

Latrobe Valley Regional REHABILITATION STRATEGY

Overview

REHABILITATING THE LATROBE VALLEY'S COAL MINES

The Latrobe Valley's three brown coal mines – Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang – have fuelled most of Victoria's electricity generation since 1924. Hazelwood closed in 2017 and Yallourn and Loy Yang are planned to close by 2032 and 2048 respectively. Each of the Latrobe Valley brown coal mine operators are required to develop a plan to rehabilitate the mine sites in order to achieve a safe, stable and sustainable landscape once mining activity ceases.

BACKGROUND

A reopened inquiry into a coal fire that burned for 45 days at Hazelwood in 2014 found that using water to create 'pit lakes' in the areas where coal has been mined is likely to be the most viable way to achieve safe and stable rehabilitation of the mines. However, the Inquiry recognised that significant knowledge gaps existed in relation to the feasibility of this rehabilitation option, and recommended further investigations be carried out.

These investigations – geotechnical, water and land use planning studies – have been undertaken as part of the Victorian Government's preparation of the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy (LVRSS).

The studies, which were carried out by technical specialists from 2017 to 2019, considered the regional benefits and risks associated with stabilising the mine pits (or voids) by creating full or partial pit lakes.

The Strategy will provide information on the:

- regional risks that need to be considered and addressed in rehabilitation plans;
- feasibility of using water if required for safe, stable and sustainable rehabilitation; and
- possible future land uses for the rehabilitated sites in a regional context.

The final Strategy will be prepared by 30 June 2020.

THE STRATEGY

The LVRSS is being prepared in four stages.

Stage One - Project Initiation was completed in March 2017. Stage One of the LVRSS established the necessary resources, structures and plans for the project. This included consultation with key stakeholders to plan the preparation of the LVRSS over Stages Two to Four and the establishment of the Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Advisory Committee.

Stage Two - Existing Conditions Review was completed in December 2017 and provided an understanding of existing regional water and environmental conditions. This stage also saw the establishment of the Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner.

Stage Three - Modelling and Analysis was completed in July 2019 and saw the undertaking of geotechnical and water studies to determine the feasibility of the pit lake rehabilitation option. Stage Three also saw the completion of land use planning studies which culminated in a social history of the region and a draft Preliminary Land Use Vision for the Latrobe Valley.

Stage Four - Integrate Findings is due to be completed before June 2020. This stage will bring together the findings of the technical studies to prepare the final LVRSS which is due in June 2020. The final Strategy will guide mine rehabilitation planning in the Latrobe Valley for decades to come.

The LVRRS will:

- Provide confidence that government has considered the rehabilitation of the Latrobe Valley's three brown coal mines on a regional scale and over the long-term, and that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect health, property, environment and water security.
- Provide confidence that there is a process for involving the community in the rehabilitation planning for each mine that seeks opportunities for economic benefit, environmental enhancement and socially valued outcomes that are sustainable.
- Provide confidence that water and geotechnical issues related to mine rehabilitation have been considered on a regional scale.
- Provide clarity about the management of regional scale mine rehabilitation risks to inform preparation of rehabilitation and closure plans by the mine operators.
- Reflect the long timelines for the realisation of beneficial uses of the rehabilitated sites.
- Provide clarity on a pathway to access water for mine rehabilitation including conditions thereon as well as clarity on the process for building regional scale water and environmental issues and risks into rehabilitation planning for each mine.
- Provide a process for ensuring that water used during and after mine rehabilitation will be the minimum volume required to achieve safe, stable and sustainable landforms considering all reasonable alternatives.
- Allow for the consideration of any mine rehabilitation option proposed by mine operators that can be demonstrated to be maintained as a safe, stable and sustainable landform.
- Provide confidence that there is a process in place to protect and ideally enhance cultural values in the process of planning for mine rehabilitation, including water and surrounding land use.

CONTACT US

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