

**OUR HOPES  
FOR THE  
FUTURE OF  
MORWELL**



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FOR THE  
FUTURE OF  
MORWELL**

**A photographic exhibition**

This exhibition is brought to you by the Community Wellbeing Stream of the Hazelwood Health Study in conjunction with Morwell Neighbourhood House and the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design, as a celebration of the community's recovery after the Hazelwood Mine Fire.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who provided their support for this exhibition, in particular the individuals and community groups who gave up their time to have their photos taken and/or to come along to focus group discussions to talk about their hopes for the future.

Morwell Swimming Club  
Rose Garden Walkers  
Voices of the Valley  
Latrobe Roller Derby Team  
Morwell Neighbourhood House  
Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault  
Life Education  
The Free Library and The Free Store  
Latrobe Valley Chess Club  
Asbestos Council of Victoria / GARDS  
St Mary's Anglican Church, Morwell  
Morwell Junior Fire Brigade  
Girl Guides Morwell  
Environment Protection Authority  
Morwell Rose Garden Group  
St Luke's Opportunity Shop  
Latrobe Valley Express  
United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Clive Hutchison | Photographer                               |
| Neale Stratford | Printing and Exhibition Mount              |
| Ian Brown       | Graphic Design                             |
| Tracie Lund     | Morwell Neighbourhood House<br>Coordinator |

Hazelwood Health Study Exhibition Project Team

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Federation University Marketing and Communications  
Federation University Faculty of Education and Arts  
Switchback Gallery at the Gippsland Centre for Art and  
Design  
Morwell Neighbourhood House  
Morwell Art and Framing  
Pazzaz Printing, Morwell  
Food Co. on Franklin

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## **Photographer's statement**

Actor and director Clint Eastwood said "Sometimes if you want to see a change for the better, you have to take things into your own hands". This sentiment is at the heart of the image making. As acts of empowerment, each organisation and individual taking part in the photography was challenged to look forward and consider an object that embodied their envisaged future for Morwell. No direction was given regarding the choice of object that could represent that future. The style of the image-making is based on similar cropping and relative positioning, but not posturing, of the hands. The offering of the future vision is entirely gestured by the individual in each case. A monochromatic treatment is overlaid on the participants in every image; uniting them in their common cause, and visually highlighting the chosen object.

Clive Hutchison  
Gippsland Centre for Art and Design

## **A note on the poems**

The 'poems' in this catalogue and the exhibition were created from the words of people who were interviewed or were part of a focus group for the Hazelwood Health Study Community Wellbeing Stream. I edited and pared back their words, keeping their essence, and arranged them on the page in a poem-like format, to reveal, I hope, the power of what people said. Always only their words.

Sue Whyte  
Hazelwood Health Study: Community Wellbeing  
Research Team

## **How this exhibition was created**

This photographic exhibition of people's hopes for the future of Morwell has its roots in two unexpected places: the Hazelwood mine fire in 2014 and an academic study into community recovery from that fire. The Hazelwood mine fire burned for 45 days in February and March 2014, shrouding the surrounding communities – especially Morwell – in smoke and ash.

Strong calls by the community for an investigation into the health impacts led to the Department of Health's (now the Department of Health and Human Services) decision to fund a ten year study of the potential health effects of this smoke event (known as the Hazelwood Health Study<sup>1</sup>). As well as streams focusing on cancer rates, respiratory, cardiovascular, and psychological health, and the mine fire's impact on babies and older people, the Health Study has also been researching the impact the smoke event had on community wellbeing.

This exhibition came out of work undertaken by the Community Wellbeing Stream in the Hazelwood Health Study during 2016 and 2017. One of our main aims has been to find out from the community how the smoke event impacted on community wellbeing. Part of our initial plans was for us to talk to community members about the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au/>

effectiveness of community rebuilding activities, and find out how these may have aided recovery following the smoke event.

A key issue that emerged during our research was the desire for the development of a long-term vision for Morwell and the Latrobe Valley. It was also evident that recovery needs to address the broader challenges that have impacted upon Morwell and the Latrobe Valley, including the ongoing impacts of the privatisation of the power industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the closure of the Hazelwood Power Station in March 2017. People want to know what the future holds and they want to have an active voice in those discussions and to be part of the decision-making process.

In 2017 we began working with community organisations on a project to foster community recovery and wellbeing. We initially invited community members to talk about what it was like to live in Morwell, what needed to change, and what were their hopes for the future. Our plan was to work with two or three community organisations and their members on a project to foster community recovery and wellbeing. The exact nature of the project was developed through the partnership between the community participants and the researchers. What emerged from these discussions was the idea for a photographic exhibition, on the theme of 'Our hopes for the future of Morwell'.

However, coordinating this proved to be difficult for community groups. On the basis of feedback from the groups we were working with in the community we agreed we would change the way the exhibition would be created. Rather than basing it on the work of a few community groups, the exhibition was now to be based on participation of up to 50 members of various community groups, who were to think of some object that symbolised their hopes for the future of Morwell. Individuals were then invited to attend a photographic session kindly hosted by the Morwell Neighbourhood House. Each individual was to hold this object while it was photographed, as well as explain what the object represented in terms of Morwell's future.

Out of this process twenty eight photographs with their captions were produced, enlarged and framed for exhibiting. The photographs were taken by Clive Hutchison of the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design at Federation University. The objects were photographed in colour but Clive chose to portray the hands, arms and background in black and white, making the object 'pop' out at the viewer. The objects – mostly everyday items such as a shoe, a house key, a shopping basket, a baby doll – are accompanied by captions provided by the community group or individual holding them, showing the symbolic meaning they have for that person or group. The hands themselves add a further layer of meaning. When we look closely at them, we see hands hardened by physical labour, old hands and young hands, hands with a

firm grip on their object, hands cradling their object lovingly, hands held open in acceptance, as well as the hands of two different people, one supporting the other.

While at first glance, a photographic exhibition may seem to have little to do with the Hazelwood Health Study, photographs can powerfully tell the story of recovery, which in turn is linked to wellbeing at the community level. To emphasise this point, it is worth quoting from a recent essay published in *Gippslandia* by the Director of the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design, Bryce Ives. Writing of the need for a vibrant creative and cultural ecology in regional communities, he makes the point that:

[C]reativity, art-making and storytelling, create a sense of pride, wellbeing and cohesion. My ten years of work with the ABC's Heywire Regional Youth Summit project has taught me the wellbeing of people living in rural Australia is an unresolved problem of national significance. But it has also taught me about the power of storytelling ... Storytelling and creativity can lead to change.<sup>2</sup>

The images in this exhibition crystallise some of the multi-faceted hopes and dreams of a range of groups and individuals, who are only a fraction of the diversity and richness that make up the wider community of Morwell and the Latrobe Valley. They are the 'tip of the iceberg' in

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<sup>2</sup> Bryce Ives, 'Why build theatres and galleries when people are unemployed?' *Gippslandia*, Spring 2017, issue 4, 15.

representing this community. However it is our hope that in bringing together these twenty eight photographs into an exhibition, that the reflections, debates and conversations they provoke will draw many more voices into this community-wide conversation at this very significant moment in Morwell's history, as it grapples with rapid changes, draws on its hidden and not-so-hidden strengths, and moves forward into the future.

- Michelle Duffy, Sue Whyte & Sue Yell, Hazelwood Health Study: Community Wellbeing Research Stream

There is a gum tree  
at the bus terminal  
in Commercial Rd Morwell  
It is illuminated at night

This gum tree  
has been there for a  
considerable amount of time  
Strong and steady  
beautiful in all its glory  
growing against the odds

Through all that has  
been going on in Morwell  
It stands as a beacon  
silent and strong

People passing  
not taking much notice  
still it continues to grow  
This is what  
the people of Morwell  
will continue to do  
Grow and renew  
against all the odds



***“That the people of Morwell will continue  
to grow and renew against all the odds”***

Gippsland Asbestos Related Diseases Support (GARDS)



*“That all families in the region have access to safe and stable housing”*

Christina Melrose: Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault



*“A strong media, a strong community”*

Latrobe Valley Express

Freedom for girls  
to do anything they want,  
that there are no stereotypes  
of what  
and who  
a girl is.  
We can do  
whatever  
the boys can do.  
Why can't we?



*“Empowering girls and young women to grow into confident,  
self-respecting, responsible community members”*

Morwell Girl Guides



*“Our dream is that all children in Gippsland receive Life Education”*  
Healthy Harold – Life Education



*“Dignity and respect for everyone in the community”*  
The Gippsland Period Project Team, Morwell Neighbourhood House



*“To see more children involved in swimming clubs, improving their skills, health, fitness and water safety”*

Morwell Swimming Club



*“For more people to be engaged with the community and be positive about Morwell”*

Morwell Junior Fire Brigade

Even though you live in one town,  
you are so close to the other towns,  
you're all connected,  
it's a network of communities  
You have that connection with people  
When you walk down the street  
people still make eye contact  
and say hello  
You don't get that  
in many places anymore.



*“That people give each other a helping hand and build a future together”*

Melinda



*“That all the voices of Morwell are listened to and valued”*  
Hazelwood Health Study: Community Wellbeing research team,  
Federation University, Australia



*“That Gippsland can roll with the punches”*  
Latrobe City Roller Derby

Really supporting each other,  
especially those feeling displaced.  
I want to see people  
lifting each other up,  
supporting each other  
and businesses.  
Just being friendly to each other  
out on the street.  
These things go a really long way.  
How awesome would it be  
to walk down the street in Morwell  
and not see empty shops?  
This is somewhere that's our home,  
it's our lifelong home  
and there has been the risk lately  
of that not being a possibility  
because there's not the opportunities  
to stay on the area.  
So my big hope is  
that we all might have  
that chance to get to stay here,  
and that we thrive  
not just survive.



*“A greener future”*  
Frank, Morwell Neighbourhood House



*“Greater economic diversity and job opportunities”*

Morwell Neighbourhood House



*“To open the door to conversations we want to have with each other and access to books without any barriers”*

Morwell Little Free Library and Morwell Free Store

It's going to be  
communities working together  
rather than being told  
because we've always been told  
It's time the community  
has their voice  
and can actually  
be part of what happens  
What would you like for the future?  
What do you think we can create?



*“Strength in Diversity”*  
Environment Protection Authority



*“To breathe life and vibrancy into the Morwell community”*  
Prue Moston-Duggan: Gippsland Centre Against Sexual Assault



*“For upgrades and improvements to make Morwell Fire Brigade even stronger”*  
Morwell Junior Fire Brigade



*“A new citizen, a new home, a new future”*

Phillip Dean



*“To have more shops to shop in and work in”*

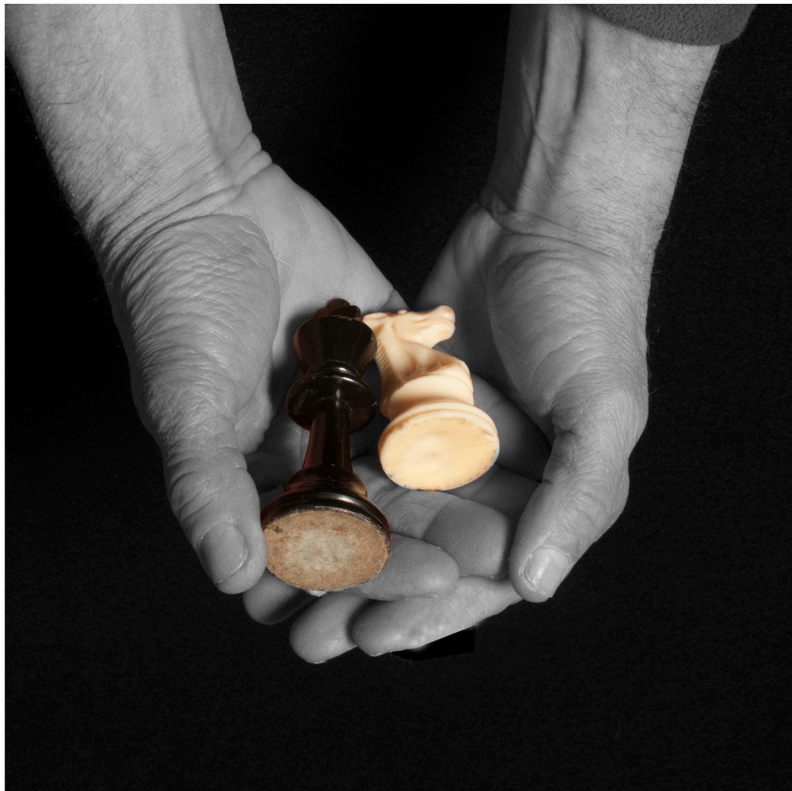
Morwell Junior Fire Brigade

Think outside the box.  
Develop networks  
then access these networks  
to find opportunities,  
to build on those relationships  
The whole thing about networking,  
and connecting,  
making new relationships,  
growing together  
and [being] nurturing  
is important.



*“Energy security in the Latrobe Valley: We have the skills”*

Voices of the Valley



*your*  
"Check  mate"  
Latrobe Valley Chess Club



*"Connecting the Morwell community through friendships and fitness"*  
Rose Garden Walking Group

The people  
real people  
of wide and varied  
backgrounds and cultures  
Many who experienced  
the privatisation of the power stations  
the loss of thousands of jobs  
the disaster of the mine fire  
I like Morwell  
because of  
the resilience  
of its people

The Morwell Rose Garden  
community involvement  
being a volunteer  
supporting this  
internationally  
recognised  
Rose Garden  
A garden visited  
and loved  
by visitors  
from all over  
A garden  
that tells the world  
that Morwell  
is so much more  
than power stations



***“Everything coming up roses”***

The Morwell Rose Garden Group



*“For Morwell to thrive and grow”*  
Janet, St.Luke’s Opportunity Shop



*“Have you seen the Boyd?  
That more people see the beauty of Morwell”*  
St Mary’s Anglican Church Morwell



*“A brighter future for the children”*  
Vicky, Morwell Neighbourhood House



*“An active future for Morwell, one that puts its best foot forward  
and a community that can think on its feet.”*

Shaun Mallia

We all want a really good future  
for Latrobe Valley,  
it does matter  
what happens here  
we can't afford to mess it up  
How do we now move  
to get where we need to go  
but do it in a way  
that we take  
the community with us?



*“Leading the way for a bright future for Morwell”*

Tracie

