



Media release

The Hon Peter Ryan MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for State Development
Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Tuesday 2 September 2014

Victorian Coalition Government supports Hazelwood Mine Fire recommendations

- **Coalition Government supports recommendations directed to it**
- **Coalition Government appoints Neil Comrie AO APM to monitor the implementation of recommendations**
- **A new Latrobe City CFA District will better prepare for and respond to fires**

Deputy Premier Peter Ryan has welcomed the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report, tabled in Parliament today.

Mr Ryan said the report contained 18 recommendations, 12 of which were directed to the Government, with the remaining six applicable to GDF Suez.

“The Victorian Coalition Government supports the 12 recommendations which apply to it, 11 of them in full, and recommendation 5, in principle.

“I would like to thank the Chair of the Board of Inquiry, the Honourable Bernard Teague AO and board members Professor John Catford and Ms Sonia Petering for their dedication and professionalism in conducting the Inquiry,” Mr Ryan said.

“The report praises many aspects of the response to the fire by emergency services, industry and state and local government agencies.

“The report describes the CFA’s effort to suppress and extinguish the fire without interruption to Victoria’s power supply as ‘a tremendous achievement’; says the measures adopted by fire services were ‘generally appropriate’, and says the CFA ‘responded quickly and effectively’ to the Hernes Oak and Driffield fires.

“The report notes that the Coalition Government’s emergency management changes, which came into effect in July, ‘generally functioned well during the Hazelwood mine fire’.

“However, the Government acknowledges that elements of the response could have been implemented more effectively.

Mr Ryan paid tribute to the people of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley more generally.

“The region has been through a terrible time and we are now working with the community and the Latrobe City Council on recovery issues and projects which will further assist in the recovery of the local economy and ensure it is strengthened.

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“Recommendation 5 is supported in principle because, although the Government supports the intent of the recommendation, it needs to consider further how it should be effectively implemented.”

The Inquiry Report criticised aspects of the State’s approach to mine regulation. Mr Ryan said that this criticism is the result of changes to regulation legislated in 2008 under the previous Labor Government.

“The Government is working to strengthen co-operation between the relevant regulators,” Mr Ryan said.

“The Government will publish an implementation plan as soon as practicable, no later than during October.”

The Inquiry also affirmed commitments made by the Coalition Government in response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire. These affirmations summarise commitments submitted to the Board of Inquiry in the Government’s second submission.

Government agencies are already undertaking significant work to implement these commitments. Of the 40 commitments made by the Government, some 36 of them have either been implemented in full or are in progress, with the remainder planned for implementation.

“Mr Neil Comrie AO APM, who was Implementation Monitor for the Bushfire Royal Commission and head of the Victorian Floods Review, will oversee the implementation of these recommendations,” Mr Ryan said.

“Mr Comrie will begin in his role after the implementation plan is released in October.

“Furthermore, the Coalition Government will establish a new Latrobe City CFA District to lead and manage fire brigades within the City of Latrobe.

“This will enhance CFA’s ability to work with industry and the community to build its capability and to prevent and respond to fires in the region.

“We undertook as a government to initiate an independent inquiry into events surrounding the Hazelwood Mine Fire. This report is the outcome of that process and we will now act upon it,” Mr Ryan said.

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