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ALLIANCE

Mine investigation response drives home importance of phasing out coal

Health professionals welcome Vic Govt's response to Hazelwood mine fire inquiry

The Victorian Government's promise to ramp up health services in the Latrobe Valley is yet more evidence that the mining and burning of coal hurts communities, says the Climate and Health Alliance.

The state government announced today it will spend \$51.2 million in response to the inquiry into the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire, which revealed the event led to deaths and compromised the health of the community and emergency workers.

The money will see the expansion of health services in the Latrobe Valley through the creation of a special health zone.

The Climate and Health Alliance's Fiona Armstrong says it's a welcome commitment.

"The Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire remains a sobering reminder of the dangers of coal mining and coal combustion for electricity. There are massive and unacceptable risks associated with coal mining for communities and public health," Ms Armstrong said.

Pollution from coal burning causes cardiovascular, respiratory and neurological diseases, as well as lung cancers.

Studies have linked the burning of coal to the reduced life expectancy of residents in the Latrobe Valley compared with those in other regions in Gippsland, and Victoria.

"The people of the Latrobe Valley have paid a high price over a long period. Governments must take note and stop this happening to other communities. New coal mine projects should be banned and existing mines should be phased out. [And coal communities must be looked after during this transition – they have suffered enough.](#)" Ms Armstrong said.

The Climate and Health Alliance is calling for the Victorian Government to detail when the Latrobe Valley's harmful coal-fired power plants will be retired.

"The health impacts from the Hazelwood mine fire did not end when the fire was put out. There remains a massive operation to clean up the mines in the Latrobe Valley - the last

thing the community needs is to be surrounded by polluted lakes of water that will pose a risk of flooding during extreme weather events,” Ms Armstrong said.

“The transition away from coal in the valley will be long and expensive, and we must ensure that companies who have profited from these dirty industries pay for the social and environment damages they leave behind.”