



# LATROBE CITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

HELD IN NAMBUR WARIGA MEETING ROOM  
CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, MORWELL  
AT 6.30 PM ON  
12 MAY 2014

SM436

**PRESENT:**

**Councillors:** Cr Sharon Gibson, Mayor West Ward  
Cr Dale Harriman, Deputy Mayor East Ward  
Cr Peter Gibbons West Ward  
Cr Sandy Kam East Ward  
Cr Graeme Middlemiss Central Ward  
Cr Kellie O'Callaghan East Ward  
Cr Christine Sindt Central Ward  
Cr Darrell White South Ward

**Officers:** John Mitchell Acting Chief Executive Officer  
David Elder Acting General Manager Community Liveability  
Chris Wightman Acting General Manager Governance  
Jamey Mullen Acting General Manager Organisational Excellence  
Damian Blackford Acting Manager Recreation & Community  
Infrastructure  
Tom McQualter Manager Council Operations & Legal Counsel  
Stacey Greenwood Acting Manager Council Operations & Legal  
Counsel

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1. **OPENING PRAYER**
2. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND**
3. **APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**
4. **DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
5. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**
6. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**6.1 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Submission**

Bruce McDonald asked the following question:

**Question**

Would Council consider including the following in the mine fire Inquiry Submission: 'The Systems in place before the fires for prevention?'

**Answer**

Council agreed to incorporate Bruce McDonald's suggestion into the final Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Submission to the Board of Inquiry.

# **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**6.1 HAZELWOOD COAL MINE FIRE DRAFT SUBMISSION**

**For Decision**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the draft Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire Submission in relation to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry for consideration.

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No officer declared an interest under the Local Government Act 1989 in the preparation of this report.

**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

This report is consistent with Latrobe 2026: The Community Vision for Latrobe Valley and the Latrobe City Council Plan 2013-2017.

*Latrobe 2026: The Community Vision for Latrobe Valley*

*Strategic Objectives - Governance*

*In 2026, Latrobe Valley has a reputation for conscientious leadership and governance, strengthened by an informed and engaged community committed to enriching local decision making.*

*Latrobe City Council Plan 2013 - 2017*

*Theme and Objectives*

*Theme 3: Efficient, effective and accountable governance*

*Strategic Direction – To provide open, transparent and accountable governance.*

*Legislation - Local Government Act 1989*

**BACKGROUND**

Many Morwell citizens and other residents of the Latrobe Valley were adversely affected by the poor air quality resulting from the Hazelwood and Yallourn Brown Coal Mine Fires that occurred over February and March 2014. This led to residents reporting respiratory and other health-related problems as a result of the conditions.

On 11 March 2014, the Premier of Victoria Denis Napthine, announced an independent inquiry into the circumstances of the Hazelwood Mine fire, including the emergency response and the support provided to Morwell residents and other affected communities.

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Following on from this announcement, Council has prepared a draft submission for the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry.

### **ISSUES**

The draft submission is provided as Attachment 1 to this report which contains.

Latrobe City Council wishes to make a submission to the Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire for the following reasons;

1. The Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire is located within the municipal boundary of the Latrobe City Council;
2. The citizens of Latrobe City and the Council's regular operations were directly affected as a result of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire;
3. Latrobe City Council played a support role in the response to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire;
4. There are a number of open cut brown coal mines within the municipality of Latrobe City that are within close proximity to townships, in particular the town of Morwell;
5. The Latrobe City Council seeks to ensure that appropriate mitigation steps are taken to ensure the risk of a similar coal mine fire is reduced and that in the event a similar event does take place the Victorian government and Latrobe City Council are better placed to respond to the needs of the community during and after such a coal mine fire; and
6. The Latrobe City Council is concerned about the overall & timely remediation strategies and plans that are in place for the open cut Brown Coal mines within the municipality.

### **FINANCIAL, RISK AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

Risk has been considered as part of this report and it is considered to be consistent with the Risk Management Plan 2011-2014.

### **INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CONSULTATION**

#### *Engagement Method Used:*

Councillors and officers involved in the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire response were engaged with in the preparation of Council's submission.

Councillors and officers have been involved with the affected community since the event occurred on 7 February 2014.

A special Council meeting was held on Thursday 8 May 2014 to allow members of the public to see Council's draft submission and provide any comment regarding it to Council. A number of amendments have been made to the draft submission taking into account those comments.

**OPTIONS**

The following options are available to Council in relation to this report;

1. Adopt the Submission attached this report; or
2. Amend and adopt the Submission attached to this report; or
3. not make a submission to the Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire.

**CONCLUSION**

Council wish to make a submission to the Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine for the reasons set out above. The proposed draft submission attached is provided for Council to consider.

**Attachments**

1. Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Draft Submission

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Council endorse the submission to the Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire dated 9 May 2014.

**ALTERNATE MOTION**

**That Council endorse the submission to the Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire dated 9 May 2014 subject to the following changes;**

1. **Minor amendment reflecting that the sub-committee for the clean up was created to implement the decisions of the Victorian Government;**
2. **The inclusion of a paragraph in section B of the submission regarding the fire prevention systems in place prior to the fire occurring.**
3. **The inclusion of the following documents:**
  - a. **Latrobe Muncpal Fire Management 2013-2016**
  - b. **Notes from EPA discussions with EPA April 2013**
  - c. **Notes from EPA discussions September 2013**
  - d. **2013-14 Fire Season Infringement Notices Map**
  - e. **Minutes from Latrobe Municipal Fire Management Committee Meeting Oct 2013**
  - f. **Copies of Fire Prevention Notices served on Hazelwood in fire season 2013/14**
  - g. **Latrobe Planning Scheme – Local Provisions Gippsland Coalfields.**
4. **Inclusion of an additional dot point on page 18 ‘Risk of emissions in case of fires.’**

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**Moved:** Cr White  
**Seconded:** Cr Harriman

**That the Motion be adopted.**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**



## **6.1**

### **Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Draft Submission**

<b>1</b>	<b>Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Draft Submission .....</b>	<b>9</b>
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## **Latrobe City Council – Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire Board of Inquiry Submission**

### **Introduction**

Latrobe City Council wishes to make a submission to the Board of Inquiry into the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire for the following reasons;

1. The Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire is located within the municipal boundary of Latrobe City Council;
2. The citizens of Latrobe City and the Council's regular operations were directly affected as a result of the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire;
3. Latrobe City Council played a support role in response to the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire;
4. There are a number of open cut brown coal mines within the municipality of Latrobe City that are within close proximity to townships, in particular the town of Morwell;
5. Latrobe City Council seeks to ensure that appropriate mitigation steps are taken to ensure the risk of a similar coal mine fire is reduced and that in the event a similar event does take place the Victorian government and Latrobe City Council are better placed to respond to the needs of the community during and after such a coal mine fire; and
6. The Latrobe City Council is concerned about the overall and timely remediation strategies and plans that are in place for the open cut Brown Coal mines within the municipality.

Council is very supportive of the Terms of Reference of the Board of Inquiry. In particular, looking into the origins of the fire and the regulatory regimes in place regarding brown coal mines and whether they are adequate. Council is aware that many members of the community are asking these exact questions as well.

### **Background**

Council's submission will set out as follows;

- a. Latrobe City Council's association with brown coal mining. This includes a brief outline of Council's role in land planning regarding brown coal;
- b. An explanation of Council's role in emergency management, fire prevention and fire management and integrated fire management planning generally;
- c. Latrobe City Council's involvement in the 2014 Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire and opportunities for better management including communications, systems and clean up; and
- d. Latrobe City Council's requirement for the long term liveability of the towns in the Latrobe Valley, particularly Morwell, to be considered as the priority when planning, remediating and designing existing and future coal mines within Latrobe City.

- A. Latrobe City Council's association with brown coal mining.** This includes a brief outline of Council's role in land planning regarding brown coal.

Latrobe City Council and its predecessors have had a long association with open cut brown coal mining. There is an abundance of brown coal spread beneath the Latrobe Valley from Moe in the West through to Rosedale. This brown coal has been utilised for the provisions of very affordable electricity for the majority of the residents in Victoria originally by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria and subsequently by private mine operators.

The State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) chose the current siting of the Hazelwood Open Cut and Power Station as the most suitable site for the extraction of coal for power generation. The town of Morwell pre-existed the Hazelwood Power Station and Open Cut. It is the understanding of Council that the SECV were considering an option, amongst others, to relocate the town of Morwell, in the manner that the town of Yallourn was, in order to access highly winnable brown coal. This plan never came to fruition. The history of the development of the brown coal industry in the Latrobe Valley is documented in books such as *Heart of the Valley – A history of the Morwell Municipality* by Stephen M. Legg and *Planning Power* by David Langmore.

The Latrobe Planning Scheme includes a Special Use Zone – Schedule 1 relating to Brown Coal. This applies to brown coal mining and power stations. There are a large number of exemptions under clause 52.08 of the Planning Scheme in relation to Earth and Energy Resources. As such, Council it is rare for Council to consider planning applications regarding development within the power stations and mining areas across Latrobe City.

In 1987, an Environmental Significance Overlay was introduced to the Latrobe Planning Scheme. This was designed to provide protection for existing settlements that are within 1000m of brown coal mines. This buffer was introduced to the Latrobe Planning Scheme well after the siting of the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine by the SECV.

- B. An explanation of Council's role in emergency management, fire prevention and fire management and integrated fire management planning generally:**

The Local Government Emergency Management Handbook (June 2012) states:

*“Councils are not emergency response agencies and are not structured or funded to deal with large scale emergency events. Events that extend for periods of time will exceed the capacity of an individual council to provide an ongoing response and can have a serious impact on a council's ability to carry out its everyday business. Large scale emergencies can also directly affect council staff living in or near the municipality.”*

Council acknowledges that it is neither an emergency response agency nor a fire agency and that these activities are best left to the experts. Council does however, play an important role in Fire Prevention and Emergency Management Planning and Recovery generally. Latrobe City Council believes it is important to understand the Municipal Fire Prevention Planning system in its current operational environment.

*The historical role of Council in fire prevention*

The Country Fire Authority Act 1958 Section 55A requires municipal councils to prepare and maintain a municipal fire prevention plan. The CFA also provide "Municipal Fire Prevention Planning Guidelines" which establishes a process by which a Fire Prevention Plan can be prepared.

Municipalities generally have been required to and have provided an officer to carry out the role of "proper officer" or more recently "fire prevention officer". This officer's role has traditionally been one of annual inspections and service of notices/directions upon property owners whose property contains, or potentially contains, a fire hazard. The role of the fire prevention officer has changed over the last few years, with his/her involvement expanded out of the traditional urban area to the broader municipal boundary, the amendments to the CFA Act to include materials other than vegetation (grass) as a fire hazard, and for the officer to be able to issue infringement notices for landowners failing to carry out works required any Fire Prevention Notices. Previously Municipal Fire Prevention Plans concentrated mainly on the issue of wildfire, the serving of notices (for fire hazards) and the performance of other authorities.

Fire prevention plans now require planning for issues across a much broader spectrum including looking at all potential origins of a fire. These can be a rural wildfire, urban fires and building fires. The CFA guidelines require the plan to:

- identify fire risks
- identify priority risk environments
- define how the risks can be treated
- specify parties responsible for identified risks
- define the groups involved in fire prevention
- increase the community knowledge about fire safety
- develop programs to deal with identified issues

In relation to the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan dated 8 December 2011 stated:

**8. *International Power GD Suez***

*International Power has emerged from the privatisation of the power industry. There are three main operating areas under their control. These are:*

1. *Hazelwood Power Station*
2. *Hazelwood Pondage*

### 3. Morwell Open Cut

*International Power advises that they have a current Fire Management Plan for the Open Cut and have Emergency Management Plans for the Power Station. There is no Fire Plan for the station or Hazelwood Pondage however some prevention measures are in place.*

*Like all other members of the Power Industry, the issue of a fire in such a significant industry is deemed a very high risk.*

#### The current role of Council in Integrated Fire Management Planning

The Municipal Fire Prevention Plan and Committee has now transitioned to the municipal fire *management* plan and committee.

The Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMP) is a sub-committee of the municipal emergency management planning committee and determined its own procedures subject to the guidelines provided in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV).

The MFMP is made up of;

- The municipal Council (Latrobe City Council)
- The relevant Fire Service(s)
- The Country Fire Authority
- The Department of Environment and Primary Industries
- Other members as required.

This MFMP's key role is to;

- Plan for fire management in a manner that coordinates fire management activities across agencies
- Provide information to and engage with the community on matters related to fire management planning
- Use the planning guide issued by the State Fire Management Planning Committee to draft a Municipal Fire Management Plan for recommendation to the MEMPC and comment by the Regional Strategic Fire Management Planning Committee
- Monitor, review and report on the delivery of the Municipal Fire Management Plan (MFMP)
- Advocate to the Regional Strategic Fire Management Planning Committee for municipal fire management needs
- To work with the MEMPC to align planning activities and
- To share knowledge and create an environment of continuous improvement.

Latrobe City Council's Municipal Fire Prevention Officer is only one member of this committee. This Committee in accordance with its duties has produced a Municipal Fire Management Plan (endorsed by Latrobe City Council on 31/10/2013). The Municipal Fire Management Plan identifies the importance of the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine and power station. Council would like to see

greater involvement in municipal fire planning from key industry players to ensure that overall we are best placed to prepare for emergency events.

#### *Council's Specific role in Fire Prevention*

Council is resourced with one officer, the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer who is responsible for fire prevention. This officer is also the Municipal Emergency Response Officer under the Emergency Management legislation. This officer contributes to both the MEMPC and the MFMPC and ensures that Council satisfies its statutory duties in relation to these committees. At times during the fire season the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer is provided some additional resources to meet the increasing demand to undertake Fire Prevention Inspections.

During the 2013/14 fire season the Latrobe City Council Municipal Fire Prevention Team issued 621 Fire Prevention notices to landowners as part of its annual Fire Prevention Inspection Program. Five (5) Notices were specifically issued to the operators of the Hazelwood Coal Mine in December 2013 relevant to the parcels of land in and around the Hazelwood Pondage. These notices were complied with.

It should be noted that whilst Council has a statutory right to enter properties and undertake inspections, actual entry to the Hazelwood Power Station and Brown Coal Mine and other mines and power stations is restricted. All officers are required to meet the induction requirements for entry to each respective mine site prior to entry.

The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer deals with the high risk bushfire areas by undertaking a proactive inspection program at the start of the fire season of all high risk bushfire areas where practical. Latrobe City Council utilises an electronic inspection tool to allow a more streamlined approach to fire prevention inspections. Council also inspects the low risk (predominantly urban) areas when informed by the community of a potential fire hazard.

Community members have raised concerns with Council regarding the adequacy of the fire preventions systems in place prior to the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine fire occurring.

#### **C. Latrobe City Council's involvement in the 2014 Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire and its opportunities for better management including communications, systems and clean up.**

During the emergency event, which at the time of writing this submission is still in the response phase, Council was a support agency.

On the weekend of the 7 February 2014 when the bushfire commenced in the Hernes Oak region Council activated its emergency systems by closing roads it controlled, opening relief centres as requested by the Incident Control Centre in

Moe and Traralgon accommodating more than 300 people overnight and providing general assistance to the Incident Controller, in this case the CFA.

Council quickly recognised that the location of the fire would have a direct impact on a number of Council's services. At times, staff had difficulty accessing their own work locations. As such, Council implemented a range of decisions to close various pre-schools, early learning centres and maternal and child health centres and relocate them to alternate sites as required to protect their health and safety. This required significant resources, equipment, communications with affected community members and staff members to complete. In general, Council believes that the services it provided in the impacted area were managed, relocated and communicated quickly and efficiently under difficult conditions.

These activities are usual for Council during the response phase of an emergency event such as fire and flood. As the event progressed, fire entered the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine (and Yallourn Coal Mine) and smoke and ash affected the town, Council continued to provide support, within its resource capability, to the Incident Controllers. This involved a wide array of services including opening respite centres for response agencies, coordinating and working with partners to provide information to the incident controller, providing communications assistance and acting as a conduit for information between the community and the incident controllers.

Throughout the event Council undertook a door knock of almost every property within the town of Morwell to gather information from residents and distribute up to date information to the households.

It should be noted that at times, Council was asked to take on roles which it quite simply did not have the resources to undertake. At these times and in accordance with the Emergency Management Manual Victoria, Council's Co-ordinator Emergency Management provided this information to the Incident Controller. As previously stated Council is not a lead agency in the response phase of an emergency event and is not resourced or trained to do so.

Council's resources were particularly challenged during the response phase of this event as its own headquarters and Morwell depot are located within the area identified as the most impacted and were directly affected by the smoke and ash from the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire. Many of Council's staff, both in the mobilised emergency roles and regular roles, were detrimentally affected by the impact of smoke and ash from the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire akin to many members of community.

It is the position of Latrobe City Council that the Board of Inquiry should closely look at several areas in the response to the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire. These are:

- The systems of emergency management put in place and coordination of the various agencies

- The communications and distribution of information and
- The clean-up and recovery decisions put in place

### **Emergency Operations and coordination**

Latrobe City Council understands that each emergency event is unique and dynamic and requires a specific response particular to that emergency. We are also aware that the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire presented novel challenges to fire response agencies and the wider community.

The systems that were put in place during the response phase of this event were different from those that Council has been involved in previously. Council believe the unique nature, duration of the event and the significance of its impact on state infrastructure saw an increased involvement in all levels of the Victorian government. The sheer number of agencies and people involved in the response effort was both enormous and challenging. To further highlight this, at one stage there were two regional control centres and three incident control centres in operation.

Latrobe City Council and indeed the community were unclear about what role Council was undertaking during the response phase and there was a much greater impact on Council resources than experienced in previous events.

The number of agencies and individual's involved created a confused and scattered approach to the call on Council's resources. At times during the response several Council officers were asked for the same or similar information and/or support by several different agencies via several different channels. This resulted in Council often duplicating requests or being confused about what was being asked of it at various times. We stress the point that wherever it was possible and within Council's ability to provide information, assistance and resources it did so. However, there were times when this simply was not possible for Council to do. Council assisted in a range of new response strategies not previously utilised including implementation of a respite centre and the establishment of a community advisory group.

At times, Council responded to members of the community who believed Council had a role in firefighting and its associated activities, mine regulation, monitoring of the Princes Freeway and other events that are not within its realm of control. We stress that whilst Council does not control emergency events it plays a critical role in linking experienced members of the community with fire response agencies to provide local knowledge and experience. This local knowledge, in Council's opinion, is critical to ensure an effective response to all emergency events.

Council has in previous events, consistent with the Emergency Management Manual Victoria become the lead agency when the event transitions into the recovery phase. This has also created confusion and challenges for the Council in what role it should take and what resources are required to satisfactorily meet its responsibilities and the needs of the community in the recovery phase of the



Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire. It is noted that this will be the first time that Latrobe City Council and the Department of Human Services will share the lead role in the recovery phase.

### **Information Distribution and Communications**

The wide array of different agencies, senior officials and elected representatives involved in the response to the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire created challenges in effectively communicating with representatives of Council and the community.

At times, the Council was requested to attend various announcements and press conferences a short notice and often with no clarity as to what was being announced. This led to confusion for members of the community and Council as to what the role of Council was during the response phase of the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire.

At other times, members of the Victorian Government and its respective agencies made decisions and announcements that Council was unaware of and that Council was not resourced or equipped to implement. This left Council unable to react to the best of its ability. It also fuelled mounting anger in the community when there was an expectation for these decisions and announcements to be implemented immediately.

There was a wide array of agencies providing messages to the community from their respective departments but it appeared that at times this was not coordinated or consistent in its approach. Council believes that this created confusion, fear, anger and a lack of trust within the community.

We note that in the early stages of the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire there was a significant lack of health information provided to the community regarding the smoke and ash falling over the town of Morwell. Council had raised some concerns with the types and quantity of air quality monitoring undertaken by the Environmental Protection Committee in February 2013. These concerns were further highlighted during the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire. Council is supportive of a continued regime of air monitoring throughout the Latrobe Valley. This will ensure the community is kept well informed about the quality of the air noting that there are open brown coal mines in the region.

Council is pleased to see a long term health study has now been confirmed by the Victorian Government and is keen to see this progressed and released to the public in due course

### **Clean Up and Recovery**

The unique nature of this emergency event saw elements of the recovery and response phase occurring at the same time. Again, this led to confusion of the role and responsibility of the Council that is continuing at the time of writing this submission.

Some key examples of this include the provision of clean up kits to the community. During the response a Clean-up sub-committee was established to coordinate the clean-up program and implement the decisions made by the Victorian Government. Membership of this committee included state government and Latrobe City Council representatives and was chaired by Local Government Victoria.

Prior to the creation of the sub-committee, officers from Local Government Victoria and Latrobe City Council met to identify how the community could be assisted to clean their homes and how council assets such as roads and public infrastructure could be cleaned. Homes were visited by agency staff, inspections carried out by contractors and feedback from the door knock was all considered in recommending an appropriate clean up package for the community. These draft plans were submitted to the State for consideration. It became clear that the scope of the clean-up program would not be equivalent to the levels recommended by the sub-committee. With reduced scope and resources, the sub-committee prepared a new plan that essentially identified two target groups: those who had the physical capability to clean their properties (the self-clean category) and those who did not (assisted clean category).

For the self-clean category the committee identified a range of options including loan equipment such as high pressure cleaning equipment (eventually not included), HEPA filtered vacuum cleaners (to ensure all dust particles were contained), laundry and car wash vouchers (identified as required through the door knock undertaken), access to free cleaning products and minor equipment. Ultimately, the recommendation was made by the committee to provide the Morwell residents with clean up kits consisting of buckets, rubber gloves, face masks and goggles. In addition, car wash and laundry vouchers were also made available to the residents of Morwell.

Council is of the opinion that the reduced funding scope for the residential clean up, tasked to Latrobe City Council for delivery has in many cases not met the needs and expectations of the community. Latrobe City Council has consistently received negative feedback from the community regarding the equipment provided.

For the assisted clean up category, the engagement of professional cleaners Council was supportive of the idea generally. However, Council was requested to not provide or undertake actions necessary to procure the services of these companies/businesses prior to the State Government announcement of this program to the community. This led to delays in delivering this service to residents as Council was required to satisfy its own Procurement requirements, undertake OHS and Police checks prior to engaging suitably qualified contractors. Limiting those who qualified for an assisted clean, along with delays in cleaning the homes of those who did qualify resulted in increased frustration and anger from some community members towards Council.

The lack of clarity about what is and was being funded and provided by the State Government has caused resourcing challenges for the Council as well as creating

confusion in the community. As Council is often given the responsibility of implementing the decisions of other agencies (i.e. the cleanup kits), the community has a belief that Council is making decisions on what assistance should be delivered to the community.

**D. Latrobe City Council's requirement for the long term liveability of the towns in the Latrobe Valley, particularly Morwell, to be considered as the priority when planning, remediating and designing existing and future coal mines within Latrobe City.**

Latrobe City Council is concerned about the short, medium and long-term remediation plans that are in place for the brown coal mines generally in the Latrobe Valley. This is not limited to the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine, but also includes the Yallourn and Loy Yang coal mines.

This is particularly relevant for those citizens who reside and work in the area of Morwell south of Commercial Road. It is Council's strong belief that the liveability of the town of Morwell must be prioritised over coal extraction when considering remediation plans and the future plans for the extraction of coal from land in the Latrobe Valley. This includes the consideration of:

- Stabilization of batters and mine walls
- Remediation generally
- Noise and dust reduction; and
- Proximity to existing settlements and residential areas
- Risk of emissions in case of fires

The northern batters of the Hazelwood Mine, the Princes Freeway and private property are in extremely close proximity to one another. Council is very interested and keen to be involved in the future discussion regarding the remediation and coal planning with both the Victorian Government and the respective mine operators to ensure it is well informed when planning the future of the municipality, especially in terms of fire prevention. To date, the Council is not generally part of these discussions. There are a range of areas within Latrobe City that have previously been identified as potential operating brown coal mines that should be reconsidered following this fire event. This includes the area to the west of Traralgon known as Area H. They should be reconsidered as they do not currently prioritize the liveability of the towns in the Latrobe Valley. The creation of a new coal mining pit in area H west of Traralgon, or on the land west of Morwell, would create significant dust and noise issues for those towns, not to mention smoke and ash issues in the event of the fire.

There are significant long term implications for towns in the Latrobe Valley, particularly Morwell, if liveability is not considered as a priority.

## **Conclusion**

Latrobe City Council is supportive of the creation of a Board of Inquiry and its investigation into the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire. Council wishes to contribute in order to reduce the likelihood of a similar event occurring in the future and improving the ability of the emergency agencies to respond to such an event should one occur again.

As set out, Council, is an important part of emergency and particularly fire prevention but is not a fire management agency. It is not resourced, equipped or skilled to do so. The firefighters, who are skilled and trained in fire events themselves have done a magnificent job throughout the event in controlling and fighting the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire and we think this should not be overlooked.

We believe that there are a number of areas within the systems, communications and clean-up/recovery management of the Hazelwood Brown Coal Mine Fire that could be improved in order to assist the affected members of the community. These include the activities of Council itself, during and after the fire event.

Whilst not set out in detail, the Latrobe City Council has had fears for some time around the general remediation of Brown Coal Mines in the Latrobe Valley. This is not specific to the Hazelwood Mine but is general for each of the respective mines. Morwell in particular is immediately adjacent both the Hazelwood Open Cut and the Yallourn Open Cut and is concerned about the effect these activities are taking on the town itself. Council is very interested in being involved in the planning for the short, medium and long term remediation of the existing mines and the planning for the use of brown coal in the future in order for it to best manage the growth of the municipality.

Overall, the Council would like;

- Greater clarity of the role of all local Council's in Emergency Management (Preparation, Prevention, Response and Recovery) and Fire Prevention efforts;
- Improved overall municipal fire management planning inclusive of each of major industries in the municipality including the owners of the Hazelwood Power Station;
- Improved systems and communication between all agencies involved in emergency response and recovery, with the recognition that recovery starts with response;
- Improved mechanisms of communicating with the community during emergency response and recovery;
- Greater clarity and involvement in coal allocation and mine planning to ensure Council can plan for orderly and safe development of the municipality; and
- Prioritization of the liveability of the town of Morwell, and the broader Latrobe City towns, over the extraction of brown coal when creating

remediation plans for existing mines and allocating any future mining licenses.

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
12 MAY 2014 (SM4100)**

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at <time>.

I certify that these minutes have been confirmed.

Mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_