

## 5. Comparison Community – Judi Walker

Sale has been identified as the comparison community to participate in the study along with Morwell, based on consideration of a number of factors, including:

- Rural location
- Lower exposure to the smoke event – based on CSIRO modelling
- Size – large enough to provide the participant numbers needed
- A complementary socio-demographic make up to Morwell

## 5.1 Why Sale?

There are considerable advantages in selecting Sale as the second community site to participate in the Adult Survey:

- Gippsland focus – selecting two communities in relative proximity to each other will give us a better understanding of the health trajectories in the area than we would if we selected communities from completely different regions. This detailed understanding of the region will inform future health policy and practice for Gippsland.
- Recruitment – we are hoping that selecting a community on the periphery of the mine fire event will increase participation rates because of awareness of the event, some level of exposure to the smoke, and interest in supporting other Gippsland communities.
- Logistical – selecting a community that is relatively close to Morwell means that we don't have to establish entirely separate study offices and structures
- Existing relationships – the Monash School of Rural Health has close links with the community and facilities that can be accessed.

## 5.2 Who will be asked to participate?

- We will identify a sample of eligible residents, based on age, location, and other information available from the ABS 2011 census.
- In order to identify community-wide outcomes we need a large sample – so over 5000 people will be selected and sent a letter informing them of the study and inviting them to participate.
- We need as many community members as possible to participate in the study in order to have the power to identify small or rare health outcomes.

## 5.3 What's in it for the Sale community?

- Following the health of the local community will help us to better understand the health trajectories in the Sale community. This will inform the development of health and social support programs which will benefit the local community.
- Findings from the Hazelwood Health Study are expected to inform future emergency policy and planning – something relevant to any rural community.
- The Hazelwood Health Study is expected to likely to become the framework for other research activities targeting areas of interest directly relevant to the local area – opening up a much wider array of potential outcomes. This includes potential opportunities for local medical and other health students to get involved.