



# Study finds students moved on from fire

THE majority of students participating in a section of the Hazelwood Health Study have recovered from the 2014 mine fire, recent analysis has found.

However, some students reported ongoing issues including dreaming about the event, feeling more restless and attempting to avoid thinking about the fire by distracting themselves with other activities.

The study assessed the psychological impacts of six weeks of exposure to smoke and ash from the Hazelwood mine fire on school-aged children.

Researchers analysed the results of face-to-face interviews held in 2017 with 46 students in grades 5, 7 and 9.

The students were primarily from Morwell schools and had completed a similar interview in 2015.

“While these findings are in line with what we found from the first round, a clear theme that emerged in this new analysis was that most students had



**DR MATTHEW CARROLL**

‘moved on’ from the Hazelwood event,” psychological impacts stream lead Dr Matthew Carroll said.

The analysis includes several suggestions from the students about how to respond to a future event, including the need for clearer communication with students on the potential impacts of the event and what they can

do to look after themselves and their families.

Dr Carroll said students highlighted the important role their family, friends and school personnel had in supporting them at the time.

The recent analysis was led by Dr Sonia Allen as part of the overall psychological stream of the Hazelwood Health Study.

Dr Carroll said the stream would now look at Naplan data as well as move forward with the adult component of psychological impacts and try to understand the determinates of distress.

“This will help response agencies to target groups within the community in future,” Dr Carroll said.

The Hazelwood Health Study is a collaboration between Monash University, Federation University, the University of Tasmania, the University of Adelaide and the CSIRO.

It is funded by the state government.