

Water Strategy and the Directions contained in that document. If water is required from the Latrobe River system of the Latrobe Valley aquifers, the decisions on water entitlements for mine rehabilitation must be appropriate and provide sufficient lead times to achieve progressive rehabilitation and the desired state of safe, stable and sustainable landforms.

c. success or otherwise of the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) to help the region transition, in light of the decline of funding made available to the LVA over successive State Budgets

REF Response:

This is a difficult question to answer with any accuracy. There is a view that the LVA has supported Hazelwood workers well, and has been the conduit for key community infrastructure.

REF is also aware that the LVA has sought to champion innovation and collaboration through the Smart Specialisation Project. The flip side is that LVA requires significant resources and is another layer of bureaucracy. The other issue is to what degree is there overlap/duplication of effort with the LVA and the Regional Office of Regional Development Victoria (RDV)? The real issue is whether better outcomes could have been achieved more efficiently through mechanisms such as RDV or a duly appointed Task Force, or existing entities like Gippsland Regional Partnerships, Committee 4 Gippsland, One Gippsland.

As concluding comments REF strongly submit that decisions on how we share and manage water resources needs to be carefully assessed having regard to intergenerational /regional interests and the critical need for decisions to be based on the best scientific and environmental considerations.

Responsible environmental stewardship must drive the key land and water resource decisions. Government and/or community cannot afford any surprises with mine rehabilitation and/or water resource management. Clearly it is desirable for the mine closures and their rehabilitation plans to have the support of the community and key stakeholders, and this challenge will require transparency and an extensive communication strategy.

Finally REF would submit that the Australian Government should be actively involved in this mine closure industry transition issue in order to optimise governmental responses and community outcomes.

Yours sincerely,
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Chair,
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