



## Community Wellbeing Stream Report

### Volume 2: Community perceptions of the effectiveness of community rebuilding activities

August 2019

**Authors:** Dr Susan Yell, Assoc Prof Michelle Duffy, Dr Sue Whyte, Dr Larissa Walker, Dr Matthew Carroll, Prof Judi Walker

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## Hazelwood Health Study Community Wellbeing Stream

### **Current members:**

Dr Susan Yell, Federation University (Stream Lead)  
Associate Professor Michelle Duffy, University of Newcastle  
Dr Sue Whyte, Research Assistant, Federation University  
Dr Larissa Walker, Research Assistant, Federation University  
Professor Judi Walker, Monash University School of Rural Health  
Dr Matthew Carroll, Monash University School of Rural Health  
Professor Darryl Maybery, Monash University School of Rural Health

### **Previous members:**

Professor Pamela Wood, Federation University (2015)  
Professor Penny Cash, Federation University (2016)  
Dr Ainsley James, Federation University (2016-2017)

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### List of Acronyms

CBEM	Community-Based Emergency Management
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CHO	Chief Health Officer
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
EPA	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
HHS	Hazelwood Health Study
HMFI	Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry
MNH	Morwell Neighbourhood House
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SECV	State Electricity Commission Victoria
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Services
VOTV	Voices of The Valley
VicHealth	The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Aims and objectives

The Hazelwood Health Study (HHS) was established to examine the potential impacts of the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire and associated smoke event. The Community Wellbeing research stream is exploring the impact of the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire on the wellbeing of the communities of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley. The key aims of the Community Wellbeing Stream are to investigate community perceptions of:

1. the impact of the smoke event on community wellbeing,
2. the elements that are important for effective communication during and after the smoke event, and
3. the effectiveness of community rebuilding activities.

This is the second volume of the Community Wellbeing Report 2015–2017, and focuses on the third of these three aims: determining the community perceptions of the effectiveness of community rebuilding activities. The first and second aims were addressed in [Volume 1: \*Community perceptions of the impact of the smoke event on community wellbeing and of the effectiveness of communication during and after the smoke event.\*](#)

In considering community rebuilding activities in the aftermath of the Hazelwood mine fire we needed to address what is meant by the term ‘rebuilding’. As discussed in Volume 1, disaster recovery can be defined as ‘the process of restoring, rebuilding, and reshaping the physical, social, economic, and natural environment through pre-event planning and post-event actions’ (Smith & Wenger 2007: 237). Thus, there is an emphasis in post-disaster literature on rebuilding materials, such as infrastructure, housing and services. However, the Hazelwood mine fire was a very different type of disaster because the physical elements of the community were left intact. Instead, rebuilding was about the recovery of the more intangible qualities of a community such as trust and the strength of social relations.

We drew on a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods to develop an extensive evidence base to determine the impacts on community wellbeing. This was used to form a narrative which incorporates a range of community voices. The data were gathered during Years 1-3 of the HHS (2014 – 2017) and build upon the work carried out by Wood *et al.* (2015) in their Initial Impact Study of the smoke event.

During community consultations for the first Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry (HMFI) it was clear that the community wanted the development of a long-term vision for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley and this was reinforced in the second HMFI:

The Board heard that involving the community in rebuilding pride in the Latrobe Valley, and progressing a vision for the economic future of the Latrobe Valley, is an

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important part of improving the health and wellbeing of the population (Teague *et al.* 2016: 63).

While the focus of the Community Wellbeing Stream in the first three years of the HHS was on providing narrative evidence of the perceived impact of the Hazelwood mine fire smoke event in Morwell and surrounding communities, in line with the passage of time, the focus of Volume 2 is on community perceptions of the effectiveness of community rebuilding activities after the smoke event. The two volumes are intended to be read as a set, so the information on the background to the event, the review of relevant literature, and methodology are provided in the first volume and are not repeated here.

## 1.2 Background

### 1.2.1 The mine fire

This was a complex emergency, as discussed in Volume 1. While there was the initial high risk but relatively short timeframe effect of the preceding Hernes Oak and Driffield bushfires, the resultant mine fire event lasted for over six weeks. The Latrobe Valley communities experienced relentless waves of smoke and ash, along with concern regarding exposure to carbon monoxide and toxic materials associated with the burning of brown coal. This was unlike the experience of a more typical Australian bushfire. Consequently, there is very little background literature or research that examines people’s experiences of such ongoing and persistent events. In addition, the Hazelwood mine fire of 2014 was a disaster that impacted upon an already disadvantaged community (VCOSS 2015).

The following sections provide context for the way the recovery process was experienced and perceived by this community: the historical background related to the privatisation of the power industry in the Latrobe Valley, and the post-fire institutional responses to the disaster. This background is relevant to recovery, in particular, because of the need to acknowledge and take responsibility for the prior events so that the community can then move forward.

### 1.2.2 Historical context: the power industry in the Latrobe Valley

Historically, the economic and social wellbeing of the Latrobe Valley and in particular the town of Morwell have been strongly intertwined with the power industry. The State Electricity Commission (SEC) was formed in 1919 and commenced coal mining in the Latrobe Valley in the 1920’s (Fletcher 2002; Gibson 2001; Rainnie & Paulet 2003). The SEC became the region’s major employer (DEECD 2012), bringing security of employment, housing and services. New mines and power stations were opened from the 1950s through to the 1990s, and with these came the development of ancillary manufacturing and service industries (Cameron & Gibson 2005; Duffy & Whyte 2017).

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However, the decision to privatise the SEC in the 1980s led to significant changes in the Valley. While over 9,000 people – or about one third of the Latrobe Valley’s labour force (DEECD 2012: 22) – were employed by the SEC in the mid-1970s, this had dropped to 1,800 by 2002 (Tomaney & Somerville 2010), which meant that up to 75% of the workforces of some power stations lost their jobs (Cameron & Gibson 2005). This in turn led to the withdrawal of other associated industries and services (Rainnie & Paulet 2003). The Kennett Coalition Government accelerated the privatisation process started by Labor in 1980s, selling the remaining generating plants in 1996 and 1997 (Rainnie & Paulet 2003). In 1996, the Hazelwood power station was sold to International Power, a British company, for \$2.35 billion, and GDF Suez (later Engie) took over International Power in 2010 (Doig 2015). Although there had been plans for a staged closure,<sup>1</sup> the decision was made to close the Hazelwood power station and Morwell mine in March 2017, following Engie’s declaration that the plant was no longer economically viable (Anderson 2017).

Privatisation of the power and coal industry had significant impact on the wellbeing of the Latrobe Valley communities. Prior to privatisation ‘the Latrobe Valley had been accustomed to near full employment and continued growth’ (Gibson & Cameron 2005: 149) but post-privatisation meant unemployment and population decline had become the norm (Duffy & Whyte 2017: 427-428). Further to this, privatisation was perceived by Latrobe Valley communities as beneficial mostly to Melbourne domestic, industrial and commercial consumers while the costs were borne by the people of the Latrobe Valley (Birrell 2001).

The impacts of these ongoing tensions in relations between community, State Government and the coal industry were evident in discussions at community forums held as part of the second HMMFI (2015/2016). As one participant explained to the second inquiry, prior to privatisation the mines and the electricity supply industry provided ‘significant job and apprenticeship opportunities for all members of the community, including those with disabilities and vulnerabilities’ (Teague *et al.* 2016; 85). Yet, since privatisation, in part due to the job losses and in part due to the lack of government intervention and assistance for the community, social and economic disadvantage became entrenched. Morwell remains challenged with high unemployment and social disadvantage, reflected in its position in the lowest decile on the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas Australian index of relative socio-economic disadvantage (Latrobe City Council Submission 2016). This context provides insights into how this community has experienced recovery and how they perceived the efforts to rebuild social capital and trust after the mine fire.

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<sup>1</sup> On 3 November 2016, Engie announced that the entire Hazelwood plant would be closed as of the end of March 2017, giving the workers and local communities only five months’ notice of the closure. ABC News online, 3 November 2016, [www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-03/hazelwood-power-station-in-victoria-to-close/7987018](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-03/hazelwood-power-station-in-victoria-to-close/7987018). Retrieved 20 July 2019.

### 1.2.3 Institutional responses following the event

Institutional responses to the disaster commenced almost immediately afterwards, with the Victorian State Government announcing an inquiry would be held into the Hazelwood mine fire. In late March 2014 community consultations were held, and the scope of the inquiry was determined. These focused on how the fire started and the adequacy and effectiveness of the emergency response. Inquiry hearings commenced in June 2014. The report of the inquiry was released in September 2014 (Teague *et al.* 2014). Following its release there were calls to re-open the inquiry, in order to consider a possible spike in deaths during the smoke event. The inquiry was re-opened the following year (September 2015), with revised terms of inquiry focusing on the mortality rates and mine rehabilitation.

In addition to these inquiries, several other regulatory and legal processes took place or were mooted, and these also formed the context for the recovery and rebuilding processes for this community. In May 2014 the Department of Health conducted community consultations to identify core health concerns, which in turn formed the basis for the request for tender that resulted in the HHS.

In June 2015 a man accused of starting the Hernes Oak fire which later spread into the Hazelwood mine was arrested ('Gippsland man arrested over Hernes Oak fire', *Latrobe Valley Express*, 26/6/25). He faced court in September 2016 ('Hazelwood accused in landmark trial', *Herald Sun*, 21/9/2016). In July 2015 the operator of the Hazelwood mine and power station, GDF Suez, faced the threat of paying a bill of \$18 million for firefighting expenses incurred by the CFA, however this did not proceed ('Hazelwood mine fire: Victorian Government may take legal action over \$18 million firefighting bill', *ABC Gippsland*, 7/7/15). In February 2016 WorkSafe charged GDF Suez with 10 breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 ('Safety charges over mine fire', *Age*, 4/2/16). In March 2016 the EPA charged the mine operators with 12 air pollution offences ('Hazelwood charged: The station's operators have been hit with another round of charges, this time by the EPA', *Latrobe Valley Express*, 17/3/16).

These events formed the backdrop to other recovery initiatives and processes. Reporting of these events also demonstrated to the community the steps being taken by authorities to ensure those who played a part in the complex causes of the disaster, or in failures to properly address its consequences, were being held to account. As noted above, this is important for the community to be able to move forward.

## 1.3 Structure of Volume Two

Section 2 presents the findings of our analysis of the data collected during the first three years of the study. The methods used to collect this data, including sources, collection

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processes and analysis techniques, are outlined in Volume 1, Section 4. In brief, the current analysis draws on data from stakeholder interviews, media and social media, and the participatory action research (PAR) project carried out in Year 3 (2017).

In Section 2.2 we present analysis of news stories (TV, radio, print) and social media posts between 2014 and 2017. These stories and posts formed the media environment from which the community drew information and narratives regarding their experiences. Awareness of this media ecology (Postman 2000) is important to understand the impact of these narratives of disaster and recovery on community responses. A thematic analysis of what was communicated by these different media tracks the shifts in concerns and focus of the community, particularly in response to such things as HMFI findings or the release of HHS findings. Our analysis suggests that understanding the different roles of social and mainstream media may offer important insights into the role of communication during the recovery process.

Section 2.3 discusses the importance of understanding the pre-existing strengths and vulnerabilities of this community in formulating strategies for recovery. It outlines some of the divisions and complexities which have shaped the community's response to this disaster and its ongoing recovery.

Section 2.4 focuses on the perceptions held within the community of a lack of emergency management planning. Interviews conducted with stakeholders in 2015 and 2017 expressed frustration with the apparent slowness of devising an emergency management plan, which they viewed as hampered by a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities exacerbated by an apparent lack of community engagement and capacity building.

Section 2.5 presents our findings on community recovery and rebuilding activities. We discuss the complex space for community recovery given the number of institutions and agencies working in the Latrobe Valley that were focused on transition and revitalisation opportunities, which led many to the perception that there were no recovery activities associated with the Hazelwood mine fire. Community recovery was impacted by the community's perceptions of the lack of an adequate response by authorities to the disaster. This section focuses on the impact that a loss of trust and community anger has on recovery, and the importance of rebuilding relations of trust to the recovery process. It also presents two case studies showing how partnerships between community groups and government agencies can be crucial to the rebuilding process.

Section 2.6 is focused on the participatory action research project, *Our Hopes for the Future of Morwell*, a photographic exhibition that provided an opportunity for members of the Morwell community to have their concerns, hopes and dreams shared and heard. This approach arose out of engagement between community members and the HHS Community Wellbeing team, who agreed this was an appropriate way to work through and express ideas about recovery in Morwell. Our analysis of the images shows that community members chose objects which epitomise for them how diverse forms of capital – social,

cultural, and produced (economic) – are community assets which can contribute to a brighter future for Morwell.

Section 3 provides a summary of key findings that provide insights into the recovery process and the effectiveness of community rebuilding. Included in this section is an outline of their implications for future planning.

## 2 Findings on community recovery and rebuilding

### 2.1 Overview

This section presents the findings of our analysis of the data described in Volume 1, Section 4. It draws on data from stakeholder interviews, media and social media, and the PAR project carried out in Year 3 (2017).

First, we analyse the media and social media attention given to Hazelwood mine fire related events which unfolded after the mine fire. Second, we outline the vulnerabilities that need to be taken into account in determining the factors impacting on the effectiveness of rebuilding activities. Third, we present stakeholder accounts and perceptions regarding community recovery and rebuilding activities, and finally we discuss the PAR project which encapsulated some of the community's hopes and dreams for the future, looking beyond recovery.

### 2.2 Media ecology of the Latrobe Valley during the recovery period

The Hazelwood mine fire was declared safe on 25 March 2014 (although hot spots within the mine continued), however, the smoke event set in train a number of subsequent events over the following years. This meant that the event and its consequences continued to be discussed in the news and social media over the period of data collection (which ended on 30 September 2017). The access to and use of media and social media formed the media ecology for the Latrobe Valley communities, providing a repertoire of narratives and meanings with which to make sense of their experiences. It also provided a record of what was occurring during the recovery process. As Postman (2000) argues, a media ecology contributes to shaping the experiences, understanding and meanings which the public derive from the world, and the ways they can interact within it.

This section provides a narrative analysis of data gathered from media and social media.. Collection of news items from local and state-based media (local and state ABC, local television news, and the local Latrobe Valley Express newspaper) was undertaken as detailed in the methodology (Vol 1 Section 4). Social media data was also collected from the Voices of the Valley (VOTV) Facebook page, which continued to focus predominantly on matters relating to the Hazelwood mine fire and its impacts in the months and years after the mine fire (while the other two Facebook groups selected for this study did not, or did not remain active). A summary of the content of this data is provided in Appendix 1.

The news stories documented the events and issues which were occurring in the months and years after the mine fire (noted in the Introduction, above), and formed the media ecology which the residents of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley were exposed to during this

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time. The mine fire and its impacts thus continued to be written, spoken and (by extension) thought about for an extended period, during which a range of recovery activities took place (discussed below in Section 2.5).

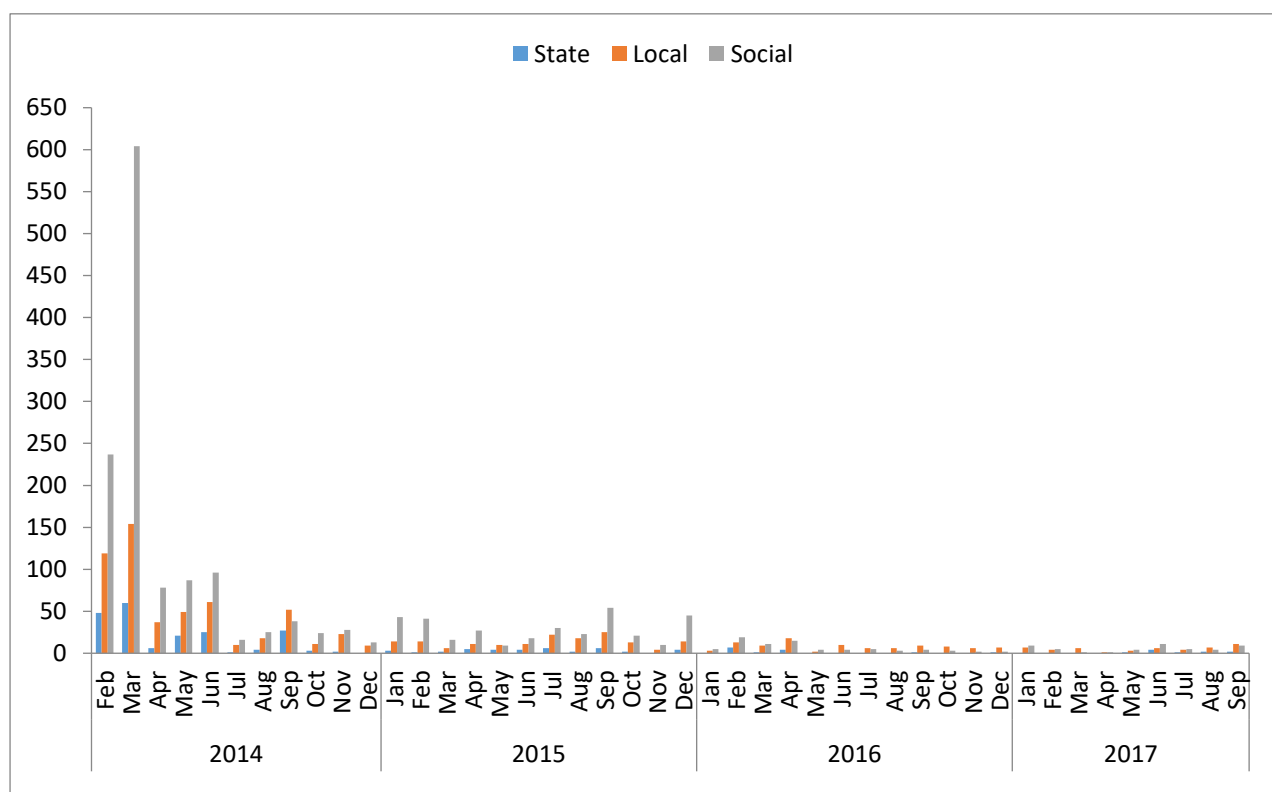


Figure 2.1 Number of mine fire related media and social media articles and posts, 2014-2017

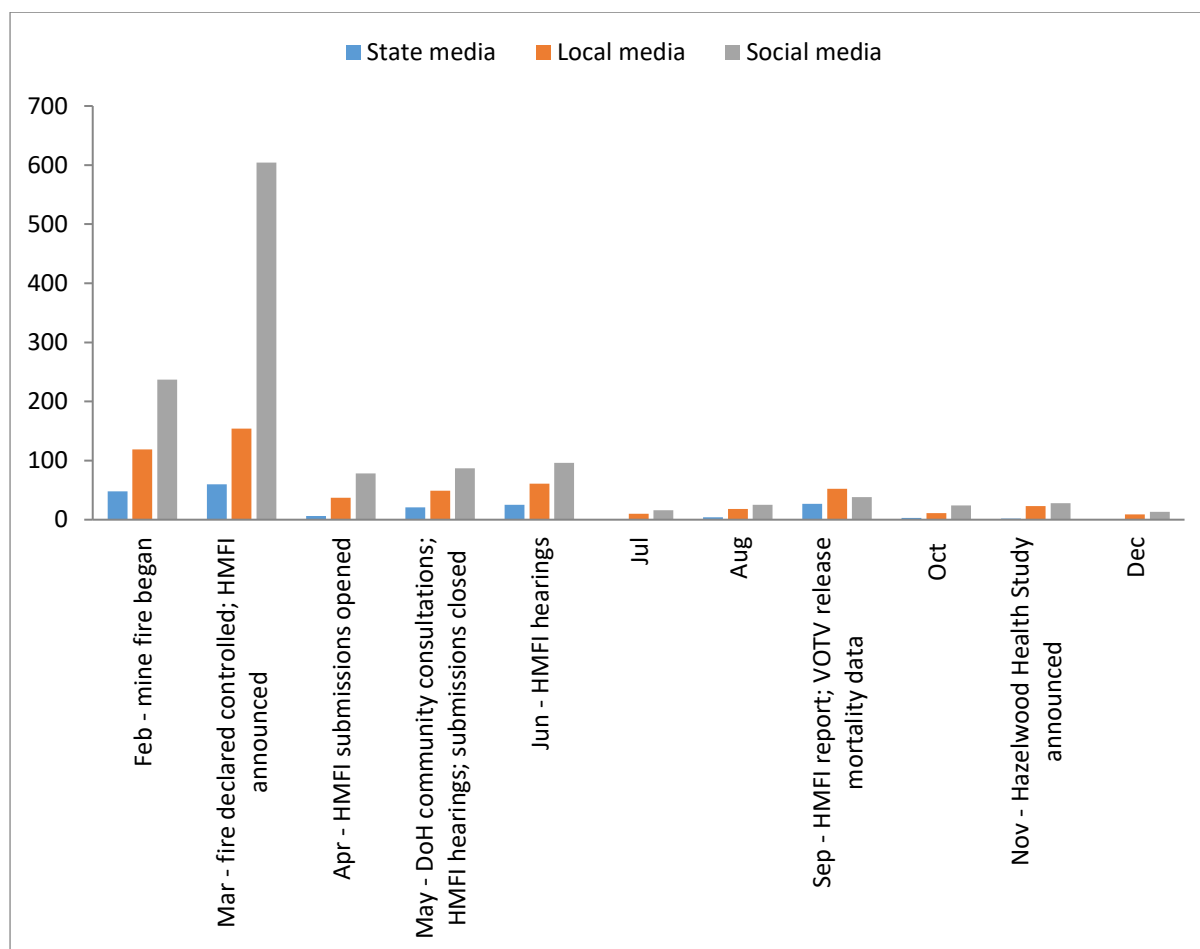
### 2.2.1 Media and social media narratives and concerns

As Figure 2.1 shows, discussion of the mine fire was at its peak during the event (February and March 2014). After the mine fire, there was a substantial drop in reporting of the event in both mainstream media and social media. A comparison of monthly rates in April (several weeks after the fire) and December (approximately 8 months after the fire) clearly demonstrates this change (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Monthly totals of items in news and social media after the fire

Month	News articles	Social media posts
April 2014	43	77
December 2014	9	13

What is important to note is that between April and December 2014 monthly rates of social media posts decreased to approximately one sixth of the initial output, compared to that of the news media, which dropped by slightly less (approximately one fifth) of its initial news reporting.



**Figure 2.2 Number of mine fire related media and social media articles and posts, 2014**

Figure 2.2 shows rates of reports/posts in media and social media during 2014, and highlights the core events prompting some of these responses (see Appendix 1 for more detail of the content of these reports and posts). Immediately after the mine fire was declared extinguished, media articles related to the event were predominantly reporting on the HMFIs and maintained a strong focus on the health impacts of the smoke event. The media reported on the community consultations being held in the lead-up to the commencement of the HMFIs in June, and on its proposed scope, and that a Health Study was being mooted. The HMFIs hearings were reported, exposing topics and issues such as community mistrust, the CHO defending advice given to residents, GDF Suez baulking at taking responsibility for the firefighting costs, mine rehabilitation, the lack of health information about the fire’s impacts, firefighters’ exposure to carbon monoxide, and the cause of the Hernes Oak fire. Later in the year the media reported on the publication of the HMFIs report, and noted its criticisms of authorities and GDF Suez and its praise for Latrobe City Council. Media attention was also focused on calls to investigate a possible spike in deaths during the Hazelwood mine fire, an issue which VOTV brought to public attention

through their report on death rates. This report was rejected by the State Government, but led to calls to re-open the HMFI (pledged by the Labor Opposition and supported by VOTV). The suggestion to make the Latrobe Valley a health conservation or health improvement area was also reported at this time. The funding for the Hazelwood Health Study was announced in November but received limited media attention.

Analysis of the content of social media posts, the frequency of which is depicted in grey in Figure 2.2 above, shows that many of the same issues were being discussed in the social media space (see Appendix 1 for details of the topics discussed). In particular, the HMFI hearings were closely followed on the VOTV Facebook page. Relief and a sense of vindication were expressed as the HMFI heard evidence of lack of health advice, and poor handling of communication:

It is a relief that the truth is finally emerging, thanks to the Inquiry into the Hazelwood Mine Fire. At last there is recognition that what the residents knew they were experiencing was not some figment of their overactive imaginations. The smoke was toxic. Everyone who breathed it knew that. Their bodies knew that. Everyone living in the Valley during the Hazelwood Mine Fire knew their bodies needed to be somewhere else. But the Health Authorities let the community down, confused them, messed with their minds and perceptions (post to VOTV, 5/6/14).

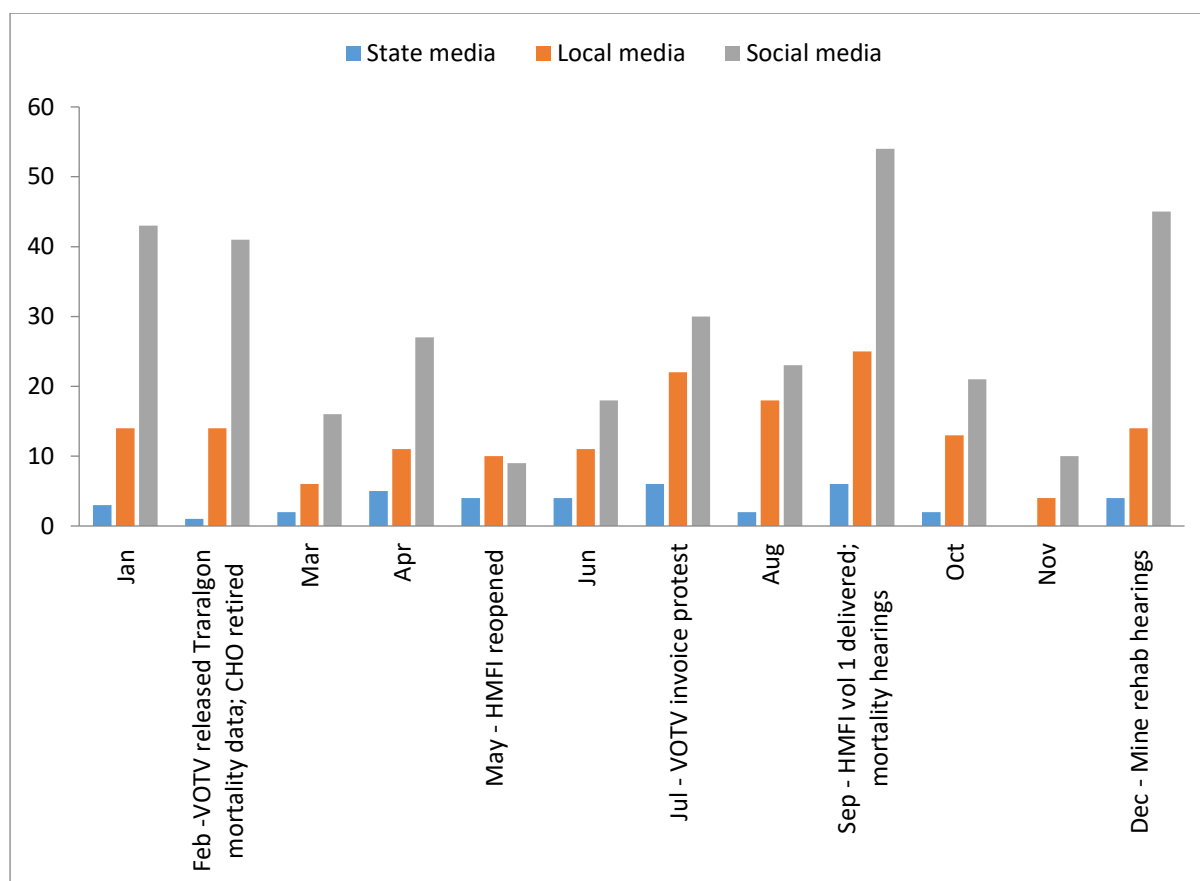
Thematic analysis of the sample of social media posts on the VOTV Facebook page for this period shows that negative feelings of mistrust of authority (especially relating to the claim that there would be no long-term health impacts, and to the clean-up effort), anger, distress, suspicion and a sense of betrayal and abandonment were still being expressed over the events related to the mine fire. There was also a sense that lessons could have been learned from the practices of the past in relation to fighting the fire, expressed in this post that included a link to archival video footage;

A brilliant video about preparing the Morwell open cut for a mine fire. There were strict rules and training in those days (post to VOTV, 7/6/14).

VOTV used social media during this period to draw media attention to community concerns, making calls for residents to participate in media interviews. It was also used to comment on, and call for, action on the death data compiled by this group.

Figure 2.3 shows that in 2015 media and social media attention to the mine fire continued, though at a considerably reduced rate (down from the peak of 604 posts in March 2014). There were peaks of media and social media activity in January, February, July, September and December.

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**Figure 2.3 Number of mine fire related media and social media articles and posts, 2015**

The thematic analysis of media coverage in 2015 shows there was a shift towards various aspects of the recovery process, although still with a health focus (including a high-profile story of a firefighter who claimed to have developed cancer as a result of fighting the mine fire). This marks a key shift in the discourse during the recovery process. Other prominent issues were the mine rehabilitation, court action to recover mine fire costs, the re-opening of the HMFI, and its finding that the Health Department ‘misled [the Latrobe Valley] community’ in denying there had been an increase in death rates (*Latrobe Valley Express*, 10/12/15). February 2015 saw the first anniversary of the mine fire, which was reported in the local media. Also making the news were Latrobe City Council’s call for funds to support the recovery process, calls for better mine rehabilitation, and discussion of Morwell’s ‘road to recovery’ (*Latrobe Valley Express*, 9/2/15). There was coverage of GDF Suez’s refusal to pay the \$18 million firefighting bill, and the VOTV rally at their offices protesting this refusal. The media covered stories of the Health Minister promising change and speaking of rebuilding trust, the HMFI hearings regarding mortality rates, the progress of the HHS, and the CFA’s court action to recover firefighting costs. The mainstream media also reported on the HMFI finding that the fire probably did increase mortality rates, issues with the mine rehabilitation, and the Health Department’s poor advice to the community during the fire and smoke event.

While a number of these issues were also being picked up and commented on (e.g. through links to news items) on the VOTV Facebook page, the agenda and topics in the social media space were also diverging, with evidence that a more forward-looking and pro-active stance was being adopted by this group and by the members of the broader community posting on this page:

If we could dream & have anything we want for Latrobe Valley. What kind of future do we want for Latrobe Valley? (VOTV post 22/2/15).

While some of the emotions and distress that were being expressed in 2014 were still evident in 2015 on this page, such as anger and mistrust of authorities, more positive attitudes were also being expressed, including that the community felt vindicated by the HMFI conclusions regarding the increase in mortality rates (post 9/12/15) and by the Health Minister's acknowledgement that there should have been an evacuation plan (post 11/12/15). As noted in Volume 1, the empowerment of community members through finding a public voice was a key element in the community's experience of, and response to, the fire, and this continued to be an emphasis throughout 2015. There were various calls and opportunities on the Facebook page for community members to speak out and have a public voice, whether for media interviews regarding the health impacts of the mine fire, to urge people to attend HHS events, to put in submissions to the second HMFI, to participate in a documentary being made about the mine fire, or to express what was important to them in order to improve the health of the Latrobe Valley:

What is important to you in regard to short, medium and long term measures to improve the health of the Latrobe Valley communities having regard to any health impacts identified by the Board as being associated with the Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire; what needs to be done?' (VOTV post 10/9/15).

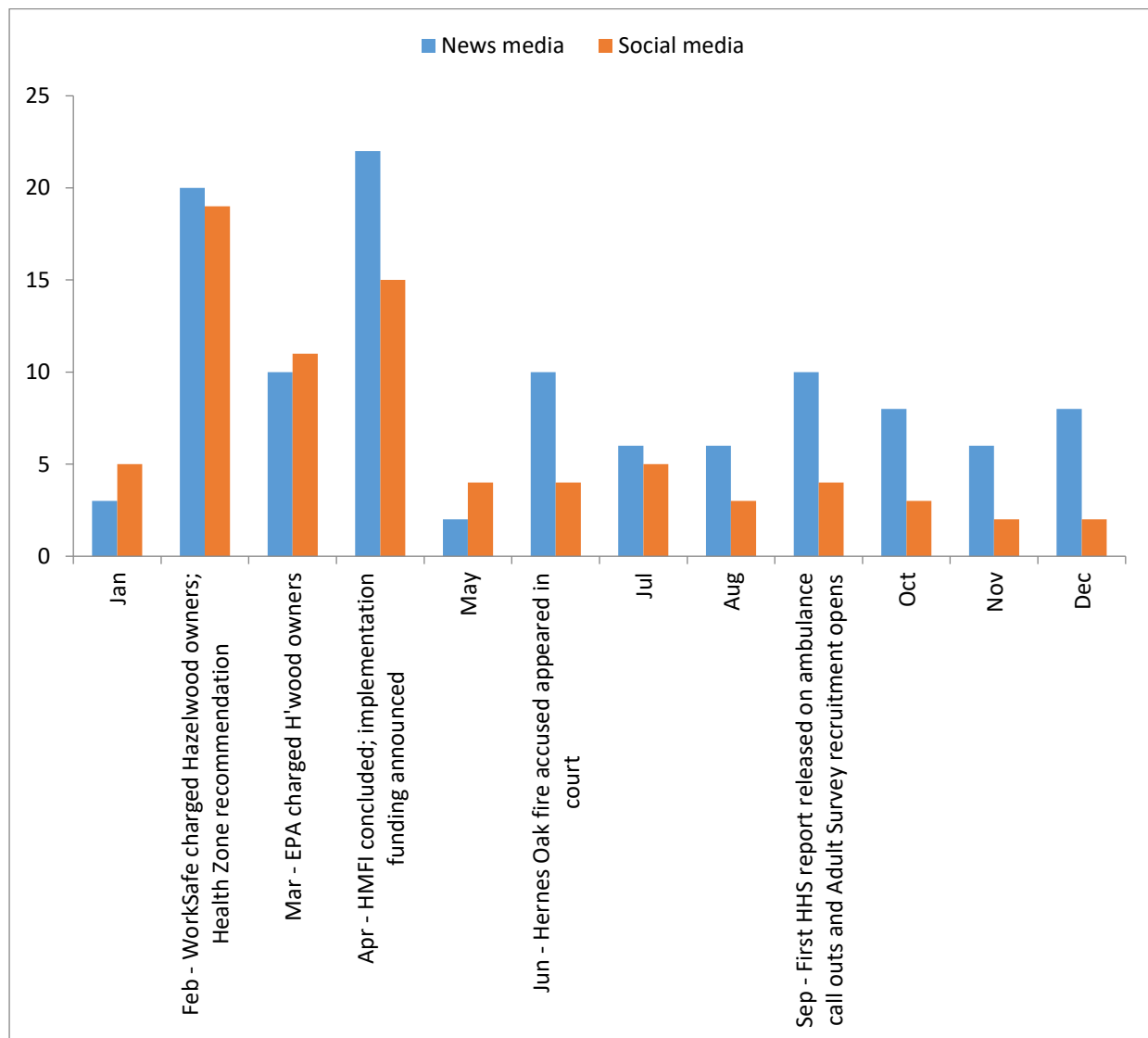
A new agenda concerning the transition away from a dependence on coal-fired power also emerged as a discussion topic on this page from February 2015 onward, with a public forum advertised on the topic of 'A Just Transition':

One year on from the Hazelwood mine fire disaster, there are growing calls to diversify the local economy, and to create new industries and employment opportunities that pose less health risks to residents. The public forum, 'A Just Transition for the Latrobe Valley?', will examine the opportunities and barriers that the Latrobe Valley community faces in ensuring ongoing livelihoods and a healthy environment (VOTV post 19/2/15).

Criticisms of authorities continued to be noted, accompanied by links to news reports and the HMFI report's conclusions.



In 2016 media and social media activity continued to decrease compared to previous years. It is significant that in nine out of the twelve months, the monthly totals of news items slightly outnumbered social media posts (see Figure 2.4). This could be interpreted as suggesting that the need to engage with and discuss mine fire-related topics was lessening among the community, or at least among the members of this Facebook group (despite the fact that news stories were still keeping this in the public eye), or that they had begun actively pursuing a new focus.

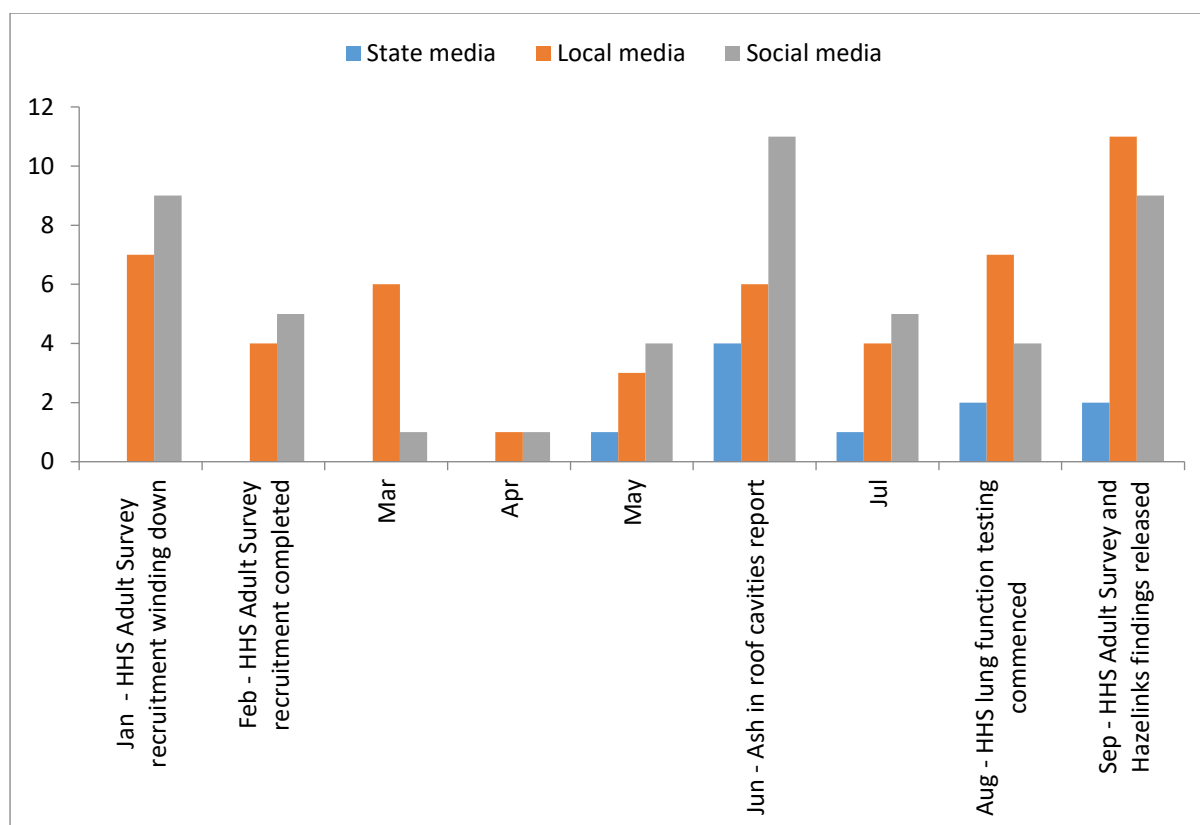


**Figure 2.4 Number of mine fire related media and social media articles and posts, 2016**

In 2016 the news media coverage predominantly dealt with institutional responses to the Hazelwood mine fire, including legal action by WorkSafe and the EPA, and the implementation of the HMFI recommendations. News items covered the release of the

implementation plan, the allocation of funding to create the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone, the setting up of the Latrobe Health Assembly (by October 2016), and the commencement of mine rehabilitation works at the Hazelwood mine. A government study testing roof cavity dust and coal ash in Morwell was also reported, along with community concerns regarding the coal ash and its possible health impacts. Local media reported calls for people to tell their story for a documentary being made on the HMFIs titled ‘Our Power’ (‘Help wanted to tell your story’, *Latrobe Valley Express*, 14/4/16). Questions regarding the scope of the HHS were reported, and in September there were calls for participants in the study’s Adult Survey. In addition, there were two major stories: the speculation around Hazelwood mine and power station closing in early 2017, and a man in court facing arson charges over one of the fires that spread into the mine and led to the smoke event.

Social media posts largely reflected the content of news reporting, with posts relating to the legal action by WorkSafe and EPA, the implementation of the special health innovation zone for the Latrobe Valley, the roof cavity dust study and the Hazelwood mine fire arson charge. The second anniversary of the mine fire was noted, and posts expressed recognition of VOTV’s work, with one post stating that thanks to VOTV ‘we are no longer voiceless and passive’ (9/2/16). Alongside recognition of positive health initiatives such as the Health Innovation Zone, some posts still expressed health concerns and fears. Some posts included links to news items about smoke or air pollution and related health conditions such as heart attacks, strokes and lung conditions. Community members were still looking for answers regarding the health impacts of the mine fire, with the first results of the HHS not yet released. The VOTV Facebook page also noted the group’s participation in (and success in gaining funding from) the VicHealth Community Challenge, a program designed to assist community-driven initiatives to generate more jobs in the region (VicHealth 2017). This was a further development of the group’s emerging interest in sustainable futures for the Latrobe Valley (discussed in more detail below, Section 3.5.6).



**Figure 2.5 Number of mine fire related media and social media articles and posts, 2017**

As shown in Figure 2.5, 2017 showed a further decline in news attention and social media activity related to the mine fire, with peaks of just 11 social media posts in June, and 13 news articles in September (compared to peaks of 19 posts and 22 articles in the previous year). News items covered in the peak months (January, June and September) included a proposed overhaul of the EPA after the Hazelwood mine fire, a further call to contribute stories to the ‘Our Power’ documentary, the mine rehabilitation cost blowout and GDF Suez’s ‘not guilty’ plea in response to the WorkSafe charges. In the second half of the year, mine fire-related news mainly focused on release of HHS results; the Early Life Follow-up (ELF) study, the Schools study, the Adult Survey, and Hazelinks analyses of health service use data, with multiple associations between exposure and initial health and wellbeing outcomes reported. (For more detail see Appendix 1.)

On the VOTV Facebook page, the ash in roof cavity problem continued to be discussed, and members were advised of the preliminary results of the government-commissioned study as publicised at DHHS community forums. There were posts praising community members for their impact on the HMFI and the subsequent ‘environmental overhaul’. There were links to a news item on the WorkSafe charges and court hearing. The HHS findings were linked to and commented on, and the HHS Community Engagement session held in September was publicised. In 2017 then, both health topics and the environmental impacts of the fire were in focus.

### 2.2.2 Summary

The events and issues documented by the news media coverage from the end of March 2014 until the end of data collection in September 2017 show that the community experienced a series of unfolding consequences from the Hazelwood mine fire, many of which were still ongoing. The HMFI was held in 2014 and then reopened the following year to address additional concerns such as death rates and mine rehabilitation. Legal action against the operators was pursued through various channels (WorkSafe and the EPA), which kept the issue of culpability for the smoke event on the public agenda. Implementation of the HMFI's recommendations led to a series of initiatives being rolled out in the Latrobe Valley: the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone, the Health Assembly and the Latrobe Health Advocate (not yet appointed in the period under analysis). Finally, the release of results from the HHS started in 2016 and became more frequent in 2017. Throughout the period under analysis, while the number and frequency of news stories related to the mine fire diminished over time, fresh issues emerged and were reported, leading to bursts of coverage every few months, and these in turn were reflected and linked to in social media discussions.

The social media analysis indicates that there were three intersecting shifts in the way community members were making sense of the event over the post-fire period. The first relates to the expression of negative emotions such as fear, anger, mistrust and health concerns. While health concerns continued to be a theme throughout the analysis period, they did not dominate posts, as they did during and immediately after the mine fire. While criticisms of the actions of government departments and the mine operators were a topic throughout the analysis period, as legal action was initiated and government funding was secured for new initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of the Latrobe Valley, we see a sense of vindication being articulated via the Facebook page.

Secondly, there was a shift of focus on the VOTV Facebook page, consistent with a re-orientation of the group's direction, which became more proactive, more concerned with envisioning a better future, and directed towards broader initiatives which might revitalise the economic and social fabric of the Latrobe Valley community (exemplified by their participation in the VicHealth Challenge).

Thirdly, there was a shift in the balance between the relative proportions of news media and social media, so that the news media items began more regularly to outnumber social media items from 2016 onward. At the same time, posts in social media were more frequently linked to mainstream news items. This indicates that social media was no longer serving the function that it served during and immediately after the mine fire, which was to express and draw attention to the community's concerns and experiences in ways that were

not being reflected or reported in mainstream media, or were given insufficient attention. At this point, the mainstream institutions of society, such as government, statutory authorities, the mainstream media and the legal system, were taking responsibility for addressing those issues first articulated by the community on social media and more formally through submissions to the HMFI. This in turn removed the impetus and ‘oxygen’ behind much of the previous social media attention to those issues. The role of ‘watchdog’ over public accountability of organisations had shifted from the community-based space of social media, back to the public sphere of mainstream media. This marked a significant change in the media ecology and a further development in the recovery process.

As discussed in the literature review (Volume 1, Section 3.6), recovery is complex, multidimensional and non-linear, and often lacks a clear endpoint. Recovery is associated with rebuilding efforts, but it is not always clear what is being rebuilt. The impact of the Hazelwood mine fire on the Latrobe Valley was complicated by pre-existing social inequities and vulnerabilities (as discussed in Section 3.1). The above media and social media analysis suggest that although the narrative of recovery is complicated, some progress has been made towards recovery, and that this recovery is more than a return to something that may or may not have served the community well in the past.

The following sections move on from the analysis of the media ecology, to present the interview and focus group findings on stakeholder perceptions of the factors affecting the recovery process, including key quotes from the research participants.

### 2.3 Pre-existing vulnerabilities

Unpacking the recovery and rebuilding process after the mine fire requires an understanding of the historical basis for the economic and social fabric of the Latrobe Valley, in particular its long-standing relationship to the mines, as outlined in the Introduction (Section 1). The former economic reliance of the Valley on the coal mining and power industry helps to explain some of the strengths but also the pre-existing vulnerabilities which have shaped the community’s relationship to government and their recovery process. The existing strengths, capacities and vulnerabilities within a community prior to the disaster will either exacerbate or ameliorate the impact of the disaster and the community’s ability to recover (Norris *et al.* 2008; Thornley *et al.* 2015). Studies of post-disaster responses have found that the strength of the relationship between government and other agencies and the community is crucial for recovery (Paton *et al.* 2014). In addition, the involvement of the community in decision-making about disaster preparation and recovery plans is essential for effective recovery from a disaster (Thornley *et al.* 2015). A detailed discussion of the literature on disaster and recovery was provided in Volume 1, Section 3.

Perceptions of the Latrobe Valley as being characterised by ‘an overarching sense of despair’ (Cameron & Gibson 2005: 274) continue in the thoughts of some members of the community who had witnessed these earlier changes, and who spoke of apparent neglect during the mine fire as part of a longer history of disregard for this community, and the perception that the neglect of authorities continues into the present:

I went from a technical career within the power industry to a kind of a HR kind of role, and I was right in the epicentre of that – well, I still call it the holocaust. The stuff that nobody else knew except the people that were in it. Coming into work in the morning and seeing guys slumped over the steering wheel in their car – attempted suicide. Grown men crying in toilet cubicles. People coming over and having a chat because they’re worried, because their wife is going to leave them when they get the payout ... And Morwell I reckon kind of got the biggest hit, in my view... Morwell, yeah, it – the rug got pulled out of its feet (GippsCASA participant, 2015).

For many, the traumatic impact of privatisation has not lessened, and indeed appeared to reflect continuing disregard for the health and wellbeing of Latrobe Valley communities. Participants perceived the confused response to the emergency and apparent abandonment by agencies and government as the latest in a series of mine-related impacts on the Morwell community<sup>2</sup> (VCOSS 2015).

Stakeholder interviews indicated that responses to the 2014 mine fire reflected deep divisions in the intersecting communities that make up Morwell. This was often described in interviews in terms of ‘old’ and ‘new’ Morwell (i.e. those who were part of the SEC’s ‘benign paternalism’ of the post-war period compared to those who were not; Duffy & Whyte 2017: 424). As one participant explained, ‘I think that for as much as we want to refer to Morwell as a whole community I think that there comes this division between people who are associated with the mines and people who aren’t’ (Headspace participant 2015). For those who had been part of the SEC, privatisation generated strong feelings of abandonment by government:

You would have those who survived because of the coalmine and the employment that it’s been able to offer our families. We’ve relocated here to be able to do that – five generations of my family have. So, they’re embedded in that culture of the coalmine, [it] brings us what we needed and we’ve always provided a resource to the rest of the state and we’re proud of that. Then when privatisation came it changed some of that thinking, but what it didn’t do was get rid of what was already intergenerational

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<sup>2</sup> These concurrent events included the closure of the major highway running alongside the mine due to drainage problems within the northern face of the open cut mine following a period of heavy rain in 2011 (Langmore 2013), which also led to cracking in residential properties adjacent to the mine (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, 2012). By 2017, a number of major employers of the region had closed, including the Hazelwood Power Station and the Morwell Mine; Morwell Mill, closed because its timber supplier, Hancock Victorian Plantations, was unable to supply hardwood; and Heyfield Timber Mill, closed because Australian Sustainable Hardwoods could not source the hardwood needed to plant sustainably (Duffy & Whyte 2017).

difficulties or disadvantage or vulnerability that was in that community. (Quantum participant 2015).

As this participant points out, privatisation made evident the inequalities in the Valley in two important ways; first, that intergenerational disadvantage or vulnerability had been somewhat masked by the SEC’s role in the region, and second, the sense of a Latrobe Valley community generated through connections to the SEC was perceived to end with privatisation. The economic and social impact of privatisation was devastating for this region, which came to be described as “The Valley of the Dole”, Australia’s version of a trailer trash community (Proctor 2005: 22). This perception of the region has persisted among many in the Latrobe Valley as well as outside the region, and particularly the younger generation:

As I said earlier, they’ve grown up as a generation of kids whose parents have lost their jobs, the impact of privatisation and so forth, let alone living adjacent to a stinking coal mine, just means that their sense of self and their sense of community is really undermined (VCOSS participant 2015).

Such perceptions are necessary to address if successful recovery is to be achieved;

Look Morwell, in particular, is a community that never travels particularly well at any given point in time, so I think there has to be a context around how the community is travelling as a result of the mine fire because prior to the mine fire they weren’t travelling particularly well. They are down on just about every social indicator and with the economy in the shape it’s in they are getting squeezed further so it’s really hard to sort of delineate whether the mine fire is contributing to that... if you are already down then you get pushed further down or you can’t be pushed any further down, and there are other features of disadvantage like apathy and kind of acceptance of a bad deal from government and being in that kind of victim mode (Latrobe City Council participant 2015).

## 2.4 Perceptions of the lack of future emergency planning

One of the core requirements for this community to recover is that the community has to have confidence that there are plans in place to deal adequately with future events. During and after the mine fire there was a perception in the community that agencies and authorities were not prepared for such an event and did not have an emergency management plan in place. As many in the community argued, the circumstances that led to the mine fire were foreseeable and should have been planned for. This critique of the response was supported by the first HMF (Teague *et al* 2015: 20):

Contrary to suggestions that the Hazelwood mine fire was the ‘perfect storm of events’, all of the factors contributing to the ignition and spread of the fire were foreseeable. Yet it appears they were not foreseen.



As discussed in more detail in Volume 1, the perception held by the community was that the response to the event was inadequate or at best slow, that agencies and authorities were ill-prepared for the event and that there did not seem to be a plan. These perceptions reinforced community feelings of abandonment by government and authorities.

An important factor that may facilitate recovery is for the community to know there is an adequate emergency plan and that the roles and responsibilities for any future emergency are clearly defined. However, what we heard in interviews in 2015 was that there appeared to be a lack of engagement with the community or participation by community members in developing an emergency plan:

There's a lot of talk going on ... But who's actually doing something, I'm not seeing anything change... a lot of good theories, a lot of butcher paper at workshops... there's a lot of writing gone on butcher paper, and someone's typed it up somewhere and it's sitting in a document somewhere, but nothing's actually happened in terms of connecting the community (Community Recovery Committee member 2015).

Those we interviewed in 2015 spoke of the confusion around the development of emergency management plans and the roles of different agencies in this development:

We can see there are still jobs like that that haven't been done. And at one stage EMV were going to do it and then next thing ... they said "Oh we're going to do it", and then they turned around and said "Oh no you're going to do it", and we're saying "Hang on we haven't got the funding for that", and it looks like nobody's got the funding for that, so there's a lot of conversation still to have. But the reality is if we had a bushfire this summer we're going to be back in the same situation, nothing's changed so... we're all starting to think okay there's not enough, there's been a lot of talking, there's not enough action in place... This is 18 months and you're still asking us the same shit and you're still asking us 5 times a week, what are you lot actually doing?" (Community Recovery committee member 2015).

While there was a common perception that not much changed and that there was inadequate community consultation in developing an emergency management plan, there was acknowledgement that the mines are now better protected, with new firefighting infrastructure and procedures. One example of this is that a new CFA District has been convened with direct responsibility for the mines and is appropriately equipped for fighting coal fires.

In 2017 there continued to be a perception that there was no overall emergency plan for a similar future disaster, despite Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) being tasked with the job and having started the process. This view is very much linked to the apparent lack of community engagement and capacity building:

I guess for me it's about investing and resourcing in capacity building of our community ..., I really believe we need an informed community about what the risks are about living here. We all love Morwell, we love Latrobe Valley, but what generally are the risks because, I don't speak to anybody that's not already in that area that



would really understand the risks the area faces, or how to prepare for that. And to me that is part of the recovery, ..., we need to understand our obligation in an emergency and what we can do to help ourselves and what we can't do ... and have an understanding of the risks (Morwell Neighbourhood House participant 2017).

The following comment highlights the need for capacity-building in the community in order to both facilitate community participation in developing an emergency plan and to be able to implement the plan during a possible future emergency:

I still think it's about the capacity building of generally of the community, of the grassroots organisations on the ground. I think stakeholders need a greater understanding of those organisations that are on the ground and their capacity and how they infiltrate into their communities. I don't think we're there with that yet and I don't think we've got the connections made properly yet. I think there's still a bit of push back from the old guard, we've always done it this way and that's everywhere I go. I would say that in every space that there's a reluctance to change (Morwell Neighbourhood House participant 2017).

At the time interviews and focus groups were conducted in 2015, there appeared to be limited community consultation in the development of an emergency management plan along with limited community engagement in devising this plan. Of those interviewed in 2015 most seemed unsure of just who had the responsibility for developing the plan and what the process for developing the plan would be, even though the first Mine Fire Inquiry's recommendations clearly tasked EMV with this responsibility.

There was some debate, even confusion, as to who was responsible for developing an emergency management plan for Morwell, and what roles various organisations and agencies had at the State and local level. More specifically, this confusion lay between EMV and Latrobe City Council. While the Council has undertaken emergency management planning work before, including local level or neighbourhood plans, it was not resourced to undertake the type of response for a complex disaster situation. As one Council participant explained:

We're negotiating for moves in Emergency Management Victoria because recommendation 11 or 12 of the mine fire enquiry, it's about EMV having responsibility for some community emergency action plan in preparation for future events and they're sort of negotiating about where we sit in that space. I think they believe it's probably best led by local government rather than Emergency Management Victoria ... actually that's quite a big program – if you want to do it properly to implement and deliver...we're very aware of committing to deliver this sort of work but not having the resources to do it (Latrobe City Council participant 1 2015).

Many of those interviewed stressed the need to determine who who is responsible for developing the plan, and more specifically who should develop the plan at the community

level. This in turn raised questions about the scale of such a plan; for example, should it be developed for the whole of Morwell or on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood level, and how would this be funded. In 2017, Latrobe City Council believed it was best placed to undertake this work but was and is reluctant to do so unless its role is recognised and it is adequately resourced. However, EMV has argued that it has the capacity and approach to adequately develop a plan for this region:

The approach was to find out about this community by talking to these people so that when the plan is written we can say, hand on heart, that we have a pretty good profile, a pretty good idea of the people for whom we're writing the plan, and we can show that ... So, it's been a very reciprocal, ... good consultative process, not just talk to me and then go away ... So that's a challenge to also get the respect of the community in general, then to say, hey, we are one agency and no we didn't do very well, we really want to do better and we've done this and we've talked to all you chaps (EMV participant 2017).

The process adopted by EMV is a community-based emergency management approach (CBEM), which is focused on ensuring communities and organisations work collaboratively in planning for emergencies. This approach aims to build on local strengths, building relationships, connecting local leaders and networks, and addressing local priorities and challenges (EMV 2016).<sup>3</sup> As EMV states (2016 CBEM: 8) the approach is based on 'collaborative decision making through the development and use of a locally tailored and appropriately facilitated process to plan for the future'. The potential value of a CBEM approach can assist in:

- building a community's capacity for risk identification and management, preparedness and prevention;
- increasing understanding of emergency management processes;
- and greater community buy-in and trust in an emergency management plan (2016 CBEM: 8).

In addition to this community-based approach, Latrobe City Council is considering what opportunities there may be for rethinking the context for emergency planning;

Participant A: We're dealing with it in a way that's different to where it's been done before. We actually want to encapsulate event planning in with a health and wellbeing approach as well.

Participant B: We're focusing on community resilience but from a health and wellbeing perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> However the challenge is to adapt this approach to a community the size of Morwell. Previously the approach has been piloted in small communities that are more likely to be impacted by bushfires than industrial disasters, such as Harrierville in the Victorian Alps.

Participant A: Not from emergency management perspective (Latrobe City Council participants A & B 2015)

This approach originates in the Local Emergency Action Plan (LEAP) that was under discussion with EMV and the CFA prior to the mine fire event. For example, the *Hazelwood Jeeralang Local Emergency Action Plan (2012)*, funded by donations made through the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, was established immediately after the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. The stated aim of the LEAP is:

to identify the things we can do to mitigate risk within our remote rural community and to improve our preparedness for an incident or emergency. Local knowledge about people, history, potential risks, vulnerability, infrastructure and services significantly enhances emergency preparation, response and recovery (Hazelwood Jeeralang Community Association Inc 2012: 4).

Yet, as both Latrobe City Council and Emergency Management Victoria participants explained, given the size of the population in Morwell, this is a significant undertaking requiring strong financial support:

LEAPS – local area action plans – in small communities around here ...they allocated ten thousand dollars for two years to do one. So, if you're looking at a township this size it's a huge job if you want to do it, a pure community led approach... Well it'll cost them if they want it done properly (Latrobe City Council participant 1 2015).

This is, then, a complex space for development of emergency management planning. Yet ensuring that future emergency planning is appropriate for this community is important for community recovery. However, those interviewed reiterated the fundamental need for adequate resourcing in order to achieve this:

We're doing everything to be compliant with what the State requires of us, but our capability if we have another event is still going to be stretched. Because we need to be training more people, we need to be helping the community understand about their role and responsibilities in emergencies as well and how they can prepare and plan. And this isn't a community that's really thinking that much about it, it still can be well the government, someone else needs to sort me out and fix me up and do everything for me...They're [State government] not resourcing us as an organisation to build our capacity and work with the community to build the capacity around that ... the resources you know need to be at fundamental level (Latrobe City Council participant 3 2015).

People's perceptions that there has been little or no work on developing an emergency plan is most likely the result of limited, and late, community participation in its development. It has taken EMV time, in part due to a change in approach towards a community-based collaborative approach, to instigate the process. An EMV staff member only began work in the community in late 2016 and only released a proposal for how to structure the planning

process in Morwell in 2017.<sup>4</sup> The interviews and focus groups represent perceptions at points in time when it was unclear who was responsible and if interviewed again, perceptions may have changed. However, this delay in preparing an emergency management plan may adversely impact upon the already negative perceptions held of government and agencies, and the lack of trust and confidence held by community stakeholders.

## 2.5 Community recovery and rebuilding activities

### 2.5.1 Overview

This section discusses community recovery after the mine fire, and community perceptions of the effectiveness of rebuilding activities. In determining community perceptions of these activities, attention needs to be directed to both official and community-led responses. Here we focus on activities specifically related to addressing community rebuilding and recovery that are broadly categorised in terms of:

- the perceptions of agency and government representatives on the effectiveness of recovery and rebuilding responses;
- the perceptions of the community about official recovery and rebuilding activities; and
- examples of community-generated and community-led rebuilding activities.

As discussed in volume 1 of the Community Wellbeing Report, recovery from a disaster is often defined as ‘the process of restoring, rebuilding, and reshaping the physical, social, economic, and natural environment through pre-event planning and post-event actions’ (Smith & Wenger 2007: 237). Recovery refers to both outcome *and* process at individual and community levels, thus recovery is about both ‘a desired outcome and a process leading to a desired outcome’ (Winkworth 2007: 49). And finally, recovery is complex, ongoing, multidimensional and nonlinear, involving ‘a process of interactions and decision making among a variety of groups and institutions, including households, organisations, businesses, the broader community and society’ (Mileti 1999: 240).

The Community Wellbeing stream’s third research aim was to be addressed by attending recovery and rebuilding activities, and then inviting participants to talk about these activities. Accordingly, in 2015 we prepared an audit of community recovery and rebuilding activities that had occurred (see Appendix 2). However, most activities were one-off events, which made it difficult for a team member to attend and find potential participants. At this same time, there were a number of groups working in the Latrobe Valley as part of broader transition and revitalisation projects that sought to address the social and economic impacts

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing this report it is two years on, and it appears that this process has not progressed further.

of a transition from a carbon economy, such as ReActivate Latrobe Valley ([reactivate.org.au/](http://reactivate.org.au/)). This crowded space meant that there was some confusion as to what activities were part of recovery and rebuilding following the mine fire. Some participants felt that the value of some of these different activities was not clear:

there's things happening, there's – so you've got your sunflowers that make you happy, and things like that, but people sort of believe they need more than things that just make them happy, like sunflowers to walk to and look at ... Morwell's got new signs, they've got planter boxes, and they've got sunflowers, but what is that doing to create jobs, what is that doing to give us a better lifestyle, ... yes it's good that something is happening, but is it what we need at the moment? (VOTV participant 2015).

In the process of conducting interviews more broadly, respondents when asked about community rebuilding or recovery activities would ask, 'what recovery?' or 'define recovery?' or would simply state that there were no such activities (focus group discussion September 2015). What was clear from these initial interviews was that the activities delivered by agency and government groups were not raised by participants in terms of community building, unless that participant was a member of that specific group. For many of our respondents, then, the perception was that there were no official community rebuilding activities

The general perception seemed to be that little recovery work had happened. In addition to the type of recovery events which had been more strategically promoted, comments from our participants suggested that there remained a lack of engagement with the community, particularly at the grass-roots or neighbourhood level as to what sort of activities would be appropriate or useful. As one community organisation representative said:

basically – there's been a lot of money put into Morwell for recovery, but there really hasn't been recovery, you know, which is really sad. The council's had a lot of money, ReActivate has had a lot of money, but there hasn't actually been that real recovery (VOTV participant 2015).

## 2.5.2 Reflections on official recovery and rebuilding responses

As noted in the submission made by the Latrobe City Council to the 2nd Mine Fire Inquiry;

the mine fire event was quite unlike other fire events in that no community assets were lost, no homes were lost and there was little damage to social and community infrastructure ... there has been no 'traditional' resilience work which has presented itself, such as the rebuilding of community halls, re-establishment of community walking tracks and paths (Latrobe City Council 2015/2016).

The uniqueness of the emergency impacted on responses taken by groups such as the Community Recovery Committee, a group more used to working with the aftermath of

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bushfires. Further complicating this period, many of the agencies tasked with assisting in recovery were attempting to do so in a complex space of multiple and overlapping organisational processes. In addition to this, the nature of emergency itself was unusual and changing day by day. It was also taking place within a media ecology in which social media were initially taking the lead over mainstream media, in expressing the community concerns and criticising the emergency response (as discussed in Volume 1 and in Section 2.2 above). The focus of the response, required to address the mine fire’s impacts on the community and environment, needed to quickly shift. As one council participant explained, the usual process in response to a disaster (such as a bushfire) would be that Council would create a community recovery committee which would engage closely with the community:

So normal scenario, events – you’ve got that response phase that the State then hands over to local government and to the municipal recovery manager and the event gets handed over. We develop a committee amongst leaders and people and call for EOI... Their primary role is to advocate for the delivery of the plan which we are then kind of developing and we are doing the engagement around the plan. So, we’d already started ... considering how that engagement [would be done] but then the State never signed over to local government so we were never empowered to do that work... So, I was there waiting for it to happen... I hung in there for about eight weeks before I said ... this is not going to work out – this is not what our community want[s]. (Latrobe City Council participant 2 2015).

The policy framework for emergency management and the roles of different levels of government in Australia are explained in the HHS report *Policy review of the impact of the Hazelwood mine fire on older people: Final report* (Walker, Carroll & Chisholm 2017). However, the important point to note here is that the Hazelwood event presented a unique set of challenges. As Walker *et al.* (2017) note, over the duration of the event, the emergency shifted focus from the initial response to a complex of fires that directly threatened the Morwell community, to an ongoing fire largely restricted to the mine site and threatening state electricity supplies, and finally to an emerging and long-term health threat. This meant that over this period, the roles and responsibilities of government and agencies changed – from a fire event under the control of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) with local coordination to a public health event under the control of the then Department of Health with state-level responsibility taken by the Victorian Chief Health Officer (Walker *et al.* 2017). These changes affected the responses and engagement of the Morwell community (Walker *et al.* 2017), and the subsequent impact on community recovery. One important challenge was dealing with changing lines of responsibility as the disaster progressed:

I was very unhappy with the way our organisation responded and we, oh I guess its fact, that we were involved with the immediate response and working with the agencies and things in the response and in terms of areas of responsibility and emergency management. Because it got all taken over by the State so ... we didn’t have to choose to be in that position, we didn’t advocate for our community. You



know our organisation at that time seemed to be just so close to the State that we were just representing the State rather than ... the interests of our own community (Latrobe City Council participant 3 2015).

As this participant suggests, what needs to be clear in such situations is where leadership and responsibility lies; and in this space of ambiguity the official response seemed to have lost sight of its duty of care for community members.

As noted in Volume 1, lack of clear communication was a major concern for the community, as expressed on social media and at community meetings. This was further complicated by the rapidly changing context of recovery, in which the tasks accorded different agencies also quickly shifted. This had detrimental impacts on agencies attempting to help with the recovery process, as one local government participant noted:

I was involved with working with the CFA when they set up a community advisory group... that was to have representatives of different sectors of the community and some of the known leaders and voices, to get together to provide information back into the CFA, who then had the responsibility for the incident ... So that was working really well. Then it was morphing in to a community recovery committee ... then someone else was brought in to the organisation and placed in a role of community recovery manager ... their role was substantially to organise the clean-up, so all the focus got put on the clean-up ... Then it was suggested that I wasn't needed, I didn't have a role. And so that was my own organisation pulling me out of that (Latrobe City Council participant 3 2015).

As Walker *et al.* (2017) also found, there was confusion about roles and a breakdown in communication during the smoke event, and what constituted appropriate and timely activities and processes for rebuilding and community recovery. Complicating this situation further, as this participant quoted above points out, individuals working in the emergency response or rebuilding activities were often shifted from one role or team to another. This led to a lack of continuity in the recovery process:

So, they did not understand that recovery starts from the minute an event starts and does not cease, even if you've got clean up or anything, you must continue in the recovery. You know everything our emergency management says, expectations [are that] you continue on developing a recovery plan and action and along the way... Trying to develop a recovery plan now, how long after the event? is pretty appalling really, but that's where we're at (Latrobe City Council participant 3 2015).

### 2.5.3 Government and agency responses

A number of agencies and local government departments have sought to take what they have learnt in this situation and revise processes and practices for managing emergency situations. For example, at the time of our interviews in 2015, local government had commenced work on developing a resilience plan that sought greater community participation, starting with a survey to identify themes from council's public health and

wellbeing plan relevant to community members and service providers, which would then inform facilitated workshops.<sup>5</sup> In addition, since 2015, many more initiatives associated with recovery were announced or implemented, including:

- the reporting of findings from the second HMFI, especially in regard to the controversial question of whether the mine fire had resulted in an increase in deaths in the Latrobe Valley;
- the acceptance by the State government of the two Inquiry reports and the release of their recovery implementation plan and associated funding (June 2016);
- the issuing of infringement notices to GDF Suez (or Engie) by WorkSafe and the Environment Protection Authority;
- and the establishment of the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone, Latrobe Health Assembly, and the Latrobe Health Advocate role, which have been set up to address social determinants of health and health inequities in the Latrobe Valley, in response to key recommendations of the HMFI.

Yet, this suite of recovery activities had not resonated with the wider community as part of the recovery process for the mine fire. In interviews conducted following the mine fire, there was still dissatisfaction voiced by members of the community with the rebuilding and recovery efforts provided:

I guess one of the key phrases that stood out for me in the consultation session was recover to what – we were already so terrible. I know that in the world of emergency management recovery is about a new normal, it's not about trying to recreate what was. So, in that sense there is the potential for some optimism and some hope. Having said that I think the recovery programs that were put in place were fairly piecemeal and I don't think there was a comprehensive strategy overall that looked at the overall needs of the community and some of the broader issues, particularly around children and young people (VCOSS participant 2015).

This participant's point is important and resonates with the findings of research on disaster recovery that the recovery process needs to be participatory, empowering and collaborative for more successful and longer-lasting outcomes (Norris *et al.* 2008; Thornley *et al.* 2015).

This participant went on to explain that

The primary thing that kept coming through for me was government created this mess. Victorians have been reliant on our coal as an electricity producer, we are important. Now this has happened on top of everything else, you need to take responsibility. They don't view themselves as necessarily needing to take responsibility and I don't think they realistically can without assistance. But I think what they are wanting is some sort of bipartisan, whole of government, federal, state and local, all coming together (VCOSS participant 2015).

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<sup>5</sup> One outcome is the Latrobe City Council's *Emergency Management Communication Sub Plan* (2015)



As this participant suggests, given the history of the community, the loss of trust in agencies and the broader negative perceptions of communities in the Valley, establishing inclusive and participatory processes for rebuilding community is fundamental to successful recovery:

There are pockets of success and greatness and future looking and so on, but the overall feeling is [we] can't trust anyone. Melbourne turns their back on us, people will joke about moccasins and drug taking – in all that Morwell is seen as the dirty cousin you don't talk about..., that in Morwell, there aren't those groups of people that can drive it. It does need to be community-led and it does need to be community-owned but the odd people that do have the capacity to do it, they are up against a hard, difficult demographic and a difficult history. It would be very different if this was a one-off event and people were all very traumatised and shocked but this happened on the back of so much. And the fact that ... so much is recognised and [has] never been addressed (VCOSS participant 2015).

As this response makes clear, interventions imposed on the community are not going to be as effective as those approaches that start from a position of community engagement and participation in decision-making that encourages a shared individual and community responsibility that serves to strengthen and develop capacities inherent in the community (Bach *et al.* 2015; Duckworth 2015). In order to address the loss of trust and community anger some agencies have actively tried to rebuild relationships and earn a renewed trust within the community. The first example is between the Department of Health (now DHHS) and VOTV who were among the fiercest critics of the Department of Health for not listening to the community. The second example is between the EPA and VOTV whose members did not believe or trust what the EPA was telling the community about air quality during the event – so much so that VOTV arranged to conduct its own air quality monitoring.

#### 2.5.4 Case study 1: Department of Health and VOTV

The Department of Health and, more specifically, the Chief Health Officer at the time, Dr Rosemary Lester, have often been the target of much of the community's anger. The cause of that anger was the inadequate information at the time of the smoke event and what was perceived as a lack of empathetic two-way communication with the community (Teague *et al.* 2014). As stated in Volume 1, in the first week of the crisis the Department of Health relied on media releases, online updates, supplemented by radio and TV interviews. In Week 2 the Department began using Twitter for health messages, and on Day 11 the CHO held the first media conference in the Latrobe Valley. The period of time that elapsed before Dr Lester visited the Latrobe Valley and her apparent lack of awareness of the conditions the community experienced was perceived as indicative of the lack of State government care and concern for this community:

to have Rosemary Lester stand out the front there and say it's perfectly fine here, and all you need to do is look out there and go 'no it's not' ... if that had been fog, okay,

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but that was the equivalent of a pea soup fog some days, but it was actually smoke. Like open the car door at the end of the night, and black ash would fall out (Latrobe City Council participant 2 2015).

Others interpreted this lack of empathy and understanding as something inherent in the workings of government, which did not align with the needs of a community under stress:

I look at the local paper and stuff but there just seems to be a level on which the rhetoric, a discourse happens which is ... at an authority-generated level. And it talks about things in terms which suggest that there are initiatives or concerns that will be addressed in some way which fits into the work, the functioning that can be done by a Department. And it just doesn't, it just seems an unreality to me, it doesn't really have anything to do with what goes on for a community when things like that happen to it, it gets the message that it's less important or doesn't really exist and what future does it really have? (Moe focus group discussion August 2015).

The anger towards the State government was still evident in the interviews conducted twelve months after the fire, and on social media (as discussed in Section 2.2). This anger fuelled much of the high degree of mistrust with the Department of Health in particular, due to a perception that the department was doing very little in the community to rebuild and regain that trust:

There is no kind of concept of community engagement and community empowerment. Like neighbourhood renewal was difficult for [the Department of Health] to run because the state are really uncomfortable with precedence. Like if they do something in Morwell then they've got to do it across the state – ministers of the state don't like that, they [like to] snip the ribbon on that – oh! now everyone wants one and they hate that stuff. The other thing is the Department of Health in Morwell where are they – who are they? No-one knows – they don't have a presence. The community can't see them; feel them; touch them or feel affected by them. They think Latrobe Community Health self-fund – self generate but they don't see the connection between the Department of Health and its manifestations in this community (Latrobe City Council participant 3 2015).

A particular focus of the poor relationship between the department and the community was the perception that the Department of Health was not prepared to consider the possibility that death rates in the Latrobe Valley had increased as a result of the mine fire. Community group VOTV had undertaken their own analysis of death rates (submitted to the first HMFI), initially using death notices in the Latrobe Valley Express, and further supported by an independent analysis of data acquired from Births, Deaths and Marriages (ABC Gippsland 2014). The Department of Health commissioned its own mortality analysis, which reported similar higher than usual rates of deaths during the period, but questioned the conclusion of the earlier VOTV analysis that these could be attributed to the mine fire (Department of Health 2014). In a media release, VOTV:

called on the Health Department and senior government ministers to clarify their positions regarding the elevated death statistics in the Latrobe Valley since the Hazelwood mine fire, and properly investigate the issue' (media release, VOTV Facebook 25/9/14).

Increasing concerns regarding the health outcomes from the mine fire, including possible deaths, as well as concerns regarding the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood mine and other sites, led to the second HMFI in May 2015. This was also prompted by calls from the State Labor Opposition. The inquiry was re-opened with new terms of reference including examination of death data (ABC Gippsland 2014).

The second Mine Fire Inquiry found that it was likely that there had been an increase in deaths during the mine fire, and that the mine fire may have been a contributing factor (Teague *et al.* 2015). Public acknowledgement by the Health Minister Jill Hennessy was noted by VOTV as vindicating their concerns (VOTV post 9/12/15). By 2016, VOTV's perceptions of the Department had changed. Once one of the Department of Health's fiercest critics, VOTV felt that they had developed a good working relationship with the Department and that a relationship of trust was being rebuilt:

Person A: They're not saying, "You're wrong." Which they used to be saying. They're saying, "What do you think about this?" And that's really a huge turnaround.

Person B: It changed, changed right the way through really ... you got to remember that when we first started off, the Health Department wouldn't talk to us, we could not get an appointment with the Health Minister at all...

Person A: ... And I think the fact that they've actually been allowed to stand up and say, "Well actually yeah you were right." So, Daniel Andrews opened that door in saying, "Yes you were right." The Health Department, so Jill [Hennessy]... through the last Inquiries has rung ... the morning or the day before the report [was] being released, to say to Voices of the Valley, "The report's out, well done."

Person A: It's saying, we actually trust you now and we're prepared to work with you, and that's what they've been doing and it's been a really big change to what we had... (VOTV participants 2016).

### 2.5.5 Case study 2: EPA and VOTV

The EPA is a Victorian State Government agency established in 1971 to administer the Environment Protection Act (1970) and take on the role of the State's environmental regulator. The EPA has had a permanent air monitoring station in Traralgon for the last thirty years. During the Hazelwood mine fire, the role of the EPA was to measure, validate and assess the impact of smoke and ash from the fire on local air, water and soil. It then provided the data to the Department of Health, which was used to assess potential health impacts of the smoke event and inform and advise the community on appropriate action. At the time of the fire the pollutants of most concern were airborne particles, those less than

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2.5 micrometres in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and carbon monoxide (EPA 2015a). However, during the mine fire the EPA also measured airborne particles less than 10 micrometres (PM<sub>10</sub>), sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and ozone. In addition, visibility reduction was monitored as this was a good indicator of smoke intensity. With over a third of its staff involved in the mine fire response this was a significant response effort for the EPA (EPA 2015a). This was acknowledged by the first HMTI which observed that ‘The scope, scale, resources and duration of EPA activities in its emergency response to the Hazelwood mine fire were significant, and went beyond the EPA’s traditional role’ (Teague *et al* 2014: 268). The Inquiry (2014) commended the EPA for its scientific rigour and its air quality monitoring role, work that also required overcoming equipment deficiencies.

However, the Inquiry (2014) did criticise the way the EPA provided information to the community, noting that there was ‘a high degree of frustration about the EPA’s inability to communicate effectively with the community during the Hazelwood mine fire’ (Teague *et al* 2014: 395). More specifically, the Inquiry noted that the community did not find the information provided particularly helpful; information was either overly simple and repetitive or it was too complex and inadequately explained. The concerns and questions raised by Morwell’s communities were not adequately addressed and did not enable them to assess the risk posed by the smoke (Macnamara 2015).

The credibility of the EPA was also ‘damaged when they framed their primary responsibility as one of reporting to the Chief Health Officer and not to the community’ (Teague *et al* 2014: 395). The community believed they were not being given all the facts or there was a cover-up. In some ways, the community’s frustration with the Department of Health and the Chief Health Officer flowed over to the perceptions held of the EPA. The result was that people did not trust what the EPA was saying, especially when they were told it was safe but they were experiencing adverse health effects (Teague *et al* 2014: 395).

By the time the mine fire was declared safe, many in the community and particularly members of VOTV had lost trust in the EPA. They believed information provided during the mine was inadequate, the community was ignored and concerns were not addressed. After the mine fire, and in response to community criticism and the findings of the HMTI, the EPA responded with a number of initiatives: a commitment to ongoing monitoring of air, soil and water quality with additional monitoring stations in Morwell, Moe and Churchill; establishing a citizen science program in the Latrobe Valley to build capacity and understanding about environmental monitoring; and opening up conversation with the community about their experience of the EPA and their ongoing concerns. As a senior EPA participant reflected:

I think we’ve failed, and so, it’s that matter of trust... I think in the olden days, if there was ever such a thing, the way agencies would work is we would try and understand an issue with dot the ‘I’s, cross the ‘T’s, prove the science, make risk assessments, and then tell the community they’re okay or they’re not okay. And I think what’s

happening now in this sort of data-rich environment, with a very informed community, is we need to be able to say this is what we know, this is what we don't know, and this is how we're going to fill those gaps of knowledge... It means we need to be giving information to people in a way that they can understand it and digest it, but ultimately make their own decisions about what they do with regards to their own health and their own family's health, and I think that's why we need to engage with community (EPA participant 2015).

The EPA specifically engaged with VOTV to gain a greater understanding of communication issues, to rebuild trust and rebuild a relationship with the wider community. The new CEO of the EPA contacted VOTV, and met with them to understand their experience of the EPA and their concerns. He acknowledged and validated their experience and apologised and worked with VOTV to rebuild that trust and address community concerns. The CEO and many on the EPA executive were new and had not been in their positions at the time of the mine fire, which did provide an opportunity to move on and build a new relationship:

We had a very good round table conversation at the Neighbourhood House, and Wendy Farmer was there and there were some others there, and they just told us how they had experienced the EPA both at the time and since ... And for whatever reason, I think one of them said that we want to trust you, but at the moment we can't, you know, we trust you as an individual, but as an organisation we don't ... I said, tell me simply, what do you want from us? And I was told, I want to know that the air I'm breathing isn't doing me harm. So, we spoke about that (EPA participant 2015).

For VOTV, part of being able to regain trust in the EPA and its data was having access to an independent, community-led source of monitoring and data collection. During the mine fire Emergency Management Victoria loaned VOTV monitoring equipment and VOTV wanted to keep independently monitoring the air quality in the Latrobe Valley. The EPA subsequently provided VOTV with air monitoring equipment, with one senior EPA participant explaining:

One of the ways of building that trust is to give the community their own capacity and capability to do measurement, and I think that goes in with the citizen science, and I think, as we go forward, across many issues, we should see more citizen science, so the people can actually see their own measurement in, and understand [the science]... (EPA participant 2015).

A member of VOTV was also invited to join the EPA's Community Reference Group. The priority for the EPA was to learn from VOTV's experience and change how the EPA interacts with community groups, yet, such action has the benefit of also building a stronger relationship between EPA, VOTV and the wider community.

Part of the EPA's response includes commitment to an extended program of air monitoring as part of their Hazelwood mine fire recovery effort. By May 2015 they had completed 12 months of air quality monitoring following the mine fire event, releasing a report that stated, 'there have been no ongoing changes to air, water and soil quality in the Latrobe Valley due to the Hazelwood mine fire' (EPA 2015b). Yet, even these measures require

engagement and listening to the needs of the community, for while this report referred to a return to air quality levels comparable to that prior to the mine fire, unfortunately this was not how this information was received by the community. Some people misinterpreted this statement, believing that the EPA was saying that the air quality during the event was safe. The EPA quickly addressed this, demonstrating the need for clearer communication in such matters (EPA interview 2015).

The experience and approach of the EPA shows how reaching out, acknowledging concerns, apologising, being willing to talk, and perhaps even more importantly, listen to the community, can rebuild trust and strengthen relationships and perhaps create stronger relations.

I am trusting the EPA, yeah, and the community is starting to trust the EPA because they are showing – [that other agencies] need to go back to grassroots and go ...– yeah, we did the wrong thing... we handled it badly... And the EPA have done that, so they are trying to improve – you know, and so they’re working with the community if things aren’t going how the community wants ... they’ve got a success story (VOTV participant 2015).

### 2.5.6 An expanded view of recovery

In 2016 and 2017, some of the stakeholders that had first been interviewed in 2015 (as well as in a pilot study conducted by Wood *et al.* 2014) were re-interviewed and asked if people in the community still talked about recovery from the mine fire. Their perceptions (of their agencies and of the community more generally) were that many people no longer saw recovery from the mine fire as having such immediate relevance to their lives:

Throughout door knocks, you know, people would go off and say that they’re sick of hearing about the mine fire, they just want to move on. And one of our working group members said she won’t even read the paper anymore, because she just, she just wants to put it behind her, yeah. ... [They don’t want to] be burdened by a negative story (Latrobe City Council participant 1 2017).

From the perspective of agencies who had played a role in the immediate recovery period, people two years on from the fire were less likely to frame issues as being about recovery, nor did they attribute new initiatives as being part of the recovery process. Nonetheless, this response is a significant component of recovery and resilience. One interviewee felt that the recovery framework implied the community were victims, which underplayed their inherent strengths and resilience:

I don’t think people are looking for a recovery. I think it’s almost demeaning to some extent and we’ve got to recover from this really bad episode and then there’s going to be a bad something in the future whatever that is, have to recover again; we’re always



in victim mode then. So, I think what I've seen is that our community is quite resilient (MNH participant 2017).

Another participant noted that there had been a shift in their organisation from a recovery focus to a broader health and wellbeing focus:

From the organisation's perspective, we've moved beyond the mine fire recovery ... our focus is now on the municipal health and wellbeing issues. So, the role of – with events team, the primary role over the next six to eight months will be development of the new municipal public health and wellbeing plan, and community consultation and progression of the future Morwell urban design plan, as well as doing other activities... (Latrobe City Council participant 1 2017).

Concerns during the mine fire and recovery after the mine fire may initially have been framed around health concerns but it soon became evident that health and recovery were about more than physical health. A key issue that emerged during community consultations for the first Mine Fire Inquiry was the desire for the development of a long-term vision for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley (2014), which was then reinforced at the second Mine Fire Inquiry (2015: 63):

The Board heard that involving the community in rebuilding pride in the Latrobe Valley, and progressing a vision for the economic future of the Latrobe Valley, is an important part of improving the health and wellbeing of the population.

Social disadvantage creates health inequities and the impact of the mine fire was likely to have been exacerbated by existing social disadvantage. Any recovery then needs to include measures that tackle the causes of such social disadvantage. As the second Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry (Teague *et al* 2015/2016: 91) noted:

in order to bring about an improvement to the health status of the Latrobe Valley community, and in particular, Morwell, action is needed to address the social determinants of health inequities ... Employment is another key issue that must be considered in the Latrobe Valley. The expert panel on social disadvantage noted that education and employment, in particular, can be pathways out of disadvantage.

The implementation of the Health Innovation Zone, Health Assembly and the appointment of the Latrobe Health Advocate are specific initiatives which respond to this argument. A focus on a location's challenges and opportunities is integral to recovery, an approach advocated in the Victorian Government's community resilience strategy following the 2009 Victorian bushfires. This strategy was based on evidence that any recovery strategy should integrate a place-based approach and part of that approach involves developing a vision for the future of the community:

a strategy of community consultation and visioning, to enable residents to picture the sort of community they wished to create. This is a method to engage communities in

dialogue and surface different opinions about “what should be” as well as “how to get there” (Hawe 2009: 36).

Another example of this type of approach was an initiative of VicHealth, the Victorian government’s health promotion foundation. In 2017 VicHealth ran the Community Challenge: Latrobe Valley, which involved ‘supporting community driven ideas to generate more jobs in the region’ and ‘to create local jobs and boost health and wellbeing’ (VicHealth 2017). VOTV was successful in its application to the Community Challenge (VicHealth 2017), and its project, *Transitioning the Valley*, proposed that:

Transitioning from coal as one of our major employers is an opportunity to retool our valley to take its place in the new energy economy. However, we also know that a sustainable transition is as much about the community as it is about technology. We see the people of Latrobe Valley initiating a new local, community owned, renewable energy industry that positions Victoria as a key innovator in this emerging sector. To succeed, the solution will need to be owned by the community and work in partnership with government, business and education providers (The Latrobe Valley Community Transition Group 2017: 4).

This reflects a shift in focus for this community group, from physical health to that of wellbeing more broadly, and thus recovery is now conceptualised in terms of job creation and sustainability, particularly as the Latrobe Valley faced the implications of a transition from coal, and the closure of its mines, the first of which was the closure of the Hazelwood power station and Morwell mine in March 2017. VOTV started to explore what might be possible in terms of creating new sustainable jobs in the Latrobe Valley. Underpinning this was the argument that that these new jobs needed to be driven and owned by community. Part of VOTV’s success was also due to government and other agencies acknowledging the need for better communication and dialogue with community, as acknowledged by a VicHealth participant:

We’d done a whole lot of talking to people about how people understand health inequities in ways that we don’t, so different points of view, what does an intervention look like, and so at the same time as we were trying to work out what do. ... So, we started to have some conversations with the groups that we’d met through the Health Improvement Forums ... it was Voices of the Valley, the Neighbourhood House people, Carolyn Boothman, those kind of community leaders who ran those sessions ... It wasn’t just saying we want someone to come in and save us, it was we want you to work with us, to do the things that we know are going to make a difference or we think are going to make a difference (VicHealth participant 2017).

Community-led initiatives are fundamental to recovery (Australian Emergency Management Institute 2011; Norris *et al.* 2008; Thornley *et al.* 2015), and as community leaders acknowledged, successful recovery occurs when community members are partners with agencies and not simply clients (Bach *et al.* 2015):



I think the community knows what it needs to recover. ... In many, many cases the answers are already there but we don't have a vehicle to, or we don't support them, to actually identify this themselves and support the projects or the programs or whatever it is that they may need. I do think community's got a lot of its own answers but we don't, we muffle these voices quite a lot and we don't allow them to rise up and actually speak ... (MNH participant 2015).

A range of community-generated projects that arose after the mine fire suggest the direction some community members wish to take in creating a future for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley more broadly. The Latrobe Valley Support Network (LVSN) initiated a community garden in Ellen Street, Morwell, in September 2014 with support of a grant provided by Latrobe City Council. Simon Ellis, a member of LVSN, explained that:

the plan is to have the garden open pretty much every day. People can come along and just sit down and enjoy the garden or they can come in and get their hands dirty. We've also got training organisation Skills Future who will put people who get really involved through a free horticultural course (quoted in Symons 2014, online).

This initiative has had some challenges, including loss of the original site for the garden. Other initiatives of LVSN include the Free Store, held each month at the Morwell Neighbourhood House, offering 'everything from household goods to clothes and food' and is available to all: 'you do not need a healthcare card, we have an open-door policy' (Tracie Lund, manager of MNH, quoted in Huxley 2018 online). The Morwell Neighbourhood House also hosted workshops a short time after the mine fire, called *Through the smoke*, with the goal of facilitating conversation about the effects of the smoke event. Out of this initiative was the draft of a play, *45 Days*, written by Tara Dean, which documented the impact of the mine fire on the community of Morwell.



### Play reading of *45 Days*, Carlton, September 2015

(Photo credit: Susan Yell)

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Some researchers argue that the most important factors for disaster resilience and recovery are social, more specifically, social capital or social capacities (Aldrich 2012; Aldrich & Meyer 2015). This is borne out in the interviews conducted for this study, and also emerges as a theme in our participatory action research (discussed below). While Paton *et al.* (2014: 256) found that the relationship between government and other agencies and the community ‘can facilitate or marginalize community recovery’, this study demonstrates how inherent capacities within the community can be quickly mobilised if official responses to an emergency are perceived to lack appropriate action. This is particularly evident in the use of media and social media to agitate for action from government. Nonetheless, as Aldrich (2012) points out, the success of these approaches requires certain levels of social capital and networks through which to agitate. In Morwell, and the Latrobe Valley more broadly, these capacities are unevenly distributed. Moreover, the historical relations between government and the Valley’s mines have had significant impact upon how such capacities and networks may be deployed. As one participant from the Latrobe City Council suggested:

[recovery] has to be done outside of the emergency – it can’t be connected to the – it’s just another wording for them – we can’t really keep harping back. It’s kind of like the SEC syndrome – people still bang on about that and yet the vast majority of people that were around then are dead but it’s become part of the essence of this community as one of their stories that has – will never end well. So there needs to be an element of stepping across the line and pulling down that rear vision mirror and getting on with it (2015).

Those we interviewed clearly have ideas about their plans for Morwell’s future. The following section explores this in more detail by examining the development of a participatory action research project asking participants to explore their hopes for the town’s future.

## 2.6 Hopes for the future photographic exhibition

### 2.6.1 Involving the community in the research

Part of the Community Wellbeing Stream’s research program involved developing a participatory action research (PAR) project in partnership with the community. This type of collaboration between academics and community members requires both to work together to define and address issues and challenges. Scholars from many different disciplines have recognised that it is important to provide ways for lots of different voices to speak (Gibson-Graham 1994; Kobayashi & Peake 1994; Rose 1993). These methods need to include non-traditional forms, such as visual modes of expression (e.g. photographs and other art forms). Our PAR project with the community took the form of a photographic exhibition.

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Planning and preparation for the photographic exhibition aimed to include the voices of Morwell community members through involving them directly as active participants in the research process and its outcomes. This exhibition provided an opportunity for members of the Morwell community to have their concerns, hopes and dreams heard. Social scientists are now more open to using non-traditional avenues, not only to capture the various ways the world is lived, but also as a way of sharing and communicating research more broadly. The creative arts have a lot to offer here, because they can present ideas in ways that are visual, concrete and accessible to a much broader range of people. Art opens a door onto how others feel and how they see the world. It also focuses on the senses, beginning ‘from one’s own lived experience and personal reactions’ (Barrett 2010: 5). In our engagement with the community, both researchers and community members agreed this was an appropriate way to work through and express ideas about recovery in Morwell.

As noted in Vol 1 Section 4, our plan was to work with two or three community organisations and their members on a project to foster community recovery and wellbeing. However, coordinating this proved to be difficult for community groups, so after consultation with those groups we broadened the scope of the exhibition to include a wider range of groups and individuals from the community. Participants were to think of some object that symbolised their hopes for the future of Morwell. They were then invited to attend a photographic session hosted by the Morwell Neighbourhood House. Each person was to hold this object while it was photographed, as well as explain what the object represented in terms of Morwell’s future.

From this photographic shoot 28, photographs with their captions were produced, enlarged and framed for exhibiting. The photographs were taken by Clive Hutchison from the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design. The objects were photographed in colour but Clive chose to portray the hands, arms and background in black and white, making the object ‘pop’ out at the viewer. Clive explained his choices as follows:

Actor and director Clint Eastwood said “Sometimes if you want to see a change for the better, you have to take things into your own hands”. This sentiment is at the heart of the image making. As acts of empowerment, each organisation and individual taking part in the photography was challenged to look forward and consider an object that embodied their envisaged future for Morwell. No direction was given regarding the choice of object that could represent that future. The style of the image-making is based on similar cropping and relative positioning, but not posturing, of the hands. The offering of the future vision is entirely gestured by the individual in each case. A monochromatic treatment is overlaid on the participants in every image; uniting them in their common cause, and visually highlighting the chosen object (Hutchison 2017).

The objects – mostly everyday items such as a shoe, a house key, a shopping basket, a baby doll – are accompanied by captions provided by the community group or individual holding

them, showing the symbolic meaning they have for that person or group. The hands themselves add a further layer of meaning. When we look closely at them, we see hands hardened by physical labour, old hands and young hands, hands with a firm grip on their object, hands cradling their object lovingly, hands held open in acceptance, as well as the hands of two different people, one supporting the other.

## 2.6.2 Thematic analysis of the images

As noted in the literature review (see Volume 1, Section 3.5), communities can draw on a range of ‘assets’ which contribute to their resilience when facing and recovering from crises and challenges. Hunt *et al.* (2011: 113) suggest a range of different forms of capital, including human, social, natural and institutional, which affect a community’s capacity to be resilient. Yet, one additional asset not mentioned by Hunt *et al.* is cultural capital, which can be defined as a subset of social capital (Ledogar & Fleming 2008). Cultural capital relates to those objects and practices that express a culture and its cultural industries (including art, music, religion, etc.).

Analysis of the images shows that community members have chosen objects which epitomise for them how some of these diverse forms of capital – social, cultural, and produced (economic) – are community assets which can contribute to a brighter future for Morwell. While some of these are assets that the community already possesses, others are lacking and suggest gaps or vulnerabilities which the participant would like to see addressed to enable the community to move forward to a positive future.

Economic vulnerability is a theme for several participants. Strengthening Morwell’s economic capital is important to community members; two images refer directly to a desire to see Morwell’s economy grow. One image shows hands holding notes and coins, with the caption ‘greater economic diversity and job opportunities’ (MNH), while hands firmly grasping a shopping basket anticipates a future Morwell where there are ‘more shops to shop and work in’ (Morwell Junior Fire Brigade). Economic development in the Valley is linked by some to transition to other forms of energy beyond coal-fired electricity generation. Voices of the Valley hold a montage of sunflowers, solar panels, transmission lines and a wind turbine, noting that ‘we have the skills’ for ‘energy security in the Valley’.

Two images express pride in Morwell’s cultural assets: the beautiful Rose Garden in Commercial Road, maintained by volunteers, and the mural by renowned Australian artist Arthur Boyd in St Mary’s Anglican Church. The caption for this image (“That more people see the beauty of Morwell”) hints at the belief that Morwell’s beauty is not often perceived by the broader public. Both of these illustrate examples of significant cultural capital for the town of Morwell.

If cultural capital is an under-emphasised attribute in the images, not the case for social capital, which contributors to the exhibition see as a real strength and a resource to further build on. One aspect of social capital expressed by these images concerns health and wellbeing. None of the images directly reference the mine fire and its impacts on health, but Morwell Junior Fire Brigade hold a small trophy with a brass figure of a firefighter, asking for ‘upgrades and improvements to make Morwell Fire Brigade *even stronger*’ (our emphasis). On the other hand, supporting and improving physical and emotional health is referenced by many images. Some of the photos emphasise services and activities, such as Morwell Swimming Club’s bright blue goggles which symbolise their desire to see ‘more children involved in swimming clubs, improving their skills, health, fitness and water safety’. The Life Education response cradles a spotted stuffed toy animal, their mascot ‘Healthy Harold’, and expresses the dream that all children in Gippsland receive Life Education. A bright golden key lies in the hands of a participant from Gippsland’s Centre Against Sexual Assault, a small object that stands for a powerful outcome: ‘That all families in the region have access to safe and stable housing’.

In two of the photos, shoes are the featured objects. The Rose Garden Walking Group sees walking as a way to connect the Morwell community ‘through friendships and fitness’ and community member Shaun Mallia’s running shoe, which for him symbolises ‘an active future for Morwell’ and a community ‘that can think on its feet’. Agility and adaptability here are key.

Another aspect of social capital which is significant for Morwell is the diversity of its population. Images provided by an EPA participant and by community member Phillip Dean both allude to the diverse groups that make up Morwell. In the EPA image, hands grip three flags, the Aboriginal flag, the Australian flag and the rainbow flag representing LBGTLQI communities, with the caption ‘Strength in diversity’; while Phillip Dean’s image denotes the hands of a new citizen proudly holding his citizenship certificate and looking forward to ‘a new future’. The values which support some of these diverse groups are expressed in a number of the images, for example the Gippsland Period Project Team aims to provide women’s sanitary products to all who need them, and see a future which involves ‘dignity and respect for everyone in the community’.

Other values and aspirations relate to aspects of resilience, include having a voice, supporting and caring for one another, growth, and optimism. The Morwell Girl Guides show off their badges, and emphasise ‘empowering girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting and responsible young women’. Morwell Little Free Library and Free Store’s red book symbolises opening ‘the door to conversations we want to have with each other’. A participant from local newspaper the Latrobe Valley Express holds an edition reporting the closure of Hazelwood power station, but note in the caption that ‘a strong media [equals] a strong community’. The importance of all the voices of Morwell being



‘listened to and valued’ is captured by the voice recorder used for interviews for our study, held by one of the researchers on the Community Wellbeing team.

Social connectivity and interdependence are expressed by the Latrobe Valley Chess Club’s image of hands cradling chess pieces, with the caption ‘Check your mate’ and community member Melinda’s chosen image: one hand resting on and being supported by another (‘That people give each other a helping hand and build a future together’). A recurring metaphor of future growth is expressed by images of plants and trees. Frank (from Morwell Neighbourhood House) hopes for ‘a greener future’, Janet (from St Luke’s Opportunity Shop) would like to see Morwell ‘thrive and grow’. Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support group hold a stunning image of a floodlit gumtree (in the main street of Morwell), which for them epitomises the wish ‘that the people of Morwell will continue to grow and renew against all the odds’.

Three more everyday objects (a stress ball, a roller skate and a smiley face icon) express the importance of resilience for this community. Latrobe City Roller Derby’s golden roller skate boot stands for the hope that ‘Gippsland can roll with the punches’. Morwell Junior Fire Brigade’s cheerful yellow smiley face expresses the hope that ‘more people [be] engaged with the community and ... positive about Morwell. The Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault purple stress ball stands for ‘life and vibrancy’ for this community.

Finally, three images talk about a bright future, and in the words of the Morwell Rose Garden Group, ‘everything coming up roses’. The sense of optimism is conveyed by a beautiful bunch of multi-coloured roses (Rose Garden Group), a smiling baby doll (Vicky, Morwell Neighbourhood House) and a large candle burning brightly (Tracie).



“Everything coming up roses”  
The Morwell Rose Garden Group



“A brighter future for the children”  
Vicky, Morwell Neighbourhood House



“Leading the way for a bright future for Morwell”  
Tracie

### Images from the photographic exhibition, *Hopes for the future*

A range of local public, private and volunteer/not-for-profit agencies and community groups participated in creating these images that led to the exhibition (as discussed in the

Methodology).<sup>6</sup> This indicates some of the diverse forms of institutional capital that Morwell possesses, which can be built upon moving forward.

The photographic exhibition was launched on 13 November 2017 at the Switchback Gallery, Gippsland Centre for Art and Design, Federation University at the Churchill campus in the Latrobe Valley. It has (at the time of writing this report) been exhibited in four locations:

- Switchback Gallery, Federation University, Churchill Campus, 17-24 November 2017
- Queen’s Hall, Parliament of Victoria, 21-25 May 2018
- Mid Valley Shopping Centre, Morwell, 26 September-17 December 2018
- Ballarat International Foto Biennale, Federation University Camp Street, 24 August-20 October 2019.

A selection of the images is also on display in the office of the Latrobe Health Advocate.

### 2.6.3 Core findings from the exhibition

The findings from this analysis show that, while a photographic exhibition may seem to have little to do with the Hazelwood Health Study, photographs can powerfully tell the story of recovery, which in turn is linked to wellbeing at the community level. Writing of the need for a vibrant creative and cultural ecology in regional communities, Bryce Ives makes the point that:

creativity, art-making and storytelling, create a sense of pride, wellbeing and cohesion. My ten years of work with the ABC’s Heywire Regional Youth Summit project has taught me the wellbeing of people living in rural Australia is an unresolved problem of national significance. But it has also taught me about the power of storytelling ... Storytelling and creativity can lead to change (Ives 2017: 15).

These images, while they are necessarily only a partial representation of the full range of views that might exist across the wider community of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley, do express some of the multi-faceted hopes and dreams of those who took part in developing the photographic exhibition. They also represent the desire of many community members to be part of a wider conversation about the future of their community. Finally, they also indicate the range of forms of capital (social, cultural and economic) that are valued, and those that are sought after in order to strengthen the community and prepare it for a better future. The following poem displayed alongside the photographs in the exhibition sums up this forward-looking disposition:

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<sup>6</sup> Morwell Swimming Club, Rose Garden Walkers, Voices of the Valley, Latrobe Roller Derby Team, Morwell Neighbourhood House, Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault, Life Education, The Free Library and The Free Store, Latrobe Valley Chess Club, Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support (GARDS), St Mary’s Anglican Church, Morwell, Morwell Junior Fire Brigade, Girl Guides Morwell, Environment Protection Authority, Morwell Rose Garden Group, St Luke’s Opportunity Shop, Latrobe Valley Express.

It would be great to see some celebrations  
not just the constant commiserations  
that we tend to have  
the saw mill closing, the power station closing.  
There's a lot of things going on  
that are knocking people down  
and some things to celebrate  
would be fantastic.  
To be able to say as a community  
'we did that'.

(Community group member, Hazelwood Health Study interview, poetic representation cited in 'Our Hopes for the Future of Morwell' exhibition catalogue, 2017).



### 3 Summary of key findings and their implications for the future

#### 3.1 Overview

This report has explored the community’s perceptions of the effectiveness of community rebuilding activities. By combining the results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses in this Volume (see Section 3) with our review of the published literature (see Volume 1, Section 3) we have been able to gain an understanding of the complexity of the recovery process for this community, and the challenges they perceive need to be overcome in order to move forward. This understanding can shed light on how to avoid some of the problems and build on what was done well, should an event such as this occur in the future. These findings therefore have important implications which can inform policy and planning for similar future events.

Based on the media and social media analysis (Section 2.2), key stakeholder interviews (Sections 2.3, 2.4, 2.5) and the participatory action research project (Section 2.6), there are a number of key findings which provide insights into the recovery process and the effectiveness of community rebuilding. This final section summarises these important findings and outlines their implications for future planning.

#### 3.2 Changing media and social media ecology

Our analysis of the media ecology in the period after the mine fire found that:

- In 2014 and 2015, social media posts to the Facebook site under analysis (VOTV) exceeded the number of news items, but from 2016 onward media items began to outnumber social media posts, suggesting diminishing need for sharing and drawing attention to mine fire-related experiences and issues.
- Health concerns continued to be covered throughout the period of analysis, but did not dominate social media posts as they had during and immediately after the fire. However, release of HMF1 findings and HHS results continued to prompt social media discussion of health-related topics.
- The expression of negative emotions (fear, mistrust of authorities, anger) diminished over time.
- There was a shift in the social media towards a more future-facing agenda (transition to the future, sustainable energy, etc.) from 2015 onward.
- Social media increasingly followed the news agenda (unlike during the fire, when social media were setting the news agenda), suggesting that community concerns were finally being sufficiently dealt with through mainstream public institutions such as news media, the courts, government processes.

### 3.3 Pre-existing vulnerabilities

Interviews with community stakeholders indicated that:

- There were deep divisions in the intersecting communities that make up Morwell, and these were linked to those who had a prior relationship to the mines and the SEC, and those who did not.
- Intergenerational disadvantage exacerbated the vulnerabilities within some sectors of this community.
- Negative external perceptions of the Valley also impacted on the community's self-perception, which in turn led to a mistrust of government.
- These perceptions need to be taken into account in efforts to rebuild trust with this community.

### 3.4 Concerns regarding a lack of future emergency planning

Findings from key stakeholder interviews highlighted the need for an emergency plan for the community to respond to future similar events:

- In 2017 there continued to be a perception that there was no emergency plan, despite EMV having been tasked with the job and having started the process.
- What needs to be determined is who is responsible for developing the plan, and more specifically who should develop the plan at the community level.
- EMV has argued that it has the capacity and approach to adequately develop a plan for this region. The process adopted by EMV is a community-based emergency management approach (CBEM), which is focused on ensuring communities and organisations work collaboratively in planning for emergencies.
- Latrobe City Council is considering what opportunities there may be for rethinking the context for emergency planning, such as the approach used to develop the Local Emergency Action Plans (LEAPs) that was under discussion with EMV and the CFA prior to the mine fire event.
- Yet, as both Latrobe City Council and EMV participants explained, given the size of the population in Morwell, this is a significant undertaking requiring strong financial support.
- This is, then, a complex space for development of emergency management planning. Developing a future emergency plan which is appropriate for this community, and communicating this plan to the community, will be important for community recovery.

### 3.5 Perceptions of community recovery and effectiveness of rebuilding efforts

Interviews conducted with stakeholders indicated that:

- From the perspective of agencies who had played a role in the immediate recovery period, people two years on from the fire were less likely to frame issues as being about recovery nor did they attribute new initiatives as being part of the recovery process.
- Many did not recognise the work that was being done as part of the official community rebuilding effort, and some felt that activities were of little benefit. In addition, some activities were one-off events.
- Yet since 2015 there have been many initiatives by local and state government as well as other agencies (discussed in Section 2.5.3 and documented in Appendix 2).
- The question of ‘recovery to what’ (i.e. not returning to a previous state) was very important to this community.
- A key issue that emerged during community consultations for the first HMFI (2014) was the desire for the development of a long-term vision for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley (2014), which was then reinforced at the second HMFI (2015).
- Over time the focus has shifted from concerns about physical health to that of community wellbeing more broadly, and thus recovery is now conceptualised in terms of job creation and sustainability, particularly as the Latrobe Valley faces the implications of a transition from coal, and the closure of its mines, the first of which was the closure of Hazelwood in March 2017.
- The more effective recovery initiatives involved those where an agency and a community group formed a partnership to address a common goal, and in which communication was open and dialogic.
- A range of community-generated projects that arose after the mine fire suggests some of the directions that community members wish to take in creating a future for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley more broadly.

### 3.6 Social capital and hopes for the future

The PAR phase of the research enabled a cross-section of community members and organisations to express their thoughts, hopes and dreams for the future of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley through participation in creating a photographic exhibition. Development of this project indicated that there was a strong desire from members of the community to be part of the conversation about the future, and the exhibition was a contribution to this conversation. Key findings from the PAR activity (the photographic exhibition) were:

- The objects chosen by community members for this exhibition symbolised a number of strengths and assets within the community, including: community pride; social

connectedness; diversity; dignity and respect for others; resilience; having a voice; and supporting others.

- Some images emphasised the need to increase economic capital in the form of employment and a stronger economy. Linked to this was a desire to see a transition towards alternative energy industries, and energy security for the Valley.
- Improving and supporting physical and emotional health was another strong theme emerging from this exhibition.
- Analysis of this material indicates that Morwell possesses diverse forms of institutional capital which should be built upon as part of the recovery process moving forward.

### 3.7 Implications for future planning

The findings presented in this volume of the Community Wellbeing Stream’s report can be used to inform the community, local government, and various community and health agencies about the factors shaping community recovery following a disaster. This volume identifies the importance of community perceptions of how authorities and agencies respond and address concerns in community recovery, and the need for clear, coherent and effective communication during the disaster and recovery phases. Of particular importance is acknowledgement that the phases associated with disaster and recovery are not linear, and that recovery often lacks a clear endpoint. This is especially significant in disaster recovery for events such as the Hazelwood mine fire; recovery is associated with rebuilding efforts, but it is not always clear what is being rebuilt. In addition, the impact of the mine fire on the Latrobe Valley was complicated by pre-existing social inequities and vulnerabilities. Our narrative analysis suggests that although the narrative of recovery is complicated, some progress has been made towards recovery, and that this recovery is more than a return to something that may or may not have served the community well in the past.

In addition to the implications for future planning outlined in Volume 1, what needs to be considered are the factors which are most critical for communication during a crisis and recovery and, in complex emergencies like this, how to ensure communication includes the community, speaks to them through the appropriate channels, and listens and responds to their concerns.

#### 3.7.1 Effective communication during the disaster and recovery periods

In addition to the recommendations proposed in Volume 1 (section 6.6.1), we recommend that:

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- Government, agencies and other authorities should consider how best to use the media ecology of mainstream and social media given the differing roles they play in disaster and recovery.
- This communication space is dynamic in its responsiveness to the concerns of the community and authorities and, as our analysis demonstrates, knowledge of how it is used to communicate different messages at different times within the disaster and recovery periods can be more effectively incorporated into emergency plans.
- As stated in Volume 1 (section 6.6.1.1) effective communication with the community should be through a trusted spokesperson, and accessible to the community through clear channels. This also means considering the differing ways that members of the community access information during the emergency and recovery periods, including the role played by community groups.

### **3.7.2 Future emergency planning**

Interviews with participants whose roles involved emergency and recovery responses following the mine fire revealed that the following considerations need to be addressed in devising plans and strategies for future events:

- There needs to be a clear overall management structure and lines of responsibility for the periods of disaster and recovery;
- There needs to be an appropriate process in place that provides clear and effective communication to agencies and the community about the emergency and any changes in that situation;
- Shifts from emergency to recovery management structures need to be clearly demarcated and managed in terms of roles and responsibilities;
- There needs to be a clear and appropriately managed determination of priorities for emergency and recovery responses, especially when transitioning between these two response phases;
- Those placed in positions of leadership and responsibility need to have appropriate levels of skill and experience;
- Continuity of personnel and response structure will ensure that appropriate knowledge about the emergency response is maintained. This will also increase community trust in the response of government and agencies.

### **3.7.3 Effective strategies for community rebuilding**

A number of factors were identified by our interviewees as crucial to effective rebuilding and recovery:

- Inclusive and participatory processes;
- An acknowledgement, where necessary, that ‘we were wrong’, in order to build trust between an agency or government department and the community;

- Establishing partnerships, preferably community-led;
- Collaborative approaches (e.g. the EPA’s citizen science initiative for air monitoring);
- Asking the community what they want in terms of assisting the recovery process.

In addition, the distinctive characteristics of this community (and any community) require place-based approaches:

- A focus on a location’s challenges and opportunities is integral to recovery, an approach advocated in the Victorian Government’s community resilience strategy following the 2009 Victorian bushfires. This strategy was based on evidence that any recovery strategy should integrate a place-based approach and part of that approach involves developing a vision for the future of the community.
- Social disadvantage creates health inequities and the impact of the mine fire was likely to have been exacerbated by existing social disadvantage. Any recovery then needs to include measures that tackle the causes of such social disadvantage.
- Recovery and rebuilding efforts need to address job creation and sustainability as well as health and wellbeing after a complex disaster with health impacts in an already disadvantaged community. This is increasingly being recognised and acted on by the State Government in relation to the Latrobe Valley, through initiatives such as the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone (with its focus on the social determinants of health), the Latrobe Health Assembly, the Latrobe Health Advocate, and the Latrobe Valley Authority.

The authors of this report hope that it provides valuable insights that can inform future policy and practice in ways that minimise harmful impacts on community wellbeing. It contributes to a well-informed evidence-base for responding to, and managing, a complex crisis of this kind in the future. We would be pleased to facilitate and/or participate in further discussion and verification of these implications for the future with members of the community and stakeholders.

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## 5 Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Themes in media and social media 2014-2017

<b>Month &amp; year</b>	<b>News media</b>	<b>Social media</b>
March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in fire services</li> <li>• HMFI community consultations</li> <li>• HMFI scope (public health) announced</li> <li>• Health Study mooted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI community consultations</li> <li>• Mistrust of authority – re health advice (no long-term problems) and clean-up effort</li> </ul>
June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI hearings (incl. EPA silence increased community mistrust; CHO defends advice to residents; GDF Suez balks at bill for mine firefighting; mine rehabilitation; firefighters' exposure to CO; lack of health info; health authorities relied on deficient data)</li> <li>• Conclusion of HMFI</li> <li>• Recommendations of HMFI</li> <li>• Cause of Hernes Oak fire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses to HMFI hearings (incl. GDF's liability for the mine fire; VoTV support for remediation effort; air monitoring; responses of authorities; mistrust; union claim that safe air quality limit for firefighters was increased; anger re change to CO protocol; distress re seeing babies and children exposed to smoke)</li> <li>• Historical video about preparing the Morwell open cut for a mine fire</li> </ul>
September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI report: criticisms of authorities (warnings too late, lack of empathy, communication breakdown, call to relocate too late); GDF Suez (events were foreseeable); Council commended</li> <li>• Call to investigate possible spike in deaths during the mine fire</li> <li>• Latrobe Valley residents consider launching class action lawsuit</li> <li>• VOTV delivers citizens' health report</li> <li>• Health conservation/health improvements for Latrobe Valley</li> <li>• Calls to re-open HMFI</li> <li>• Govt rejects death data report compiled by VOTV</li> <li>• EPA reviews action re the smoke pollution from the mine fire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses to HMFI report: residents should have been told to leave; feelings of betrayal and abandonment.</li> <li>• Notice of VOTV public meeting – call for HMFI to be re-opened; a Coroner's inquiry; more air monitoring; Latrobe Valley to be classified as a health conservation area; mine rehabilitation to start.</li> <li>• Call for people (especially families, small children, babies, pregnant women) to be interviewed by media re health effects.</li> <li>• Concern re rejection of VOTV death data report – suspicion of a 'cover-up'</li> <li>• Concern that HMFI did not recommend actions for mine rehabilitation</li> <li>• Discussion of EPA seeking to investigate whether an offence was committed in relation to the mine fire's air pollution.</li> </ul>
February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latrobe City seeks funds from State govt for recovery from the mine fire</li> <li>• One-year anniversary of the mine fire</li> <li>• Calls for better mine rehabilitation</li> <li>• Morwell's 'road to recovery'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event commemorating one-year anniversary of the mine fire</li> <li>• Hazelwood Health Study</li> <li>• Link to article by Tom Doig ('Morwell is like Mordor')</li> <li>• Latrobe City seeks funds from State govt for recovery</li> <li>• Health Study facilities (concern re facilities, location, staffing at LRH)</li> <li>• Event – public forum 'A Just Transition for the Latrobe Valley'. Call to diversify the economy, create new industries and employment opportunities that pose less health risks to residents.</li> <li>• Hopes and dreams for the future – call for comments.</li> <li>• Concern re small number of community members attending first HHS community briefing event.</li> <li>• Meeting to discuss HMFI implementation plan.</li> </ul>
July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GDF Suez refuses to pay \$18 million firefighting bill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer of counselling by Relationships Australia circulated.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firefighter links cancer diagnosis to the mine fire</li> <li>• Lung health tests available</li> <li>• VOTV rally at GDF Suez offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment re Tom Doig’s book, and praise for activism of LV community</li> <li>• Anger re GDF Suez’s refusal to pay firefighting bill</li> <li>• Call for submissions to next HMFI (on mine rehabilitation)</li> <li>• Praise for premier’s support of firefighters</li> <li>• VOTV rally – links to media coverage</li> <li>• Relaying of a doctor’s advice to get a chest CT scan (re cancer and mine fire)</li> <li>• Link to story re clean energy biomass burning option for power station</li> <li>• Call for people to do media interviews re health impacts of the mine fire</li> <li>• Link to ‘Our Power’ documentary (on Hazelwood mine fire)</li> </ul>
September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI hearings re mortality rates during and after the mine fire</li> <li>• Health minister keen to build trust with Latrobe Valley community</li> <li>• Progress of long-term health study (HHS); push to include non-Morwell residents</li> <li>• Proposal to re-locate town of Morwell further from the mine (rejected by state govt)</li> <li>• CFA going to court over mine fire costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criticism of CHO’s appearance at HMFI</li> <li>• Mortality rates due to the mine fire</li> <li>• Praise for VOTV speaking up for ‘many who choose not to speak out’</li> <li>• Call for GDF-Suez and government to accept responsibility</li> <li>• Calls for participants in HHS</li> <li>• Reference to lack of an evacuation plan for Morwell in a future major emergency (fire)</li> <li>• Call for submissions to HMFI</li> <li>• Call for people to say what is important to them in relation to improving the health of the Latrobe Valley</li> <li>• Link to media article re accusations of ‘selective and misleading data’ re deaths in the Latrobe Valley</li> <li>• Report by Latrobe City Council on recovery after the mine fire</li> <li>• HMFI conducting Health Improvement Forums</li> <li>• CFA court action over mine fire costs</li> <li>• Criticism of poor attendance by community at HHS session for the elderly</li> </ul>
December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI conclusion that Hazelwood mine fire probably did contribute to an increase in deaths; community member calls it a ‘bittersweet victory’ [claim that her husband died to the mine fire]</li> <li>• Mine rehab works ‘below par’</li> <li>• Department ‘mised community’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI conclusion re death rates</li> <li>• Links to news items re HMFI and death rates</li> <li>• Comments re the community feeling vindicated</li> <li>• Idea to turn the Hazelwood mine into a lake</li> <li>• Health Minister quote saying Morwell should have been evacuated during the mine fire</li> <li>• Link to media story re toxic water being used to fight the mine fire</li> <li>• Link to Richard Di Natale’s speech in Federal parliament re the mine fire</li> <li>• HMFI Rehabilitation session</li> </ul>
February 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WorkSafe charges Hazelwood mine operators over Hazelwood mine fire; GDF Suez attends court to face charges</li> <li>• Implementation funding of for HMFI; announcement that Latrobe Valley will be made a special health zone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to news items re WorkSafe charges</li> <li>• Notice of VOTV meeting to discuss HMFI report and future of VOTV</li> <li>• Link to ABC’s Science Show on the health impacts of wood and coal smoke</li> <li>• Second year anniversary of Hazelwood mine fire: thanks to VOTV for giving community a voice</li> <li>• Link to HMFI health report</li> <li>• Links to news items re funding for special health zone</li> </ul>
March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HMFI extension requested for final report on mine rehabilitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA charges against GDF Suez (incl. news links)</li> <li>• Link to news item re HMFI report delay</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA lays charges against Hazelwood operators</li> <li>• GDF Suez hosts public forum</li> <li>• Concerns re coal dust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of EPA action</li> <li>• Health concerns</li> <li>• Cancer fears</li> <li>• Coal ash</li> <li>• Concerns about ‘Old Faithful’ (underground fire in mine which had been burning for many years)</li> </ul>
April 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latrobe City Council wants all health recommendations of HMFI adopted</li> <li>• State Govt response to HMFI</li> <li>• ‘Our Power’ documentary – call for people to tell their story</li> <li>• Brown coal mine bonds increased</li> <li>• Emissions continue to climb in Latrobe Valley</li> <li>• Rehab works under way at Hazelwood</li> <li>• Cost of the clean-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to news items re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shortfall in cost of clean-up</li> <li>▪ Coal mine bonds</li> <li>▪ HMFI health improvement recommendations</li> <li>▪ Victorian government response re mine rehab</li> <li>▪ Funding to implement HMFI recommendations</li> <li>▪ Independent review of health study</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health study scope (should it include non-Morwell residents?)</li> <li>• Vic Health Community Challenge project (created in response to the mine fire)</li> <li>• Health Assembly to be running in October</li> <li>• Implementation plan released</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Study news</li> <li>• Increased stroke and heart attack rates during and after the fire – link to article on air pollution and stroke risk</li> <li>• Link to Vic Govt news – tabling of HMFI implementation plan</li> <li>• Link to news item – appointment of Health Assembly chair</li> </ul>
September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientists testing roof cavity dust</li> <li>• Community signs up for air monitoring program</li> <li>• Latrobe Valley finalists in sustainability awards</li> <li>• Engie (formerly GDF Suez) information on mine rehab</li> <li>• Health Study adult survey</li> <li>• Speculation re closure of Hazelwood mine and power station in early 2017</li> <li>• Man charged with arson over fire that spread to Hazelwood mine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to news item of increased heart and lung conditions during mine fire</li> <li>• Climate Guardian visitation protest</li> <li>• Link to news item on man charged with arson re Hazelwood mine fire</li> <li>• Link to news items explaining ash in roof cavity project</li> </ul>
January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victorian EPA to be overhauled 3 years after Hazelwood mine fire</li> <li>• ‘Our Power’ documentary – call to share stories</li> <li>• HHS ELF study</li> <li>• HHS Adult Survey deadline</li> <li>• Mine rehab cost blowout</li> <li>• Environmental overhaul</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call for people to sit on HHS Ministerial Advisory Committee</li> <li>• DHHS community forums re ash in roof cavities study</li> <li>• Link to ELF study news item</li> <li>• LV Mine Rehab Commissioner role advertised</li> <li>• Praise for community members’ impact on the HMFI and subsequent ‘environmental overhaul’</li> <li>• Deadline for HHS Adult Survey</li> </ul>
June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazelwood mine operator pleads not guilty to WorkSafe charges</li> <li>• HHS ELF study</li> <li>• HHS Psychological Impacts (School) study – child distress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements in EPA monitoring</li> <li>• Ash in roof cavity results; ash study concerns</li> <li>• Links to information on WorkSafe charges and hearing</li> <li>• HHS results re child distress</li> </ul>
September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHS study results (Adult Survey): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased risk of heart attack</li> <li>▪ Increase in hospital admissions</li> <li>▪ Cancer rates</li> <li>▪ Increase in asthma</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release of HHS study findings: death rates, hospital admissions, heart attacks, cancer rates</li> <li>• HHS Community Engagement session</li> <li>• Latrobe Valley Health Innovation Zone</li> </ul>



## Appendix 2 - Rebuilding and recovery activities 2015-2017

Activity	Community group or agency	Details
<b>Agency and government responses</b>		
Latrobe Says Thanks (Thank the volunteers)	LCC/Community Recovery Committee	<p><a href="http://www.stjohnvic.com.au:443/media-view/2014/Hazelwood-Community-Thank-you-note-31032014?tid=199">www.stjohnvic.com.au:443/media-view/2014/Hazelwood-Community-Thank-you-note-31032014?tid=199</a></p> <p>LATROBE CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14 (p. 56)</p> <p>The ‘Latrobe Says Thanks’ event, held in May 2014, was an opportunity for members of the community to thank some of the wonderful Country Fire Authority volunteers involved in the fire-fighting effort during the Hazelwood mine fire and see the fire trucks up close.</p> <p>As well as offering the community a chance of a relaxing afternoon, to browse the stalls, mingle and have some family fun time, it was also an opportunity to reflect on the superb efforts that the fire-fighters put in during the fire season.</p> <p>The event was supported by GDF Suez, TRFM and Gold 1242, and included a variety of activities, stalls and entertainment along with food and drink. With approximately 1500 people attending, the event held in the Latrobe City Council corporate headquarters car park, included a party atmosphere, street performers, children’s activities and food stalls.</p>
Free small business mentoring	LCC	For mine fire affected businesses in Morwell
Community Advisory Committee (CAG)	LCC	<p>From Latrobe City Council’s submission to 2<sup>nd</sup> Mine fire Inquiry</p> <p>On 27 March 2015, Latrobe City Council finalised discussions with the Department of Human Services and signed a funding agreement for delivery of recovery activities to those communities affected by the Hazelwood Mine and Hernes Oak Fires. Since December 2014, Council has taken over the primary role of supporting the Morwell and District Community Recovery Committee in the development and creation of a recovery plan. From a health perspective, our submission will detail our work in supporting the Recovery Committee, initial scoping of the recovery plan and the Committee’s work in developing a Community Health and Wellbeing Sub Plan for Morwell.</p>
Recovery Committee		<p>The Hazelwood Mine Fire Community Advisory Committee (CAG) was established in March 2014, with the first meeting held on 5 March 2014 and chaired by the Regional Director (Gippsland) of the Country Fire Authority. The purpose of the committee was to facilitate two-way communication between the response agencies at the Gippsland Regional Control Centre (RCC) and Hazelwood Incident Control Centre (ICC), and community representatives in Morwell. It was noted that the committee would eventually transition into recovery mode.</p> <p>The community representatives provided a valuable source of advice to fire controllers and during the transition to recovery, a range of relevant agencies and services. Members of the group also helped pass on important information through their networks to reach a greater number of people within the community.</p>



		The CAG began the process of transitioning to a Community Recovery Committee in April/May 2014, with the first meeting of the Morwell and Districts Community Recovery Committee (CRC) occurring on 5 June 2014.
Let's Make Morwell More-Well project <i>Relationship with nature: gardening activities</i>	Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault (Gipps CASA)	The project 'originated from the detrimental environmental effects of the Hazelwood Mine fires on the Morwell community ... and rests with the notion that the power of nature can also heal and enhance the community's wellbeing.'  <a href="http://www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/2668602/help-make-morwell-more-well/">www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/2668602/help-make-morwell-more-well/</a>
Citizen Science program	EPA Gippsland	Specifically tagged as part of Hazelwood Recovery program  <a href="http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/hazelwood/citizen-science/epa-and-citizen-science-in-the-latrobe-valley">www.epa.vic.gov.au/hazelwood/citizen-science/epa-and-citizen-science-in-the-latrobe-valley</a>
Roundtable forum with community groups	VCOSS	VCOSS invited a number of community and social service organisations to discuss emergency management and recovery from the Hazelwood Mine Fire. VCOSS made a submission to the mine fire inquiry on behalf of a number of local community and social service organisations. At this roundtable VCOSS was seeking further information and views on the recovery process for organisations, individuals and communities in and around Morwell.  Also conducted other roundtables for a report One Year On; and for a submission to the second mine fire inquiry (that included a consultation with the Aboriginal community).
Community Social Capital Fund	GDF Suez	GDFSuez established the Community Social Capital Fund, post the mine fire, aimed at 'supporting Morwell's revival following the disruption of the mine fire' (Media release 15/8/14). A total of \$500,000 was made available to local community organisations for a range of initiatives and activities, some connected to the mine fire, most are more general community capacity building initiatives. Community organisations applied to the fund and were assessed by a Community Committee; 27 organisations were successful, and a total of 34 projects. Examples of initiatives include: upgrades to equipment for Gippsland FM radio; the staging of a Youth event (Enjoy Church); the purchase of vehicles for the Latrobe Regional Hospital patient transport program; training for counsellors at Lifeline; woodworking equipment for the Morwell Men's Shed; the purchase of stackable chairs for community functions (Salvation Army). The St Vincent's Primary School specifically lists funding for the development of an emergency management plan.  GDF Suez also provided \$700,000 towards the 'Revive Morwell' initiative which aimed to encourage Morwell residents to shop in Morwell.
Transitioning the Valley	VicHealth Community Challenge	<b>Transitioning the Valley</b> is a jobs and collective impact, future industry initiative that blends existing hard and soft infrastructure, new energy technologies and a blend of business models. Initiated by the community, it will work together with government, business and educational facilities to provide a pathway for transition to the future industries. The project will initially focus on the brokering and founding of a Transition Centre and industry incubator, to retool the industrial and educational base of the Latrobe Valley for the requirements of a 2050 Hybrid Energy future.  <a href="http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/media-releases/transitioning-the-valley-initiative-to-boost-latrobe-valley-health-and-jobs">www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/media-releases/transitioning-the-valley-initiative-to-boost-latrobe-valley-health-and-jobs</a>

Community-led activities		
Vibrant Matter	Organised by artist Hartmut Veit	The "COAL" MFA Graduate Exhibition 2017 at VCA Art Space was the outcome of 4 years of research and working with coal in the Latrobe Valley. This socially-engaged art enquiry, residency and anthropological research with Latrobe Valley mining communities into the politics of coal, space and place was conducted between 2014-2017 in Morwell, starting with the Hazelwood Mine Fire in 2014 and concluding with closure of the Hazelwood Mine in March 2017.  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqiE6_5ySgvSBbr6BFGbVEA">www.youtube.com/channel/UCqiE6_5ySgvSBbr6BFGbVEA</a> <a href="http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-13/coal-art-exhibit-opens-hartmut-veit/8234210">www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-13/coal-art-exhibit-opens-hartmut-veit/8234210</a>
Through the Smoke workshops	MNH	A series of workshops to capture people's experience of the mine fire. This may, in part, have led to <i>Dying for a Laugh</i> a play written by Tara Dean (with links to VOTV)  <a href="http://www.morwellnh.org.au/journey-through-the-smoke-workshops-on-win-news/">www.morwellnh.org.au/journey-through-the-smoke-workshops-on-win-news/</a> <a href="http://www.morwellnh.org.au/?s=journey+through+the+smoke">www.morwellnh.org.au/?s=journey+through+the+smoke</a> <a href="http://www.morwellnh.org.au/residents-dying-for-a-laugh/">www.morwellnh.org.au/residents-dying-for-a-laugh/</a>
Snow Day	MNH	<a href="http://www.morwellnh.org.au/forecasting-snow-morwell/">www.morwellnh.org.au/forecasting-snow-morwell/</a>
Thank you Latrobe	MNH	<a href="http://www.morwellnh.org.au/latrobe-valley-says-thank-you/">www.morwellnh.org.au/latrobe-valley-says-thank-you/</a>  The event is coordinated by Tracie Lund, held on Friday March 14th at <i>Twin City Archers</i> , located on Toners Lane, Morwell.
Community garden	Latrobe Valley Support Network (LVSAN)	LSVN was formed as a direct result of and in response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire by people who were involved with Disaster in the Valley and Voices of the Valley but who now want to focus on community recovery and community development. Their overarching aim is to raise the community spirit in the Latrobe Valley. They want to promote healthy living and working together.
Free Store	LVSAN	<a href="http://www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/2478188/plenty-of-room-for-community-spirit/">www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/2478188/plenty-of-room-for-community-spirit/</a>  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPN49mT3Rt8">www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPN49mT3Rt8</a>