



**Latrobe Valley
Mine Rehabilitation
Commissioner**

Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Planning – One Year On Audience Q&A

26 June 2018

Morwell Bowls Club

Note: this is not a transcript of the proceedings, actual wording may differ from notes.

Q: Will tonight's presentation be made available to the public?

A: We will aim to publish it on the Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner (LVMRC) website.

Q: Tonight's presentations have not referred to safety issues for Morwell township or the railway line. Safety has been spoken about in the abstract, without acknowledging real implications for individuals and infrastructure.

A: This evening wasn't intended to discuss specific examples or to examine individual towns in depth. We are looking at all identified receptors, which includes townships, buildings, services, roads, railways and other infrastructure. All are being looked at, and it's important that all are looked at, not just one or two. The goal at all stages for all teams is safe, stable and sustainable, with minimal risks going forward. Very conscious of the needs of individual areas, but LVRRS is considering all parts of the Latrobe Valley.

Q: Why is the pit lake considered the starting point?

A: Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry looked at all possible rehabilitation scenarios, and the independent expert advice found, independent of the miners that for a safe, stable and sustainable outcome they needed some form of pit fill material to maintain stability and water is the most feasible filler to meet that. The Inquiry's recommendation for partial or full pit lakes was based on knowns and unknowns, and the LVRRS was put into place to examine the unknowns. No option is without disadvantages. It is possible the LVRRS may overturn the HMF I finding that pit lakes are the best option.

Q: NSW has a compensation fund for communities around mines where damage occurs due to mining activities; has anything been done here to set a similar fund up?

A: When this was first raised with the Commissioner in October 2017, the Commissioner made a recommendation to the Government that a scheme should be introduced as part of the regulatory reform work. It is the Commissioner's understanding that this is being seriously looked at as part of regulatory reform going forward.

Q: Explain the extension of the licences of the mines.

A: The extension of the mining licenses was not an extension of power generation; power generation will cease on the current agreed dates of 2032 for Yallourn and 2048 for Loy Yang. The extension was to allow for the rehabilitation of the mines within the mining licence period. At least seventeen years has been allowed beyond mining for power generation for rehabilitation to be completed. The extension of the licenses does not explicitly exclude future mining for other uses for coal, such as hydrogen production. Alongside the extension of the mining licences it has been agreed that the power companies will give at least five years notice of any closure of the power stations.

Q: Have any areas that have already been rehabilitated been handed back to the state?

A: Some land on the existing mining licences, owned by the mine owners, is being leased by farmers. North Yallourn Extension has been largely rehabilitated and is owned by the State. This rehabilitated mine area still has the option for further mining and so has a barrier around it preventing public access, although it is occasionally used by scouting groups. The lakes at Yallourn North Extension are pristine, and wildlife, including eels have populated the lakes. It's not operating perfectly, but there's a lot that can be learned, and Energy Australia are doing a lot of work to capture the historical knowledge of the rehabilitation of the extension that can feed into our understanding and inform the final solutions for rehabilitation.

Q: We would like to see copies of the technical work that has been completed so far; we don't want to wait until the final report comes out in a few years.

A: We will progressively release the technical studies as they are completed. The information presented tonight is based on preliminary drafts of reports – they are undergoing final revisions prior to publication. Reports will be available on our websites. We are looking at release later this year, and will publish summary versions as well as full reports.

Q: It's unclear if the pit lake is the only option or if other options are being fully considered. Between LVRRS and the miners we are getting mixed messages.

A: There's a substantial amount of work ongoing looking at variants and options. Until this work is finished we can't have a firm message on what will be recommended for each mine. There's a tendency for people to focus on what is going to happen in the pit rather than considering what will happen with the other two-thirds of the licence that are outside the pit. There's 60 km² of land available outside the pits that can be used and developed for all kinds of purposes. For example, the Great Latrobe Park can use an area around the pit instead of inside it. The idea that if the pit is filled then we will be losing out is incorrect.

Q. Government and the mines have come to the conclusion that a pit lake is best. What is the mechanism for getting mining companies to look at other options?

A. If you want to put an idea forward its economic and technical feasibility must be tested. Investors must be found to cover all the costs. For example, keeping Hazelwood empty will create costs in perpetuity. Any future use should meet the underlying costs, not assume that these will be someone else's problem. It's not straightforward, as keeping the mine void empty has potential long-term impacts that need to be explored. Until all the impacts are explored we don't know what is feasible.

Q: In-perpetuity costs must be considered, but Great Latrobe Park would not need to cover these.

A: If minimum maintenance and high maintenance options are considered, we may find that the state is only willing to cover the costs of the minimum maintenance option. It's important that aspirational plans are tested for economic and technical feasibility, and we don't assume others will pay for negative costs. Feasibility must be considered at all stages of redevelopment.

Q: If there is an interest in continuing coal winning, the complexity would be huge, as ENGIE is on their way out. How can we change what ENGIE and your group is doing if the community considers it more appropriate to keep the mine for coal winning in the long term?

A: There is still coal that can be mined in Hazelwood, the question is when in the future would that occur. If it's in 10, 15, 20 years, we can't keep ENGIE on hold that long based only on what we might like to do in the future. There are 13 billion tonnes that is readily available elsewhere, so why not just extend the other licenses.

Q: But the quality is different in the different seams, it may not be as good as the Hazelwood coal.

A: The quality of the coal will have to be evaluated. It depends on what the coal will be used for as to whether coal from a particular seam or from a particular should be used.