



**HAZELWOOD
MINE FIRE INQUIRY
RECOMMENDATIONS
AUGUST 2014**



Hazelwood
Mine Fire
Inquiry

On 9 February 2014 fires took hold in the Hazelwood mine as a result of embers spotting from bushfires. The mine fire burned for 45 days, sending smoke and ash over Morwell and surrounding areas for much of that time.

On 21 March 2014, the Governor of Victoria appointed the Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry made up of the Honourable Bernard Teague AO, Professor Emeritus John Catford and Ms Sonia Petering.

The Board was asked to inquire into the circumstances of the mine fire, the emergency response and the support provided to affected communities.

The Board heard of the experiences of people affected by the mine fire in its community consultations, in written submissions and at public hearings held in Morwell.

It independently reviewed the actions of State departments and agencies, local government and GDF Suez. It also engaged its own experts in the areas of health, mine safety, fire risk management, air pollution and communications.

A 400-page plus report (including an executive summary and recommendations) has been written in response to the Board's Terms of Reference and the information it received. The report answers important questions raised by the people of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley including:

- What are the potential health implications now and into the future?
- What fire prevention measures were put in place by GDF Suez?
- Who is responsible for regulating the mine?
- How did the mine fire start?
- What can be done to prevent incidents like this from happening again?

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report was provided to His Excellency the Governor on 29 August 2014 and tabled in Parliament in September 2014.



Community consultation in Moe.
Photo courtesy of Rebecca Symonds,
Latrobe Valley Express

- ▲ In its report, the Board describes what went wrong, what went well and what can be done better in the future to prevent a similar incident from happening again. Below are the Board’s 18 recommendations for improvement. It is now up to the State of Victoria and GDF Suez to consider these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE OF VICTORIA

<p>RECOMMENDATION 1</p> <hr/> <p>The State empower and require the Auditor-General or another appropriate agency, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversee the implementation of these recommendations and the commitments made by the State and GDF Suez during this Inquiry; and • report publicly every year for the next three years on the progress made in implementing recommendations and commitments. 	<p>Monitor implementation</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 2</p> <hr/> <p>The State establish, for any future incident, integrated incident management teams with GDF Suez and other Victorian essential industry providers, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require that emergency services personnel work with GDF Suez and other appropriate essential industry providers; and • implement the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System. 	<p>Develop Integrated response</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 3</p> <hr/> <p>The State enact legislation, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require Integrated Fire Management Planning; and • authorise the Emergency Management Commissioner to develop and implement regional and municipal fire management plans. 	<p>Legislate Integrated Fire Management Planning</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4</p> <hr/> <p>The State:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring forward the commencement date of s.16 of the <i>Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Act 2014</i> (Vic), to facilitate the requirement that approved work plans specifically address fire prevention, mitigation and suppression; and • acquire the expertise necessary to monitor and enforce compliance with fire risk measures adopted by the Victorian coal mining industry under both the mine licensing and occupational health and safety regimes. 	<p>Address fire risk in work plans</p>

Monitor
air quality

RECOMMENDATION 5

The State equip itself to undertake rapid air quality monitoring in any location in Victoria, to:

- collect all relevant data, including data on PM_{2.5}, carbon monoxide and ozone; and
- ensure this data is used to inform decision-making within 24 hours of the incident occurring.

Lead PM_{2.5}
compliance
standard

RECOMMENDATION 6

The State take the lead in advocating for a national compliance standard for PM_{2.5}.

Revise carbon
monoxide
protocols

RECOMMENDATION 7

The State review and revise the community carbon monoxide response protocol and the firefighter carbon monoxide response protocol, to:

- ensure both protocols are consistent with each other;
- ensure both protocols include assessment methods and trigger points for specific responses;
- ensure GDF Suez and other appropriate essential industry providers are required to adopt and apply the firefighter carbon monoxide protocol; and
- inform all firefighters about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, and in particular, highlight the increased risks for those with health conditions and those who are pregnant.

Revise
smoke
protocols

RECOMMENDATION 8

The State review and revise the Bushfire Smoke Protocol and the PM_{2.5}Health Protection Protocol, to:

- ensure both protocols are consistent with each other; and
- ensure both protocols include assessment methods and trigger points for specific responses.

Develop
Smoke Guide

RECOMMENDATION 9

The State develop and widely disseminate an integrated State Smoke Guide, to:

- incorporate the proposed State Smoke Plan for the management of public health impacts from large scale, extended smoke events;
- include updated Bushfire Smoke, carbon monoxide and PM_{2.5} protocols; and
- provide practical advice and support materials to employers, communities and individuals on how to minimise the harmful effects of smoke.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The State should continue the long-term health study, and:

- extend the study to at least 20 years;
- appoint an independent board, which includes Latrobe Valley community representatives, to govern the study; and
- direct that the independent board publish regular progress reports.

Extend health study

RECOMMENDATION 11

The State review and revise its communication strategy, to:

- ensure all emergency response agencies have, or have access to, the capability and resources needed for effective and rapid public communications during an emergency; and
- ensure, where appropriate, that private operators of essential infrastructure are included in the coordination of public communications during an emergency concerning that infrastructure.

Revise communications strategy

RECOMMENDATION 12

The State, led by Emergency Management Victoria, develop a community engagement model for emergency management to ensure all State agencies and local governments engage with communities and already identified trusted networks as an integral component of emergency management planning.

Develop community engagement model

RECOMMENDATIONS TO GDF SUEZ

RECOMMENDATION 13

GDF Suez revise its Emergency Response Plan, to:

- require an increased state of readiness on days of Total Fire Ban;
- require pre-establishment of an Emergency Command Centre;
- require pre-positioning of an accredited Incident Controller as Emergency Commander; and
- require any persons nominated as Emergency Commander to have incident controller accreditation and proficiency in the use of the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System.

Revise Emergency Response Plan

Establish back-up power supply

RECOMMENDATION 14

GDF Suez establish enhanced back-up power supply arrangements that do not depend wholly on mains power, to:

- ensure that the Emergency Command Centre can continue to operate if mains power is lost; and
- ensure that the reticulated fire services water system can operate with minimal disruption if mains power is lost.

Conduct risk assessment and implement plan

RECOMMENDATION 15

GDF Suez:

- conduct, assisted by an independent consultant, a risk assessment of the likelihood and consequences of fire in the worked out areas of the Hazelwood mine, and an assessment of the most effective fire protection for the exposed coal surfaces;
- prepare an implementation plan that ensures the most effective and reasonably practicable controls are in place to eliminate or reduce the risk of fire; and
- implement the plan.

Review Mine Fire Service Policy and Code of Practice

RECOMMENDATION 16

GDF Suez:

- review its 'Mine Fire Service Policy and Code of Practice' so that it reflects industry best practice and ensures that, by taking a risk management approach, it is suitable for fire prevention, mitigation and suppression in all parts of the Hazelwood mine; and
- incorporate the revised 'Mine Fire Service Policy and Code of Practice' into the approved work plan for the Hazelwood mine.

Adopt carbon monoxide protocol

RECOMMENDATION 17

GDF Suez adopt and apply the firefighter carbon monoxide response protocol.

Improve crisis communications strategy

RECOMMENDATION 18

GDF Suez improve its crisis management communication strategy for the Hazelwood mine in line with international best practice.

▲ Action is already underway towards implementing some of the recommendations made by the Inquiry.

Fifty commitments have already been announced by the State and by GDF Suez. They are set out as 'Affirmations' in the report.

The Board attaches similar weight to the commitments that are the subject of its affirmations as to its recommendations.

There are also matters for future consideration mainly relating to health and wellbeing in the report.

The impact of the Hazelwood mine fire on the Morwell and Latrobe Valley community has been significant. People have been affected in many ways. First and foremost, the community has experienced adverse health effects and may be affected for an indeterminate period into the future.

Many people and local businesses have experienced financial impacts for a range of reasons including downturn in business, medical costs, veterinary costs, time taken off work, relocation from homes, cleaning homes and businesses and possible decrease in property value.

Undertaking this work has been a privilege. The Board and Secretariat sincerely thank the people of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley for their generous support of the Inquiry.

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry will close its office on 5 September 2014.

Children wearing face masks on their way to school. Photo courtesy of Fairfax Syndication





Hazelwood
Mine Fire
Inquiry

▲ To access an electronic version of the
Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report:
www.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au

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