



**Information sheet: Example only. Eligible residents will receive a copy in the mail in the coming months**

**Hazelwood Adult Survey & Health Record Linkage Study**

You are invited to take part in the *Hazelwood Adult Survey & Health Record Linkage Study* components of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Health Study being led by Professors Michael Abramson and Judi Walker at Monash University. Please read this Information Sheet in full before deciding whether or not to participate.

**What is the study about?**

During February and March 2014 a coal fire burned in the Hazelwood Mine causing a period of smoky conditions in the Latrobe Valley. The aim of the *Hazelwood Adult Survey & Health Record Linkage Study* is to find out whether smoke from this fire has affected the health of adults living in Morwell. Health outcomes of particular interest include effects on the heart and lungs, also psychological health and cancer. The health of adults living in Morwell will be compared with the health of adults living in Sale which was only minimally exposed to the mine fire smoke.

**Why were you chosen for this research?**

All adults who were aged at least 18 years on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2014 (the start of the mine fire event) and living within the town boundary of Morwell or selected regions of Sale are eligible and encouraged to take part in the *Hazelwood Adult Survey & Health Record Linkage Study*. Sale was selected as the most appropriate community to compare with Morwell based on several factors including smoke exposure and community characteristics.

Other parts of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Health Study are investigating the health of infants (Latrobe Early Life Follow-up Study), school-aged children (Hazelwood Schools Study) and the elderly (Impacts on Older People Study). If eligible, you may be invited to participate in those as well as in this study.

**What does participation involve?**

Participation in the *Hazelwood Adult Survey & Health Record Linkage Study* involves two main parts:

**1. Questionnaire**

You are invited to complete a questionnaire (either online or by telephone-interview) about your exposure to the mine fire smoke and your health and lifestyle. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete. If you complete the questionnaire over the phone, the interviewer will be a trained researcher from the Hunter Research Foundation ([www.hrf.com.au](http://www.hrf.com.au)).

**2. Health Record Linkage**

It can be difficult for people to remember exactly when they used a health service, or the name of a particular diagnosis received, and it may be difficult for us to contact you about your health in the future. For these reasons you are invited to give permission for the researchers to access your information from health databases such as ambulance, hospital, cancer and death records. The researchers do this by linking your name, date of birth and sex to these health records. For some linkages we need your Medicare Card number.

Linkage to these health records will be repeated in the future for as long as it remains scientifically informative to do so.

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### Possible benefits

Participants who complete the survey will be eligible to receive a \$20 Latrobe City gift card (Morwell participants), or a \$20 Shop-in-Sale e-voucher (Sale participants), which they can use at local businesses.

This study will provide valuable new information about long-term or chronic health conditions in Morwell residents and any associated impact of the mine fire smoke event. The findings will help inform the local community, their health-service providers and the State of Victoria Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) of the long-term health needs of the Latrobe Valley community.

### If you wish to participate

- You can complete the questionnaire and give written permission for health record linkage online by going to [\[URL to be inserted here\]](#) and entering your unique ID shown on the cover letter that accompanied this Information Sheet.

OR

- You can complete the questionnaire and give verbal permission for health record linkage over-the-phone by calling 1800 082 238. When you call, an interviewer may be available to administer the questionnaire immediately, or you may prefer to make an appointment time which is more convenient for you to be called back.

### If you do not wish to participate

- You can decline participation verbally by calling the Recruitment Coordinator on freecall 1800 985 899. Please quote your full name, residential address and the unique ID shown on the cover letter that accompanied this Information Sheet.

OR

- You can decline participation online by going to [\[insert URL\]](#) and select "I decline participation ...". Please enter your full name, residential address and the unique ID shown on the cover letter that accompanied this Information Sheet.

### If you do not respond to this invitation

If we do not hear from you, we will try to phone you if there is a phone number for your household listed in the Electronic White Pages to answer any questions you might have. Alternatively, we will send you a reminder letter.

### Risks and inconveniences

Risks and inconveniences involved with participation include the time taken to complete the questionnaire and potential discomfort answering questions about the mine fire event and your health. You may prefer to answer the questionnaire with a supportive family member or friend present. Alternatively, if you feel distressed it may be helpful to phone a friend or local community support group. In addition there are 24-hour counselling services available over the phone such as **Lifeline on 13 11 14**.

### Can I withdraw from the study after consenting to take part?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to agree to take part. If you do participate, you can discontinue participation, or withdraw your consent to health record linkage, at any later date up to such time that your data has been included in final reports.

### Confidentiality, privacy and data storage

Your answers to the questionnaire, and any of your information accessed through health record linkage, will be completely confidential. All of the information gained in the study will be held securely by Monash University for a minimum of five years in adherence with the University's regulations and the various provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*.

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All data will be stored in a secure, restricted-access area maintained by Monash University. The results of the study will be presented as grouped data which means that no individual participants can be identified.

**How will I be informed of the study results?**

The Morwell and Sale communities and the wider region will be kept up to date on the progress of the study and the research findings through regular community updates, media notices and via the study website [www.hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au](http://www.hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au).

**Future Investigations**

In future it is proposed that follow-up studies be undertaken to specifically investigate cardiovascular and respiratory health conditions. Based on information that you provide in the Adult Survey, you may be invited to participate in those follow-up studies. If we do contact you, you will be under no obligation to participate.

**Source of funding**

The study is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); however, the DHHS has no role in the collection, analyses and interpretation of participants' data, nor in the reporting of results.

**Enquiries, concerns or complaints**

If you have any questions about participating in this study, please contact the Recruitment Coordinator on freecall 1800 985 899 or by email at [recruitment@hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au](mailto:recruitment@hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au).

Alternatively you can contact the Principal Investigator, Professor Michael Abramson, at:  
Monash University, Department of Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine,  
The Alfred Centre, 99 Commercial Road,  
Melbourne VIC 3004  
Tel: 03 9903 0573    Email: [michael.abramson@monash.edu](mailto:michael.abramson@monash.edu)

If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this study is being conducted, please contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee, and quote project number 2015/000389, at the following address:

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Building 3e Room 111  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800  
Tel: +61 3 9905 2052    Email: [muhrec@monash.edu](mailto:muhrec@monash.edu)    Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

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**SURVEY REFERENCE CALENDAR**

If you participate in the Adult Survey, you will be asked questions about where you were at different periods of time during the mine fire event. To help prompt your memory, below we have provided a calendar of events related to the mine fire from the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2014 (the date the mine fire started) to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2014.

| Day   | Date   | Events  |
|-------|--------|---|
| Sun   | 9 Feb  | • Morwell grass fire and coal fire started  |
| Mon   | 10 Feb |   |
| Tues  | 11 Feb | • Visit to Morwell by Premier Napthine<br>• Firefighting of the mine temporarily suspended  |
| Wed   | 12 Feb |   |
| Thurs | 13 Feb | • Dr Lester issued first health alert   |
| Fri   | 14 Feb | • Community meeting arranged  |
| Sat   | 15 Feb | • CFA message 'Watch and Act – Morwell residents indoors immediately, close windows/doors/vents. Seek further information via radio.' |
| Sun   | 16 Feb |   |
| Mon   | 17 Feb |   |
| Tues  | 18 Feb | • Community meeting held at Kernot Hall   |
| Wed   | 19 Feb | • Respite Centre in Moe opened  |
| Thurs | 20 Feb | • Commercial Road Primary School and Scared Heart Primary School relocated  |
| Fri   | 21 Feb | • Community Health Assessment Centre opened at Saskia Way, Morwell  |
| Sat   | 22 Feb |   |
| Sun   | 23 Feb |   |
| Mon   | 24 Feb | • Maryvale Crescent Preschool relocated   |
| Tues  | 25 Feb |   |
| Wed   | 26 Feb | • Premier Napthine second visit to Morwell  |
| Thurs | 27 Feb | • All government-run children's services closed   |
| Fri   | 28 Feb | • Dr Lester advised vulnerable residents to relocate  |
| Sat   | 1 Mar  |   |
| Sun   | 2 Mar  |   |

| Day   | Date   | Events  |
|-------|--------|---|
| Mon   | 3 Mar  |   |
| Tues  | 4 Mar  | • St Kilda Football Club visited Morwell  |
| Wed   | 5 Mar  |   |
| Thurs | 6 Mar  |   |
| Fri   | 7 Mar  |   |
| Sat   | 8 Mar  |   |
| Mon   | 10 Mar | • Labour Day Holiday  |
| Tues  | 11 Mar |   |
| Wed   | 12 Mar |   |
| Thurs | 13 Mar |   |
| Fri   | 14 Mar |   |
| Sat   | 15 Mar |   |
| Sun   | 16 Mar |   |
| Mon   | 17 Mar | • Dr Lester lifted relocation advice  |
| Tues  | 18 Mar |   |
| Wed   | 19 Mar |   |
| Thurs | 20 Mar |   |
| Fri   | 21 Mar | • Choppers dropped in to visit Morwell primary school students                            |
| Sat   | 22 Mar |   |
| Sun   | 23 Mar |   |
| Mon   | 24 Mar | • All children's services and Maternal and Child Health Centres resumed normal operations |
| Tues  | 25 Mar | • Mine handed back from CFA to Mine Managers  |
| Wed   | 26 Mar |   |
| Thurs | 27 Mar |   |
| Fri   | 28 Mar |   |
| Sat   | 29 Mar |   |
| Sun   | 30 Mar |   |
| Mon   | 31 Mar |   |