Mine fire impact discussed

By FARHAAM PLUMMER

The environmental impacts of the Hazelwood mine fire were discussed at a sustainability forum at Federation University Gippsland campus on Thursday.

About 50 people from various sustainability, environmental, community and business groups attended the event hosted by Regional Centre of Excellence in Education for Sustainable Development Gippsland.

Discussions included the associated problems of the Hazelwood mine fire, how to decrease the impacts of road fire power and sustainable living practices.

Faculty of Education and Arts lecturer and ROC Giripland committee member Dr Muridah Green said participants wanted to get a sense of how the community mightRed bank having to deal with events like the mine fire and the impacts.

"People in the Latrobe Valley are exposed to a wide range of environmental, economic and social impacts from the mine being here," Dr Green said.

"Education around sustainability happens in many different ways, it happens in formal ways and informal ways.

"We're talking about schools and universities, but we're also talking about grass-root community actions and initiatives as well."

Event organiser and ROC Giripland officer, Joan McSorley said it was an ideal time to run the event, to make the community and university aware of their work.

Council to usher in a new era

Continued from page 1

"We had a good discussion. I think it was acknowledged that the pressure of this work is going to be better synched up"

Under the restructuring, councils five overarching departments will become four governance and organisational development, economic development and planning, community engagement and technical services, infrastructure and waste.

"We've taken waste and benfit management out of economic development and put it in with the tech services with a strong engineering focus," Mr Mitchell said.

"Previously we had planning in with the governance area and everyone realised that wasn't the best mix.

"Now with economic development and planning in the same department, if you are a developer you will be talking to one department." Along with this, payroll and human resources would be brought into the same department and the support team for the chief executive and mayor bolstered by the addition of the community relations and media team.

"I think that's a more traditional model," Mr Mitchell said.

Mr Mitchell is soon expected to advertise for general manager to lead the four overarching departments.

"I've invited the people in acting and existing managers who have all previously been invited to apply for those four positions and they all indicated that very clearly," Mr Mitchell said.

"We have a process to appoint people as soon. Organisations to that, it means the best people get the job."

When asked whether he was concerned the departure of an entire management team over the few months had resulted in the loss of decades of experience, Mr Mitchell said he was confident there was "ton of talent within the organisation."

"The people on the ground, they're the glue in all of this," Mr Mitchell said.

"The organisation will continue to move on."

Mr Mitchell said council would move forward in the next few weeks with the recruitment process for a permanent chief executive.

He said the restructuring would not affect staff below the general manager level, but he expected changes at lower levels would eventually be considered.

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