correctly"

So please consider the other VOC gases are full of cancer causing properties, and 45 days exposure is more than enough to kill people, maybe not immediately, but later on get cancer/leukaemia and die.

28.

Craig Lapsley..... "we have not seen a spike of CO to warrant evacuation" fire fighter "L" says safe level around perimeter of mine was put up to 70ppm? so in amongst that air, along with CO would have been many other cancer causing toxins, like benzene PAH, and a long list of others, if there was that much CO, it was definitely time to evacuate.

EXCERPTS FROM "DISASTER IN THE VALLEY" PUBLIC FACEBOOK PAGE Which I very strongly suggest the board look at here
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Disaster-in-the-Latrobe-Valley/>

Melinda Roberts

26 February 2014 ·

Dear Mr Naphthine. Thank you for encouraging people to lend their holiday homes to residents of Morwell to give us a break. For your nice deed I would like to reward you with one week of free accommodation in Wallace Street Morwell. We have plenty of room so please feel free to bring along any pregnant or elderly relatives that you have. I'm sure they will flourish in the "non-toxic" air. Now, don't feel obligated to bring food, we have lots of vegies from the garden. They may be a bit crunchy and have an "ash" type taste, but don't worry, the tank water we water them with is "safe" and the air they grow in is only filled with toxins that are "safe". We have lots of face masks for you to wear, they won't stop all the chemicals going into your lungs but at least the ash won't go up your nose causing those nasty, but safe, black boogas. Now, don't worry about bringing fancy clothes. The furniture is all covered in a layer of dust, but you should bring lots of socks as walking barefoot in the house makes your feet black as the carpets are now beyond saving. If you happen to smoke you are in for a real bonus. Just stand outside and breath deeply. Why pay \$20 a packet with this bonus at your own free holiday accommodation. Wearing black is a bad idea though, so leave though suits at home. Nothing worse than getting the dust cloud you cause when walk along the street all over your lovely pants. I do have to warn you that when you finish coughing and blowing your nose, putting in your eye drops and scrubbing your feet, you may have some trouble sleeping. Now the lack of oxygen in the air can make you nice and drowsy, but the constant sound of helicopters overhead can be a bit noisy, what with all the concerned politicians flying overhead, looking concerned and then getting the hell out as far as they can. Oh, one last thing. As a special bonus just for you, I will arrange a 12 hour unpaid shift fighting the fire right at the "coal front". Our volunteer firefighters will love to show you around and give you a real "safe" experience. Can't wait to receive your booking. Please let the phone ring a few times, I can have trouble finding it in the smoke!

Disaster in the Latrobe Valley We all feel so powerless

Like · Reply · 2 · 26 February 2014 at 13:55

Anne-Maree Wierzbinski Im not feeling the best today so I'm just staying inside??

Like · Reply · 1 · 26 February 2014 at 13:39

29.

Sally Davis My Fathers due for his long awaited Heart Op at Monash, he was rung yesterday and told to go get his Carbon Minoxide levels checked before they will priceed Grrrrrr im so over all this !!!!!

Like · Reply · 27 February 2014 at 09:44

Disaster in the Latrobe Valley If your able to, take a trip outside of morwell for a few hours.

Like · Reply · 26 February 2014 at 13:47

Damien Scurlock How long do they think people can just 'stay indoors'?

Like · Reply · 26 February 2014 at 13:22

Linda Sweetcheeks Virgo I live in Elgin st just as bad told just stay indoors

Like · Reply · 26 February 2014 at 12:32

Jenny McMahon I think we are powerless with this! Its too big, too deep, you cannot dig it out it's too hot! It would take months and months to try and dig it even if it was cold coal.....This is one disaster none of us ever thought aboutin Latrobe Valley.....

Like · Reply · 1 · 26 February 2014 at 23:12 ·Edited

Jenny McMahon ? Well, it will burn as long the coal is still there.....it's going to smolder underneath for years!!!! No solution, I think , to this problem.....this makes sense to me!!...If you put water on hot coal you get steam with fumes.....If you put ...[See MoreSee Translation](#)

Like · Reply · 1 · 27 February 2014 at 07:39 ·Edited

Hazelwood mine fire: Firefighter links cancer diagnosis to Morwell blaze as union seeks answers

By Elise Kinsella

Updated 15 Jul 2015, 2:31pm

The firefighters' union is calling for an investigation into what firefighters were exposed to during the Hazelwood mine fire in Victoria's Gippsland region.

The union said firefighters were increasingly being exposed to health risks as part of their job.

30.

Yesterday, firefighter Rob Gibbs from Cowwarr, in south-east Victoria, said he had been diagnosed with leukaemia and he believed his illness was linked to his work battling the Hazelwood mine fire.

The union's national secretary, Peter Marshall, said Mr Gibbs had a type of cancer that was recognised as being related to firefighting.

He said firefighters needed to be properly cared for and compensated if their work made them ill.

"This comes on top of a number of recent incidents in relation to firefighters being exposed, in some cases unnecessarily, to substances that are known to cause cancer and illness and injury," he said.

Mr Marshall said firefighters had been left out of a long-term health study into the effects of the mine fire.

"The inquiry into the Hazelwood mine fire recommended an ongoing health study for the community, what it didn't do was recommend ongoing monitoring for firefighters," he said.

"So at the very least there should be long-term monitoring of firefighters to determine what the long-term effect of that exposure was, if any."

Premier Daniel Andrews pledges support for firefighter

Premier Daniel Andrews said his office would investigate what support had been provided to Mr Gibbs.

"The people of Morwell and our firefighters were badly let down, I've got a very different approach," he said.

"If we can do anything for that individual firefighter I am confident the CFA [Country Fire Authority] will do that and I will have my office do some investigations today about what support he has been getting and if there is more that can be done, rest assured it will be."

Mr Andrews said his Government had reopened the mine fire inquiry for good reason.

He said firefighters who become ill because of their work should have access to compensation.

"I take the welfare of our volunteer firefighters and our career firefighters very, very seriously," he said.

"That's why we made a commitment and we've already begun work to make sure that our firefighters have the presumptive right to sue and to be properly compensated if their firefighting causes them to be sick."

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/minister-rejects-fire-health-risk-20140223-33amd.html>
The Napthine government has rejected accusations that it is failing to protect the Morwell community against health risks from the coal-mine fire that has enveloped the Latrobe Valley in smoke and air pollution.

31.

As the fire in a disused part of a coal mine supplying the Hazelwood power plant burnt into its third week, opposition health spokesman Gavin Jennings said the government was failing to provide information, advice or reassurance to those who lived nearby, adding to a sense of anxiety and uncertainty.

Visibility in the surrounding area has been reduced markedly.

Fire crews continue to dampen the fire. *Photo: Jason South*

"At what stage does air quality become so bad that you have to do something more than stay indoors or reduce your physical activity outside?" Mr Jennings said.

Advertisement

The Greens called for a state of emergency, claiming bureaucratic infighting had put lives at risk.

"The first responsibility of any government is to protect its people, and that's not happening in Morwell," Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber said.

But Health Minister David Davis played down the need to evacuate or declare a state of emergency.

He said the fire was clearly serious, but 31 people had been tested for carbon monoxide and all were "below levels of concern".

Of 136 people who had visited an assessment centre, three or four had been referred to hospital, with some also referred to GPs and pharmacists. "Everything that is required on the ground in terms of information and advice has been put in place," Mr Davis said.

"Vulnerable people ... older people, pregnant women and, indeed, children, and also particularly those with respiratory conditions, were advised to seek support and attention from the relevant medical authority."

The Environment Protection Authority's air quality index for Morwell South, adjacent to the mine, was 183 late on Sunday. Anything more than 150 is considered "very poor".

The authority issued a high level smoke alert for the Latrobe Valley extending into Monday, warning that visibility was less than 10 kilometres due to high particle concentrations.

Victorian chief health officer Rosemary Lester said the smoke could aggravate existing heart or lung conditions and cause irritated eyes, coughing and wheezing.

Greens senator Richard Di Natale, a former GP, said there was no safe level of exposure to smoke from coal combustion.

"You're walking a tightrope between not trying to create unnecessary fear and anxiety in the community, but also being honest and upfront about the risks people are facing," he said.

"If I lived in Morwell with a young family, I wouldn't be there because I would consider the level of risk unacceptable."

A state of emergency would need to be declared by the chief commissioner of police. The government has the power to call a state of disaster. It is believed neither declaration has been deemed appropriate.

Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley said protocols had been prepared for an evacuation, but triggers had not been met.

He said smoke was the biggest concern, as opposed to the flames. "It's definitely unique ... the complexity is that it's directly adjacent to a city," Mr Lapsley said.

Firefighters faced the added complication of a long crack that opened in the mine's southern wall. An exclusion zone was set up around the crack at least 100 metres long and firefighters were withdrawn from the area.

The crack was found to be up to 10 metres deep and 2.5 metres wide, but authorities said it was not threatening the mine or power station.

With Caroline Zielinski

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/minister-rejects-fire-health-risk-20140223-33amd.html#ixzz3gsw7sLsu>

AN EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK "THE COAL FACE" BY TOM DOIG

A THICK GLUEY GOO

After the fires started, and the drama with her neighbours sheltering in her garage, it took Michelle Gatt two full days before she noticed that something was up with her two-year-old German shorthaired pointer, Chooch. On Monday night at dinnertime, instead of bounding around the corner like usual, Chooch was moving really slowly. Whats wrong? Michelle wondered - then she saw the blood on the concrete. All four of Choochs paws had "opened up"

In the days that followed, the dog started to bleed from every cavity in her body and her hair fell out in thick clumps. Her teats became distended, red and ulcerated, and she swelled up from her usual slim size until she was "like an elephant"

When Michelle took Chooch to the vet, the vet's diagnosis was that the dog must have been "doused with petrol and set alight" Even though Michelle wasn't convinced, she went home and checked the perimeter of their property, just in case someone had tipped something over the fence, but no. So she took Chooch to another vet for a second opinion. The next vet said that the dog had been "chemically burned"

Chooch had a build-up of ash in her fur, and every night at dusk, as it became dewy, the moisture turned the ash into a caustic alkaline paste. It was sticky, "like superglue" and really hard to remove. The coal ash paste caused irritations all over Chooch's body, and when she tried to lick it off, she swallowed it. This made her intestines swell up until she started bleeding internally.

The vet told Michelle that unless Chooch was taken to Hallam Park Animal Hospital, a specialist vet near Dandenong, and put on a drip under 24 hour care, she would die. Michelle did this for a week, which cost 46,500. Chooch improved to a degree but she became vicious and angry and wouldn't let anyone touch her. The vet did a number of tests, which showed that the dog had chemicals in her system that she couldn't have ingested in an ordinary backyard. These included traces of the chemical retardant that was being sprayed on the Hazelwood fire, a few hundred meters away from Michelle's house.

Back home, whenever it rained, Michelle noticed that there was a fine residue in the ash on the pavement - a bit like pollen, except instead of being yellow, it was bright pink. At the same time, the coal-ash paste that nearly killed Chooch had also stuck to their tiles, and was eating through the canopy in the back garden. It was in their trees too, and when it rained a thick gluey goo would drip slowly from the branches onto the lawn.

AND THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE, ANIMALS WERE BREATHING AND BEING EXPOSED TO
24/7

In the last couple of weeks, I have heard of 3 mineworkers diagnosed with lung cancer..... I think the Department of Health need to be actively looking now for cancer clusters and making it possible for people suffering to get immediate help, not have to wait long periods to see a specialist, considering mine workers and fire fighters were doing the job of keeping electricity flowing to the rest of Victoria, they should be appreciated and looked after now.

After hearing all the advice Mark Cummins, expert Texan Coal Mine Fire Fighter gave us.....CANCER.....is the thing from coal smoke.

I am terrified we are going to see lung cancer in CHILDREN, who live close to the mine. Is it possible, parents are taking their children to the doctor, the doctor who is not briefed on what to look for, what to test for, and they are being given Ventolin and other asthma medications and sent away, when in all reality their child could have lung cancer as a result from the Hazelwood mine fire?

What will the Department of Health do to prevent this from happening. What steps have been taken to brief doctors of the Latrobe Valley on things to look for, things to test for?

1) **Exposure to air pollution early in life and when a woman gives birth to her first child may alter her DNA and may be associated with premenopausal breast cancer later in life.** A study, by researchers at the University at Buffalo, is based on data from the Western New York Exposures and Breast Cancer (WEB) study, which collected information from 1,170 women with recently diagnosed breast cancer and 2,116 healthy women who lived in New York's Erie and Niagara counties between 1996 and 2001. "*The investigation looked for an association between exposure to pollution and alterations to DNA that influence the presence or absence of key proteins. Such genetic changes are thought to be major contributors to cancer development and progression, including at very early stages,*" said lead investigator Katharine Dobson, MPH – <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/04/110420125508.htm>

The paper talks about emissions, including "*gases, particles, volatile organic compounds, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), many of which are accepted or potential carcinogens. Benzene ... is an accepted human carcinogen (International Agency for Research on Cancer 1987), and has been shown to cause mammary carcinomas in rodents (Huff et al. 1989; Maltoni et al. 1988, 1989). Exposure to other aromatic hydrocarbons including kerosene, toluene, and xylenes, has also produced increased rates of mammary cancers in female rats (Maltoni et al. 1997). Aromatic hydrocarbons are lipophilic and may therefore reach elevated concentrations in breast tissue and promote carcinogenesis in the cells of the breast (Morris and Seifter 1992)*". Wood heaters emit NO₂ and most of the other toxic chemicals listed above. The best estimate is about 0.44 grams of NO, 0.18 grams of NO₂ and 0.62 g of NO_x are emitted for every kg of firewood burned ([Gras 2002](#)) NO_x mission limits for petrol cars are 0.15 g/km (Euro-3), 0.08 g/km (Euro-4) and 0.07 g/km (Euro-5).

34.

All of the above were ingested or breathed in by the people surrounding the mine fire. Will the department of health test for DNA changes in babies and children & people due to exposure to the toxic coal smoke for that long period? Now, it should have already been well under way.

from WHO document on indoor coal smoke & lung cancer in children & women

http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/publications/en/Indoorsmoke.pdf

I am asking you to see that considering cooking indoors only takes place a couple times a day or maybe even once a day, exposure for babies and small children for 24 hours a day for 45 days is a definite concern and deserves proper investigation

This is a link to University of Sydney, HEALTH AND SOCIAL HARMS OF COAL MINING IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES: SPOTLIGHT ON THE HUNTER REGION
http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/research/units/boden/PDF_Mining_Report_FINAL_October_2012.pdf

This report/study is for normal coal MINING impacts, not including a 45 day coal mine fire.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-03/lung-cancer-coal-fire-power-stations-doctors/3987412>

Lung cancer alarm near coal-fired power stations

Updated 3 May 2012, 2:21pm

PHOTO: [Doctors cite lung cancer worries in region with coal-fired power stations](#) (ABC)

RELATED STORY: [Report sheds light on power stations' solar potential](#)

RELATED STORY: [Man dead after not paying new hospital charge](#)

MAP: [Port Augusta 5700](#)

A new analysis of pollution data for the Port Augusta region contradicts reassurances from the South Australian Government that smoking can be blamed for high lung cancer rates.

Residents of the region have long complained about health problems they link with two power stations, Playford and Northern, which burn highly-polluting brown coal.

The lung cancer rates around Port Augusta are said by medical experts to be double the expected number.

The independent analysis has been presented in Adelaide at a briefing for state parliamentarians organised by Doctors for the Environment Australia.

Port Augusta mayor Joy Baluch lost her husband to lung cancer 16 years ago and he never smoked.

She dismissed the Government's explanation of high lung cancer rates in the region.

"Of course I don't believe the Government, why should I? After 40 years of constantly being told that the problems at Port Augusta are attributed to the high consumption of cigarettes. This is absolute rubbish," she said.

"They are blatantly lying to the residents."

35.

Fight for data

Air pollution statistics for Port Augusta are collected by Alinta Energy, which owns the two power stations, in conjunction with the Environment Protection Authority.

Professor David Shearman, of Doctors For The Environment Australia, said it took a six-month battle to get the figures, so they could be independently examined.

"What it amounts to is the community feels they have not been listened to," he said.

"When you look at how this community exists, it exists under the shadow of a power station that pours out pollution. They've had to stomach this for years because it supplies a large portion of the state's energy and there's been no alternative."

Professor Shearman said smoking rates were about 7 per cent higher in the Port Augusta region than other areas.

"That's really insufficient to account for a doubling of ... lung cancer," he said.

He said cleaner alternatives for power generation now needed to be considered for the area.

THERE SHOULD BE NO "FIGHT FOR DATA" as we have also experienced in Victoria with our data centres, this should be easily obtainable for any member of a community, transparent, open and honest. The health department should have been actively working on data/figures/illness/death soon after the Morwell Open Cut Mine Fire started, and openly sharing this with the community, we should not have had to fight to get data.

http://www.keepthescenicrimscenic.com/resources/Air_near_coal_mines-%20Sue%20Bradbury.pdf

THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF BREATHING THE AIR NEAR COAL MINES

Air pollution takes different forms. We can't see most of the things floating around in the air, but these things, called particulate matter (PM), can damage our health.

- PM10 particles measure between 2.5 and 10 micrometers (from 25 to 100 times thinner than a human hair). These coarse particles cause less severe health effects. They are often visible, and are caused by smoke, dirt and dust from factories, farming, roads and mining.
- Fine particles are up to 2.5 micrometers in size (100+ times thinner than a human hair). These particles are not visible, and are more dangerous to human health as they can contain toxic organic compounds and heavy metals. It is these finer particles that lodge deep in the lungs, and are the more dangerous particles resulting from open-cut coal mining.

Particulates can also contain arsenic and dioxins, which produce oxidative radicals. In addition, machines using diesel fuel emit many toxic chemicals, including nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and formaldehyde, and the low-grade diesel used on mine sites contains far more sulphur than higher-grade diesel. The solvents in low-grade diesel can cause brain damage and any heavy metals or other contaminants cause cancers.

36.

Most Australian air pollution monitors, however, only monitor for PM10 particles, so whilst there is plenty of anecdotal evidence, it is difficult to get scientific evidence here of the link between fine particulates and ill-health. Studies have been done, though, in many other countries which have more sophisticated air pollution monitoring systems, such as the UK and USA.

EFFECTS ON THE HEALTH OF INFANTS

These studies show that there is a relationship between infant deaths from respiratory causes and long-term exposure to fine particulate matter. In addition, babies born to mothers exposed to air pollution are more likely to have low birth weight and to be born prematurely, and these babies are more likely to have respiratory problems.

Some studies have shown that Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is associated with the presence of nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide. These chemicals, together with formaldehyde, are emitted by machines using diesel fuel. Formaldehyde has caused tumours in laboratory rats. Diesel emissions are carcinogenic, and have been linked to heart attack and stroke in healthy men.

An American study showed that infants who are exposed to relatively higher levels of particulate matter over a period of weeks to months are more likely to develop bronchiolitis severe enough to warrant hospitalization, and a high proportion of these go on to develop chronic respiratory symptoms of recurrent wheezing and asthma. Another American study shows an association between respiratory-related deaths of infants (between one month and one year old) and fine particle air pollution in California, adding to previous literature in the United States and in other countries that air pollution may be associated with some infant deaths.

EFFECTS ON THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN

Babies with respiratory problems often develop asthma as children. Dr Dick van Steenis recently visited Australia from the UK. His studies, and others, showed that both PM1 and PM2.5 particulates produced by open-cut coal mines also cause new cases of asthma to develop in children, especially if toxic waste is present due to known or unknown tipping. He confirmed a rise in asthma to affect 33% of primary school children living within one mile of an open-cut coal mine, a cumulative rise to 21 % at two miles and even up to 12% at three miles.

Particle analysis done in the UK show that asthma is caused by

- cut quartz particles less than PM1 in size, which are "second to asbestos in terms of serious effects on the lungs. The body has to wall off these particles, causing fibrosis, which was called silicosis in underground miners, but which equally applies above ground".
- coal particles less than PM1, which cause inflammation. Human white blood cells can only ingest a certain amount of PM 1-2.5 particulates - the rest are walled off, causing chronic pulmonary obstructive disease and fibrosis.

Dr van Steenis states that the alleged ability to control dust by open-cut mining companies is a fallacy. The PM2.5 and PM1 dust cannot be controlled. The lightness of fine particles allows them to remain suspended for long periods, and to blow hundreds of kilometres.

37.

Australian Dr Pauline Roberts is concerned about the effect of heavy metal exposure through inhalation of particulate matter on children's growth and behaviour. High lead levels, for example, have been linked to a reduction in IQ, negative classroom behaviour, juvenile delinquency and increased violent behaviour.

EFFECTS ON THE HEALTH OF ADULTS

Long-term exposure to air pollution from coal mining leads to increasingly serious lung diseases, such as chronic pulmonary obstructive disease, fibrosis and lung cancer. There will also be increased incidence of heart attacks, generalised premature deaths, strokes, type 2 diabetes, clinical depression and other conditions resulting from any toxic waste contaminating the site, for example cancers, hormone disorders, birth defects, skin rashes, eye inflammation, and nausea, due to pollutants such as organic compounds, heavy metals, dioxins and even radio-active matter.

In a study of coalmining communities in West Virginia, Michael Hendryx found that high levels of coal production were associated with higher rates of cardiopulmonary disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, lung disease, and kidney disease.

The Hunter Valley Research Foundation's 2008-2009 report into Newcastle and the Hunter Valley reveals "an increased mortality; decreased life expectancy; increased rates of lung, skin and colorectal cancer; and increased rates of death from breast, cervical and prostate cancer when compared to the rest of NSW in general."

And yet the NSW government last year quashed a motion calling for a comprehensive population health study to assess the impact of the coal and power industries in the Hunter. An American study showed that 55% of open-cut coal mine workers had developed lung damage by twenty years of age. In the USA and the UK, governments are paying massive amounts in compensation for lung damage caused by their failure to exercise duty of care in relation to the health of the population.

This should be a lesson for our governments.

Europe has a Human Rights Convention which can be used by people whose health is threatened by proposed harmful activities. We Australians have no such safety net. Our governments have changed the laws, with impunity, to give more and more power to mining companies to disrupt the lives and health of our communities. But we have elections in this country - not all parties are hell-bent on expanding a destructive and unsustainable coal industry, and not all parties are prepared to remove the rights of citizens to lead a full and healthy life.

REFERENCES

Partial list of chemicals associated with diesel exhaust

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/dieselexhaust/chemical.html>

Diesel pollution linked to heart attack and stroke in healthy men

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/88329.php>)

Relations Between Health Indicators and Residential Proximity to Coal Mining in West Virginia

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2376994/>

Effects of Subchronic and Chronic Exposure to Ambient Air Pollutants on Infant Bronchiolitis

<http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/content/165/5/553.short>

Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) Air Pollution and Selected Causes of Postneonatal Infant Mortality in California

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1459937/>

Coal opencasting and health

38.

<http://www.countrydoctor.co.uk/precis/precis%20-%20Opencasting%20coal%20and%20health.htm>

Submission by Dr Pauline Roberts to the Senate Select committee on agricultural and related issues; 13 May 2009

<https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/.../viewdocument.aspx?id>

Greens mining <http://nonewcoal.greens.org.au/>

Air info now: What is particulate matter?

http://www.airinfonow.com/html/ed_particulate.html

Considering the Health impact from coal mining under normal circumstances the community of Morwell and surrounds have suffered extreme extra exposure to toxic coal smoke for 45 days, Full Blood, Urine, Hair & DNA testing of all willing participants would be a minimum procedure to find out exactly what their state of health is now, and take every measure possible NOW, to minimise any further suffering, a 20 year health study does not help now.

Kerry-anne Clissold whos very healthy husband died, how distressing this has been, the extra stress of Kerry begging the coroner to intervene and investigate, Voices of the Valley, myself, and the UFU sent requests to the coroner only to be advised that; the way the Act is setup, the Coroner could not do an investigation into deaths.

Why do we have a Coroner? if not to do a special investigation in circumstances such as the Morwell Open Cut Mine Fire. Again the system let the people who needed it most, down.

I want to make these statements;

I feel this would not happen in Brighton or Toorak, to begin with a coal mine would not be able to begin operations, but if it did, there is no way the affluent communities of Brighton or Toorak would be treated the way the people of The Latrobe Valley have been, its the same old story, the lower socioeconomic communities bare the brunt, and this has to change, every person in this country deserves the same level of care, health and safety as any other!

and;

What a hypocritical System we have when;

Smoking has been banned in vehicles whilst children are passengers, because of the health risk to the child, yet thousands of children, women, men and animals were left in toxic, carcinogenic coal smoke for over 45 days.....and led to believe a cheap disposable dust mask would protect them, **its shameful**

Nothing less than blood, dna, hair, and urine testing of willing participants and at no cost to the person, would be acceptable in trying to establish exactly how much people have been exposed to and what the possible effects (cancer) might be for the person in the future and any health impacts or cancers would be dealt with the person not having to wait 6 months to see a specialist.

After what the communities of Latrobe Valley have been put through since the start of the power industry, this is the least our government could do.....

The main recommendation I would like to come out of the Inquiry is;

Planning would immediately be put in place so as soon as is possible and practical, as number 1 priority after an even like a coal mine fire begins, The Department of Health, would set up a temporary testing centre at a central location like the Bowls Club, they would already have a list of people who will be willing participants a register eg: 3 Fire-fighters, 3 Mine employees (or employees from whichever place it might be with an event) 3 people from Wallace Street, 3 people from other side of train tracks, 3 people from Morwell South, 3 people from Morwell East, 3 people from Churchill, 3 people from Moe, all together a list of at least 50 people that would attend every day during an event up to a few days after the event has ceased completely to have blood testing, urine testing, and any other tests relevant, to establish whether or not it is safe for people to stay. Test results would be available with no time wasted, so that NO-ONE and NO DEPARTMENT has to rely on EPA air monitoring, or if the air is acceptable or not, or if evacuation is necessary or not, TEST THE PEOPLE, THEN YOU KNOW BEYOND ANY SHADOW OF A DOUBT, if even one person comes up with elevated levels, err on the side of caution and EVACUATE.

Part II of this is that the Department of Health are made responsible to actively brief and educate all Health Professionals in The Latrobe Valley on the affects/impacts of Coal Smoke Toxins and how to properly and effectively treat patients, and until that can be achieved fund an expert in this field to oversee how patients are being treated now, and that professional make recommendations and advise The Health Department on how to do this.

Secondary Recommendations:

- 1. Someone will make sure that in amongst emergency planning, provision is made for transport of vulnerable persons to be evacuated if the need arises, and someone will be held accountable for making sure this happens. Department of Human Services will be compelled to check their Register for Vulnerable Persons and make sure it is kept up to date, not just for Morwell and surrounds, but for every area.*
- 2. Coroner would investigate any possible related deaths to the mine fire and include suicide in this investigation. I have seen a lot of evidence of Mental Health suffering, and this really needs to be investigated also when considering any extra deaths*
- 3. The Health Department carry out an immediate health survey of every single person in the surrounding area of Hazelwood Mine, door to door, and use that data accordingly to put into place HELP FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, not make these people wait for 20 years until the other health study is finished.*
- 4. All affected Roof Spaces are cleaned, to remove the toxic ash so that people will not continue to suffer health impacts from the toxins.*

END OF SUBMISSION, Christine Hamilton.