

# Hazelwood coal mine fire: Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities project

Community update No. 9 – March 2017

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has prepared the following information to provide an update on the 'Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities' project since February 2017. This update includes information about the final project report and next steps.

## About the project

The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry recommended that the government collect and test any ash that may have settled in the roof cavities of houses in Morwell, publish the results of that analysis to the community and provide advice about any potential known or unknown health effects (Recommendation 9, Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report III).

The 'Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities' project addresses this recommendation. It has also allowed government agencies to better understand the community's concerns about ash in roof cavities through community forums and feedback.

DHHS is leading the project, working closely with the community, Latrobe City Council and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria.

## Project activities to-date

Senversa (an independent expert) was appointed in August 2016 to collect and sample ash residue and/or dust from 50 houses in Morwell and 10 from another site unaffected by the fire (the control site). Following consultation at community forums held in Morwell in September 2016, Rosedale was confirmed as the control site.

Senversa then developed a sampling plan that set out the selection criteria for houses to be sampled. The sampling plan ensured that a range of house types, ages and distances from the coal mine fire were represented in the sampling program. This is available on the project web page at: [www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project)

Senversa completed the collection of samples from houses in Morwell in September 2016 and houses in Rosedale in December 2016. The samples were sent to an independent laboratory for testing, and the results were analysed and compared.

The results were shared with the community in December 2016 through community update 6 (and in subsequent updates).

The project team discussed the results with community members in January 2017 at four community forums held in Morwell. The project team also shared the results with community groups and stakeholders.

**The results do not show that brown coal ash residue from the 2014 Hazelwood fire is likely to pose a risk to human health if it is present in roof cavities.**

During January and February 2017, Senversa visited individuals whose roof cavities were tested to provide individual reports and discuss the results.

Stakeholder engagement is ongoing.

## Can I still be involved?

While the project is drawing to a close, community members can still participate by registering to receive monthly project updates, asking questions and providing feedback, and by attending community meetings.

We encourage everyone to stay involved with the project, even if your house was not selected for testing.

To receive updates:

- phone us on: 1300 761 874
- email us at: [ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au)
- download a registration form from: [www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project) (you can return this by mail or email).

# The final project report

## When will the report be ready?

Senversa is in the process of preparing the final report. The report will be peer-reviewed by another external, independent expert at the recommendation of the Latrobe Health Assembly.

Because of the additional time required to complete a peer-review, the final report is now expected in April 2017.

We hope that this further independent peer review will provide assurance particularly to Morwell residents that the project has been completed in the best way possible, and the results are consistent and reliable.

## What will be in the report?

The final report is a technical document that sets out how the sampling and testing was completed, what was tested and why, the results of testing, and an analysis of the findings.

It will include more than 1500 pages of data, evidence and background information.

The report will also include Senversa's recommendations about what was found in the roof cavities of Morwell and Rosedale.

## How can I get a copy of the report?

Community members provided feedback at the September community forums about how the final report should be published and promoted.

We have used your suggestions to inform our publication plan as follows:

- the final project report is a large, technical document, we will publish an executive summary (a shorter document written by Senversa that summarises the findings).
- anyone who has registered to receive project updates will be sent the executive summary of the report. This will include a request form for a copy of the (full) final project report.
- hard copies of the executive summary will be available via local community groups and community hubs, such as the library, RSL, and council offices for people to collect.
- the executive summary report will also be published on the project web page:  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project)

## Final project report (full report)

- The final project report will be published on the project web page. As it is a large file, it will be separated into smaller sections making it easier to read.
- We will print fewer copies of the full report and the printed version will not include the appendices due to their size and the technical nature of the information. Appendices will only be available on the web page.
- Hard copies of the final project report will be available by request. Anyone can request a copy by:
  - emailing [ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au)
  - phoning 1300 761 874
  - returning the request form included with the summary version
  - completing the online form or downloading a request form on the project page at:  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project)

Information on how to obtain a copy of the report will also be available in in the local newspaper and through community groups.

## What happens after the report is published?

DHHS will continue to work with the community and stakeholders to provide ongoing opportunities for discussion and feedback.

We want to ensure that the community has a good understanding of the potential health risks associated with dust in roof cavities.

## More information

### Department of Health and Human Services

Community updates and resources will be published on a dedicated project page at:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ash-project)

Questions about the project can be directed to:

[ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:ashproject@dhhs.vic.gov.au) or 1300 761 874.

The answers to community questions are available in the Frequently asked questions (FAQs) at:

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/emergencies/hazelwood/ash-project-faq>

Stay up to date with social media:

- Twitter: @VicGovDHHS #MorwellAshProject
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/VicGovHealth](http://www.facebook.com/VicGovHealth)

### EPA Victoria

For more information about the EPA's environmental monitoring program in Morwell and surrounding areas call EPA on 1300 372 842 or visit

<http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/hazelwood>

### Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

For more information on the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry visit [www.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au](http://www.hazelwoodinquiry.vic.gov.au)

### Senversa

More information about Senversa is available at [www.senversa.com.au](http://www.senversa.com.au)

## Project timeline

<b>February 2014</b>	Hazelwood coal mine fire burned for at least 45 days until 10 March 2014.
<b>March 2014</b>	Hazelwood Mine Fire Board of Inquiry established.
<b>May 2015</b>	Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry reopened.
<b>February 2016</b>	<i>Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Report 2015/2016 Volume III – Health Improvement</i> (Inquiry Report III) tabled in the Parliament of Victoria. This report includes Recommendation 9, relating to the Ash residue in Morwell roof cavities project.
<b>April 2016</b>	The Victorian Premier and Minister for Health announced that the Government had accepted all recommendations from Inquiry Report III, including the testing and analysis of ash residue in roof cavities, on 15 April 2016.
<b>May 2016</b>	The 2016-17 Budget allocated funding to support the implementation of the recommendations in Inquiry Report III (including Recommendation 9).
<b>June 2016</b>	Planning was underway to implement the project, including the development of a dedicated website and generic email address to facilitate the recruitment of houses for testing, and engagement of an independent expert.
<b>July 2016</b>	The procurement process to engage an independent expert closed on 22 July 2016.
<b>August 2016</b>	The successful independent expert (Senserva) was engaged via a DHHS contract. Contracts are published on <a href="http://www.tenders.vic.gov.au">www.tenders.vic.gov.au</a> .
<b>September 2016</b>	Community forums were held in Morwell. Senserva developed the <i>Sampling and Analytical Quality Plan</i> that sets out how houses were selected for testing. Senserva began collecting samples in Morwell in late-September 2016.
<b>October 2016</b>	Senserva finished collecting samples from all of the 50 selected houses in Morwell.
<b>November 2016</b>	Senserva began collecting samples from Rosedale (control site) in late-November. Samples from Morwell were tested.
<b>December 2016</b>	Senserva provided preliminary results of the testing for Morwell only. Sampling was completed in Rosedale and those samples were tested. Senserva analysed and compared the results.
<b>January 2017</b>	Community forums were held in Morwell to discuss the final results and possible next steps. Senserva started visiting people whose houses were tested to discuss the results and provide the individual reports.
<b>February 2017</b>	Senserva completed individual visits with people whose houses were tested.
<b>March 2017</b>	The project team shared the results of sampling with the Latrobe Health Assembly. The final project report will be peer reviewed in March 2017.
<b>April 2017 onwards</b>	The final report will be available in April 2017. The department will develop a user friendly summary of the report.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 761 874, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [environmental.healthunit@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:environmental.healthunit@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

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