WHY SHOULD PEOPLE DOWNSTREAM CARE?

As coal mining and coal-fired power generation come to an end in the Latrobe Valley, mining companies must rehabilitate the enormous open-cut pits left behind.

The proposed rehabilitation plans would require thousands of gigalitres (GL = billion litres) of water over coming decades to fill these pits and stabilise the mine walls.

This water will be taken from the Latrobe River catchment, the same river system that feeds the Lower Latrobe Wetlands, Lake Wellington and the Gippsland Lakes.

The health of these waterways support:

- Native fish, birds and wildlife
- Tourism businesses and local jobs
- Farmers and irrigators producing food and fibre
- Recreational fishing, boating and swimming
- Gunaikurnai cultural values and connection
- The internationally recognised Gippsland Lakes ecosystem

With climate change expected to reduce water availability across the region, the decisions made now about mine rehabilitation will affect how water is shared between communities, agriculture, industry and the environment for decades to come.

The good news is that community members can have a say in these decisions when we make our voice heard.

Read on to learn more >>

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Scan the QR code to access:

- Sign the petition
- Community resources
- Mine rehabilitation updates
- Fact sheets and background information
- Guides to writing a submission
- Upcoming community events and information sessions

Together, we can help protect Gippsland's rivers, wetlands and lakes while supporting the communities, industries and wildlife that depend on them.

<< Sign the petition

or go to:
ENVICT.ORG/MINEREHAB

WHO ARE WE?

Environment Victoria has been advocating for responsible mine rehabilitation and healthy waterways for more than a decade.

We work with local communities, volunteers and partner organisations to help ensure decisions about mine rehabilitation protect both people and the environment.

Contact:
COMMUNITY@ENVIRONMENTVICTORIA.ORG.AU

WHAT DO COAL MINES HAVE TO DO WITH THE GIPPSLAND LAKES?

The Latrobe Valley coal mines may be hours away from where we live, but decisions being made today about mine rehabilitation could affect the rivers, wetlands and Gippsland Lakes we all depend on.

The water needed to fill these massive mine pits comes from the same catchments that support farming, fishing, recreation, tourism, wildlife and communities across Gippsland.



What's happening now?

The Latrobe Valley contains three large open-cut coal mines: Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang.

Hazelwood closed in 2017. Yallourn is scheduled for closure in 2028, while Loy Yang is also preparing for eventual rehabilitation starting in 2035.

Mining companies are proposing to fill these pits with water, creating pit lakes that use water pressure to help stabilise the steep mine walls.

Hazelwood mine is expected to require around 637 GL of water for rehabilitation — more than the volume of Sydney Harbour. While the combined total for all three mines would drain a staggering 2,354 GL (or 2.354 trillion litres) – over the coming decades.

While it is expected that mining companies will be granted licenses to take no more than their average historical take, they will also no longer be returning treated water used for energy production back to the river, resulting in net water loss in the river overall.

The Latrobe River and estuary are already short by an estimated 129 GL of environmental flows annually, which are needed to perform their primary environmental functions. Experts say our waterways need more water, not less.

The decisions being made now about mine rehabilitation plans will determine:

- How much water is taken from the Latrobe River system
- The health and water quality of our rivers and waterways
- How impacts on downstream communities are managed

People who fish, farm, boat, work in tourism, care about wildlife or simply value healthy waterways all have a stake in what happens next.

Why do healthy river flows matter?

Healthy freshwater flows from the Latrobe River are critical to the survival of the Gippsland Lakes, one of Australia's most important coastal ecosystems and a home to migratory birds, native fish and the critically endangered Burrunan dolphin.

Healthy river flows help to:

- Maintain water quality and push back saltwater intrusion
- Support wetlands, wildlife and fish populations
- Flush stagnant water and pollution from the system
- Reduce the conditions that contribute to toxic blue-green algal blooms

Without adequate freshwater, the health of the Gippsland Lakes declines, placing increasing pressure on wildlife, local industries, and the communities that depend on this unique environment. One stark example is the major blue-green algal outbreaks experienced in recent years, which led to restrictions on recreation and seafood collection.

These challenges are being compounded by climate change. Rising sea levels are increasing salinity in the Lakes, while hotter, drier conditions are reducing freshwater inflows. Together, these pressures threaten the health and resilience of the entire system.

The consequences are already being felt through declining fish stocks and lower productivity across the Lakes. This results not only in environmental damage but also significant economic costs and impacts on industries that depend on a healthy Lakes system.

The Gippsland Lakes tourism economy is predicted to be worth $1.5 billion, making the health of the Lakes important for jobs, businesses and regional prosperity.

What can we do?

When we act together and make our voices heard, we can educate others, bring attention to these issues and ensure that our rights and interests are protected.

If you would like to get involved:

There are upcoming opportunities to shape the outcomes of decisions when mine rehabilitation plans and water applications are assessed for approvals.
If you would like to get updates and information about these, sign up via the link on the back page.

In the meantime, we will continue calling for:

- Responsible water policies that protect Gippsland's precious freshwater resources and waterways, including closing loopholes that allow mining companies to take more water than they are granted entitlement to
- A pause on new large-scale data centre approvals until robust water security safeguards are in place and local communities have been properly consulted
- Mining companies to pay for the water they extract from our rivers, with those funds reinvested in restoring the Latrobe River and strengthening the health, water quality and climate resilience of the Gippsland Lakes

You don't need to be an expert to get involved. Local knowledge and a shared interest in Gippsland's future matter too.

