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Hazelwood chimneys an ongoing risk

The structural integrity of the eight Hazelwood Power Station chimneys is deteriorating rapidly, ENGIE Hazelwood has warned.

The eight Hazelwood chimneys, which have doubled their original design life, have been barricaded off since 2016 because of serious safety concerns, with an exclusion zone remaining in place.

The warning comes in response to Latrobe City Council's decision to recommend the eight chimneys be listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Station Director with the Hazelwood Rehabilitation Project, Wayne Buckley, said since the Power Station had ceased operation and there was no heat passing through the chimneys, they had deteriorated more quickly than would normally occur.

Technical reports from independent external consultant, Jacobs, have identified the chimneys as "lacking long term structural integrity" however consider them to be stable in the short term.

Mr Buckley said continued spalling did pose falling material risks but more importantly, created weak points that impacted the integrity of the shell.

"The upper steel walkways and their fixings to the chimney are for the most part all in a failing state," he said. "All access ladders require constant inspection and repair to allow access to the top in order to perform the annual inspections, involving high rope access work.

"The technical reports show that the upper structural bands are also in a rapidly declining state and are critical for the integrity of the last upper section. The internal brick-work plays a large part in the stability by acting as a ballast and is in a failed state requiring on going repair."

Mr Buckley said ENGIE Hazelwood had spent in excess of \$3 million just on remediation work since the business closed on 31 March 2017.

"These repairs and maintenance, which are reassessed every 12 months and are signed off by Jacobs, are to maintain the chimneys until they are ready to be demolished in around two years. The chimneys are designed for an operating Power Station and not to stand indefinitely on their own.

"It is estimated it would cost tens of millions to bring the chimneys up to standard and then further ongoing expense to maintain them.



“People need to understand the visual appearance of the chimneys will rapidly decline so you are likely to end up with an eyesore rather than an aesthetically structure without large sums of money spent.”

Mr Buckley acknowledged that some people in the community had an attachment to the landmark structures however said the safety of employees and the community was paramount.

“We have been sharing this information openly with our community over the last 12 months, detailing their deterioration.

“Latrobe City councillors have been invited to discuss these technical studies with us to assist them in understanding how serious this issue is however to date, they have not requested any information.”

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