

# PLANNING FOR A BETTER FUTURE IN THE LATROBE VALLEY

The Victorian Government's  
Implementation Plan following  
the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

# FOREWORD FROM VICTORIAN PREMIER



The Hazelwood Mine Fire devastated the Latrobe Valley. Burning for 45 days over February and March 2014, it hit communities hard and left residents physically and emotionally exhausted.

While the subsequent Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry ('the Inquiry') identified some of the shortcomings in the state's response, it wasn't enough.

Local residents continued to have concerns about issues not fully addressed in the initial Inquiry.

Hearing these concerns, we committed to reopen the Inquiry. And that's exactly what we did in May 2015. The reopened Inquiry was asked to investigate:

- whether the Hazelwood Mine Fire led to increased deaths
- how to improve the health of the Latrobe Valley community
- options for rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley coal mines.

Following its investigations, the Inquiry provided recommendations on how we can ensure the same mistakes are not made again.

Our response delivers on every one of those recommendations. It provides a clear plan to increase local health services, improve air quality monitoring and strengthen the regulation of the Latrobe Valley coal mines. In total, we are investing more than \$80 million to respond to the Hazelwood Mine Fire.

Over the next three years, we will:

- appoint a Latrobe Health Advocate to provide a trusted local voice
- establish a Latrobe Health Assembly, bringing together community and health services to identify health issues and develop local solutions
- increase funding for health services so local families get the help they deserve
- increase ambient air quality monitoring to give communities the information they need
- begin planning for rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley coal mines
- increase the mine rehabilitation bonds so the community isn't left paying the bill when mines close
- establish a Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner to oversee this rehabilitation work.

All of this will happen in genuine partnership with local communities. It's what the residents of the Latrobe Valley deserve, and we're getting it done.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Dan Andrews', written over a dark teal background.

**The Honourable Daniel Andrews MP**  
**Premier of Victoria**

# COMMUNITY IS KEY

We don't want to tell you what we think is best for you, we want to listen to what you need

It is the people who live and work together, who grow and share in each other's futures, that give the Latrobe Valley its power. For any change to be successful, we need the community to be central in shaping our response.

We don't want to tell you what we think is best for you, we want to listen to what you need.

This can only be achieved through a diversity of voices, passionate debate and a united commitment to improving the Latrobe Valley.

We want to plan, adapt and learn together so that our response delivers change for those who need it most. Only then can we start to build a stronger, healthier community for generations to come.

## OUR COMMITMENT FOR CHANGE

In the Government's first budget, \$30 million was delivered to implement all recommendations of the 2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry.

But the first inquiry did not address all the communities' questions, leaving many at the very centre of the disaster feeling their voices had not been heard. This is why the Inquiry was reopened – to ensure local residents had the answers they needed.

The findings of the Inquiry Reports highlight the urgent need to address both the immediate health impacts of the mine fire as well as the long-term disadvantages faced by those living in the Latrobe Valley.

We know that action has been a long time coming and that our response is the first step of many in building a brighter future for the people of the Latrobe Valley.

### THE REPORT FINDINGS

- The mine fire likely contributed to an increase in deaths.
- More needs to be done to plan for and progress mine rehabilitation.
- There is a strong causal relationship between social disadvantage in the Latrobe Valley and the poor health uncovered by the mine fire.
- More needs to be done to ensure greater community engagement, advocacy and innovation in health service delivery.

### We are investing in the Valley's future

We know change will not be possible without major ongoing investment in the Latrobe Valley.

The Government has committed more than \$80 million to implement all of the Inquiry's recommendations, including \$30 million in the Victorian Budget 2015-16 and \$50 million in 2016-17.

# A PLAN FOR RENEWAL

WE WILL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY TO PLAN FOR AND DELIVER LONG LASTING IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS FIVE KEY AREAS.

## 1. A HEALTHY LATROBE VALLEY

We need to work together to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage and create a healthier and more productive environment for the people of the Latrobe Valley.

We want to hear from the community – we want you to have a voice in determining the types of services you need.

The Latrobe Valley will be designated Australia's first Health Zone

We want to improve community health by taking action to reduce smoking, improve nutrition, increase physical activity, lower harmful use of alcohol and drugs, improve mental health support and prevent family violence. We want to work with schools, employers and with community leaders to build a healthier and more productive place to live.

The Latrobe Valley will be designated Australia's first Health Zone.

The Latrobe Health Assembly will drive health innovation across the zone by bringing together the community with health agencies, and local and state government in an ongoing open conversation. An independent Latrobe Health Advocate will also be appointed to act as a local community voice.

The community will be included at every step in designing and delivering health services and improvement programs that are tailored to the Valley's needs.

## 2. AIR QUALITY AND WELLBEING IN THE LATROBE VALLEY

Working in partnership with local community, we will co-design a permanent air monitoring network of five stations in the Latrobe Valley. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) will work with residents to understand local environmental issues and develop a longer-term air monitoring solution that provides the most relevant information to both the community and the EPA.

## 3. ENGAGED COMMUNITIES ARE SAFE COMMUNITIES

### Air quality during smoke events

Since the mine fire, we have worked with emergency services organisations and experts to improve the way we manage smoke events to make sure the community has the information it needs.

The new State Smoke Framework provides strict guidelines, procedures and tools for emergency services and decision-makers to respond to and communicate with communities during smoke emergencies.

The State Smoke Framework provides the best possible support for the community during extended, complex events and Victoria now leads the nation in the management of and response to smoke events.

We will continue to develop the State Smoke Framework including investing more in predictive tools, so that we can better understand how smoke affects communities.



### Planning for emergencies

A well-informed and engaged community is a safer community.

We are strengthening emergency management planning and will work with community, emergency services and local government to ensure we are better prepared for emergencies.

We will build community leadership and strengthen local networks through the Latrobe Valley Community Engagement and Planning Project. The project will build community resilience by giving the community a voice in emergency management planning, so that local risks are identified and strategies are developed.

We are committed to working in partnership with the three Latrobe Valley coal mines to develop the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy

## 4. BETTER REHABILITATION AND REGULATION

Without successful rehabilitation, we know mine voids may present a real risk to both the public and the local infrastructure of the Latrobe Valley in the coming years. From fires, mine instability, water contamination and environmental damage, the danger posed by mine voids will need to be addressed.

We are committed to working in partnership with the three Latrobe Valley coal mines to develop the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy which will address knowledge gaps relating to mine rehabilitation and guide long term rehabilitation planning for the Latrobe Valley.

We will ensure the community has a voice throughout the development of the strategy so that it represents and addresses the concerns of all those who call the Latrobe Valley home.

We are also increasing the rehabilitation bonds for the Latrobe Valley coal mines, to close the gap between the current bond amount and the estimated rehabilitation liability cost, and modernising the regulatory framework to ensure that the Latrobe Valley coal mine operators manage risks and are held to account for breaches of environmental and public safety.

# INVESTING IN A SAFER AND HEALTHIER LATROBE VALLEY



**\$30 million**

to improve the health of the community



**\$10 million**

to strengthen our emergency management arrangements so we are better prepared to mitigate against, respond to and recover from emergency events



**\$13 million**

to plan for mine rehabilitation and post-mine closure to give residents a safe and stable landform



**\$1 million**

of additional, dedicated funding to improve the way we engage and communicate with the community



**\$12 million**

to increase our capability to undertake air quality monitoring to respond to and manage smoke events



**\$4 million**

to ensure strong, consistent and effective implementation of all programs and reforms, including independent monitoring and reporting



**\$3 million**

to permanently increase ambient air monitoring in the Latrobe Valley



**\$7 million**

to modernise the regulation of the Latrobe Valley coal mines so we continue to ensure a safe and stable mining industry



## CHANGE STARTS TODAY

We promise that these initiatives, programs and reforms, together with the recommendations and affirmations in the Inquiry reports, will significantly transform the health and future of the Latrobe Valley community.

Over the next three years the Latrobe Valley community will:

- have a Latrobe Health Advocate, providing a local trusted voice
- be engaged in identifying health priorities and developing innovative health programs
- be supported in making healthy decisions and developing healthy habits
- have answers from the coal ash residue in roof cavities investigation
- help design a revised permanent air monitoring network, so that local residents' biggest concerns are addressed
- have detailed air quality monitoring data from the monitoring sites
- have a Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner to help plan for the future of the Valley
- have every assurance the Latrobe Valley Coal Mines are managing their risks, including fire
- be invited to engage in local emergency management planning
- benefit from the State Smoke Framework.

## A TIMELINE FOR ACTION

Work is already underway. By the end of this year, the Latrobe Health Assembly will be up and running, and will have commenced the engagement work crucial to understanding community priorities and providing support where it is needed.

The Government will be held to account in our commitment to the people of the Latrobe Valley. Every one of the action items from the Inquiry Reports will be monitored by the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) who will report on progress annually for three years. The IGEM will also report on progress in implementing the recommendations and affirmations that are the responsibility of the Hazelwood mine operator and other non-government parties.

To find out more or get involved please visit:

**[dpc.vic.gov.au/HazelwoodMineFireInquiry](https://dpc.vic.gov.au/HazelwoodMineFireInquiry)**  
**GovernmentResponse**



## More information

Further information about the project can be found on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website via:  
[dpc.vic.gov.au/HazelwoodMineFireInquiryGovernmentResponse](https://dpc.vic.gov.au/HazelwoodMineFireInquiryGovernmentResponse)

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

