

Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

Mine Rehabilitation Submission

Kyle Bush
[REDACTED]

To the members of the Board of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry,

I submit this proposal for rehabilitation of the Hazelwood open cut mine and its adjacent spatial assets.

The attached document is the product of a year-long Master's thesis in the school of Landscape Architecture at RMIT University, Melbourne, completed in 2014. The work and the views expressed throughout are my own and do not reflect the position of RMIT University or any of its staff. At the time of publishing I was a student of Landscape Architecture with no other affiliations to affected parties, though community engagement in Morwell was conducted to inform the work.

The Elicit Yield Anew Project: Recalibrating Recoupling Morwell

The attached proposal offers a strategy for pre-emptive post-industrial transition for the Hazelwood site, and the town of Morwell. It views 'rehabilitation' of the site as not only needing to be ecological – in terms of the physical open-cut site itself – but also acknowledges the need for significant economic and social rehabilitation of the town of Morwell, and the greater Latrobe Valley, which has suffered in various forms since the privatisation of the SECV in 1996. The consideration of mine rehabilitation by the State Government of Victoria in response to the fire events of 2014 is seen here as an opportunity to address the many other underlying issues faced by Morwell and the Latrobe Valley. The rehabilitation of Hazelwood coal mine has the opportunity to become the driver of vastly improved social, ecological and economic resilience for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley region.

Thinking beyond this site, what is done with the Latrobe Valley coal mines has the potential to become a leading example of how other Australian settlements might deal with inevitable fluctuations in industrial mining activity. Domestically, we have few examples of successful and lasting ecological, social and economic transitions following the decline of industrial mining activity in towns which depend heavily on the singular industry.

While the lifespan of Hazelwood coal mine and power station is yet to be determined, it is reasonable to speculate that it will not be a major contributor to the local economy into the long-term future. Even now the Australian Paper Mill and the Latrobe Regional Hospital employ more Morwell residents than the Hazelwood mine and power station, and the designation of the Morwell as the industrial centre of a future 'polycentric' Latrobe City provide reasonable grounds for considering options for industrial diversification. Accepting this pathway is a step toward preparing Morwell and the Latrobe Valley for the inevitable transition to a diverse and resilient economy, reducing its exposure to the vulnerabilities of a globally shifting energy industry. Rehabilitation efforts can become the catalyst for this step, which will be a long term pursuit (given the scale of mining in the Latrobe Valley) and could have far-reaching strategic outcomes, if treated as the opportunity it truly is.

The 'Recalibrating Recoupling Morwell' prospectus attached contains a set of propositions which deal with opportunities presented in both the north-eastern portion of the Hazelwood open cut, and the former SECV industrial precinct on its eastern edge. This portion of the mine includes the site of the 2014 fires (the northern batters) which is the portion in closest proximity to the nearby residential land of Morwell South. The former SECV industrial precinct has a high percentage of vacant buildings and a high degree of blight, but offers a significant opportunity for the adaptive re-use of existing building infrastructure. It is also directly accessible from Commercial Rd, Morwell's main shopping street. The adjacency of mine sites earmarked for rehabilitation and these under-utilised buildings and land parcels presents an opportunity for a more comprehensive and integrated strategy to be considered. The result, if both parts were considered in a long term strategy, would be far greater connection between the town of Morwell and the rehabilitated mine sites in whatever form they take.

I would be very interested in discussing further any of the ideas presented in the attached document. In the case of any further information or clarification being required, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Kind regards,

Kyle Bush

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