

Media Release

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VicHealth welcomes Hazelwood Mine Fire health improvements report

VicHealth welcomes the tabling of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report into health improvements in the Victorian Parliament today.

The report, which identifies a broad range of recommendations to improve the health of Latrobe Valley residents, follows the Victorian Government's decision last year to reopen the mine fire inquiry.

VicHealth Executive Manager Programs Group, Dr Bruce Bolam, said it was pleasing to see the latest report strengthened.

"This new report highlights the importance of the long-term determinants of the health and disadvantage the Latrobe Valley community is facing," Dr Bolam said.

"VicHealth is proud to have been able to make a submission to the re-opened inquiry, which provided an important opportunity to look beyond the devastating short-term impacts of the fire, to ways in which the community can build its resilience, cohesion and health in the future.

"Given that the impacts of the Hazelwood Mine fire have exacerbated existing inequities and the entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage in the Latrobe Valley, it's crucial to focus on the underlying drivers of ill health."

VicHealth has invested significantly in the Latrobe Valley through a number of past and current projects to work with the community and promote healthy eating, encourage regular physical activity, prevent tobacco use, reduce harm from alcohol and improve mental wellbeing.

A community working bee will be held on Saturday for the Morwell community to get involved in the activation of the Tarwin St pop up park, which is supported by VicHealth, in partnership with Latrobe City Council and designed to provide a vibrant, safe and accessible place that inspires locals to meet up, move their bodies and have fun.

"We know that people experiencing physical, economic or geographic disadvantage experience increased rates of disease and are more likely to die early from preventable causes," Dr Bolam said.

"Addressing the causes of inequity and disadvantage in the Latrobe Valley, which has only increased since the mine fire in 2014, will help improve the health outcomes in the region.

"VicHealth looks forward to continuing to work with State and Federal Governments to guide future investment into the Latrobe valley."

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