



What you told us January – March 2023

In the first quarter of 2023, a number of community members spoke directly with the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority team about mine rehabilitation issues, both as part of formal events and in one-on-one meetings. Community members continue to be interested in mine rehabilitation issues and when the community speaks, we listen, capture people's views and use people's comments to guide our work.

What We Did

In March 2023, the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority took part in the RMIT design studio for the second year in a row. This project is a collaboration with RMIT University and Engie Hazelwood. Through this project, Bachelor of Landscape Architecture students from RMIT University investigate the nature and role of public access to coal mines undergoing rehabilitation. Through the studio, students develop proposals for a lookout which enables greater connection between the public and the rehabilitation process. A key part of the studio was a stakeholder forum held at the community hub at Latrobe Valley GovHub, Morwell.

The aim of the stakeholder forum was to provide an understanding of the social context of mine rehabilitation and transition in Latrobe Valley. In an open environment, stakeholders provided different perspectives on the transition and rehabilitation process, and opportunities and challenges for the Latrobe Valley. Participants were invited to bring something for 'show and tell' significant to rehabilitation or transition in the Latrobe Valley. A number of 3-dimensional models were displayed as a prompt for discussion. While the stakeholder forum was designed for the benefit of the studio students, it was a meaningful opportunity for discussion between all participants about mine rehabilitation and transition and a chance for the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority to hear additional perspectives.

In the first quarter of 2023, a number of community members contacted us directly to meet with us one-on-one about mine rehabilitation. This was a chance for us to meet people individually, hear their perspectives and answer their questions.

What We Heard

As part of these contact sessions, a number of messages came through. Key themes relevant to mine rehabilitation were:

Recognition

People we spoke with expressed a desire to see the Latrobe Valley's contribution to Victoria's economic prosperity acknowledged in the transition. Mention was made of the estimated financial value of the quantities of lignite mined from the Latrobe Valley since the Yallourn power station started operations in 1921. This value was seen as a source of pride but when juxtaposed against the low socio-economic statistics of many of today's Latrobe Valley residents it was a point of sadness. This point was not about the seeking of reckoning; rather, the desire for recognition and opportunity to thrive as the Latrobe Valley moves away from brown coal being at the centre of its industry toward a different future.

Information

People we spoke with expressed the need for the community to be better informed about mine rehabilitation to enable them to be a part of the conversation. One example given was that community members could not resolve their views on pitlake mine rehabilitation solutions if they did not know whether the larger goal was for a pitlake solution featuring recreational boating and floating solar or for a fenced-off pitlake.

This sentiment echoed views expressed in the *Federation University Final Mine Void Forms, and Future Land and Water Uses: Researching the Community Perspective Final Report* where respondents said "I would not like to see a scenario where it's basically going to be fenced off, and that is a big worry for the community. So, we actually need the powers to be to be a bit more transparent with what they're saying." Participants stated the community might be more actively involved in the conversation if information was more readily available.

Vision

Individuals spoke of specific desires around economic and social opportunity, for example:

- Rehabilitated land in the Latrobe Valley transformed into a tourism hub with potential uses including a pumped hydro scheme and floating solar panels on rehabilitated pitlakes.
- Land use capitalising on tourism opportunities in the form of a wildlife sanctuary on rehabilitated land adjacent to the Hazelwood mine with recreational tourism and transport terminals linking to other tourist hubs in the state. Employment opportunities were seen as a key factor.
- Rehabilitated land housing a waste recycling facility integrated with local community groups, educating future generations about sustainable practices and providing housing, work opportunities and skills development for future generations. This was seen as an opportunity to increase social connectivity and opportunity for disadvantaged community members.



Some of these sentiments echoed the views expressed in the *Federation University Final Mine Void Forms, and Future Land and Water Uses: Researching the Community Perspective Final Report* where respondents said “So we’d like to see, as a tourist attraction, as a Latrobe Valley standout, a world-class wetland created among some of those sites. And we think that would be a great asset to the region.” Key to these individual desires was a broad vision to see rehabilitated land in the Latrobe Valley used for the benefit of the planet and the community.

Opportunity

People we spoke with were aware of the socio-economic status of residents of the Latrobe Valley. One speaker shared statistics about the health, employment, housing and mental health status of Latrobe Valley residents in comparison to other local government areas. Participants wanted to see mine rehabilitation and transition in the Latrobe Valley to act as an opportunity for people’s lives to be improved through employment, education, tourism and ensuring an attractive environment to be proud of. This echoed the views expressed in previous feedback. This echoed the views expressed in the *Federation University Final Mine Void Forms, and Future Land and Water Uses: Researching the Community Perspective Final Report* where respondents said, “This is such an opportunity ... instead of seeing it as an issue, it’s really an opportunity.”

What we will do next

We use this feedback to guide our work as we work with community, industry and government to oversee the rehabilitation of declared mine land to ensure transition to safe, stable and sustainable post-mining landforms in Victoria. We also share this feedback with stakeholders.

We continue to carry out meaningful engagement to develop strong relationships between partners, stakeholders and community. We continue to run engagement events and encourage community groups and individuals to meet with us directly.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions or comments, you can contact us by calling 1800 571 966, emailing contactus@mineland.vic.gov.au, following us on social media, or subscribing to our mailing list at www.mineland.vic.gov.au.

