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Subject: Rehabilitation of Latrobe Valley Coal Mines
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It will not be long before our coal mines in the Latrobe valley will be made redundant and may allow the current private owners to leave them as gaping holes stuck in the heart of Latrobe City. This should not be allowed. Both the private operators of these mines and the state and federal governments have a responsibility to rehabilitate these mines so that they will remain an asset to the state and local community. In the past these mines have provided enormous wealth to Victoria by the provision of cheap energy and more recently to the private operators. The recent privatisation of these mines and power generators has been detrimental to the local community in many aspects, mainly in loss of employment and recently the hazard to health that has been extenuated brought about by reduction of the maintenance of these mines as a result of cost cutting. Both the state of Victoria and the private multinational owners of these mines have a duty of care to the local community to repair the damage done by rehabilitating these mines so that they will become a tourist attraction and not just a whole in the ground full of water and a unsightly scrub as is happening in the section of the Yallourn mine that is no longer operational.

Other countries have a tendencies to rehabilitate mines that have been declared unworkable by either returning them to as near as possible to the original or in many cases to maintain their use for tourism. Our Latrobe Valley coal mines should be rehabilitated in such a way that they will be an asset as a tourist attraction with caravanning facilities, restaurants, horse riding and bike tracks amongst a botanical plantation. I cannot see why we cannot convert these mines into botanical gardens - one for exotics and the other for native species. I am lead to believe that 25 million year old seeds discovered in one of the mines have been germinated and may be used in the rehabilitation. These seed are from the original species that formed the basis of this coal resource. That would be an attraction for local as well as international tourists.

This, naturally enough will not be cheap and should not be reliant entirely on the private operators although they should be expected to participate with this rehabilitation considerably. They have made considerable profits and are responsible for the mines and the damage to the environment. The cost of these rehabilitations should be borne by both the private multinational owners and the Victorian taxpayer. They have been the recipients of the benefit of these mines far that past several decades consequently they should not have any problems with footing the bill. This rehabilitation should begin immediately and be an ongoing exercise over the next decade until the mines are no longer being worked by the current owners. If rehabilitation is performed in such a way that these mines would become usable tourist attraction they will be able to re-employ a majority of workers made redundant by the closure of the power generators. That is not too distant into the future. These mines have been an integral part of the wealth of the local economy and they should remain so after their use-by date, in the form of power

generation, has
been reached.

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