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676911 EXT 297

18th April, 1969.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN
OF THE STATE ELECTRICITY
COMMISSION, DR. W. H. CONNOLLY

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12 midnight, Friday, 18th April

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FUTURE OF TOWN OF YALLOURN

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The State Electricity Commission will put into effect a number of important proposals in connection with the future of the town of Yallourn in the Latrobe Valley.

These proposals are to allow for winning of valuable deposits of brown coal from an area which is now covered by portion of the town.

The proposals are announced at this stage mainly to remove the uncertainty which has existed for some time among Yallourn residents.

The Commission has made plans to ensure that there will be no sudden upheaval of Yallourn residents.

Although it will be necessary to clear 1,000 houses in the town and find a similar number of houses elsewhere, there will be 25 years in which to achieve this result. It will be many years before there is a noticeable reduction in the number of houses.

In 1961 the Commission pointed out that there was a considerable quantity of brown coal under Yallourn which could be won economically and that it may be needed after the year 1995. A public statement was made then so that all with a long-term interest in the town should be aware of possible development well in advance.

Since then a decision has been made to build a new power generating station at Yallourn - Yallourn "W" - which will increase the amount of coal required from Yallourn open cut. This has made it necessary to review the future programme for the enlargement of the cut.

Investigations have been made over a long period to determine more precisely the extent of the coal deposits below Yallourn township and to define the boundaries of open cut workings in the township area.

These investigations have resulted in the Commission's present plan to win coal under Yallourn with the gradual attrition of the town between the early 1980's and the year 2000.

The proposal calls for the clearing of some 200 houses in the south-eastern section of the town by 1985, followed by the removal of houses and buildings in the main town by about 1995 to 2000.

An exhaustive investigation has shown that on both economic and technical grounds the development of Yallourn open cut - which is essential to meet Victoria's growing electricity requirements - should continue through the Yallourn town area.

Yallourn was built by the Commission in the 1920's for its construction and operating work force, and was originally a most attractive town by comparison with the surrounding communities.

Today most houses in the town are over 30 years old and none has been built in the last 20 years. Many are nearly 50 years old and the cost of maintaining them has become excessive.

Practically all the houses in Yallourn will have become obsolete by the year 2000.

Within the next 10 to 15 years, as open cut workings develop and Yallourn "W" Power Station is brought into service, the town will become less attractive, with major works close to it on three sides.

Generally, houses will be retired as they become vacant. The actual rate of transfer of Yallourn residents will be kept to a minimum.

Occupants of houses in the south-east area of the town, the first to be affected, will be offered alternative accommodation in other parts of the town as houses become vacant so that this area will be cleared by 1985.

It will be necessary to limit the continued occupation of Yallourn houses by people who retire or leave the Commission's service after about 1972 to avoid problems which would arise with an increase in the older and less mobile residents.

This will not affect retired people and widows living in Yallourn at present, although there may be some need for them to move to other houses in the town so that specific areas can be vacated in accordance with the works programme.

The Commission will confer with the Housing Commission and local municipalities to ensure that there will be adequate and suitable accommodation available for rental by retired people in nearby towns.

The effect on businesses will be discussed with the Yallourn Town Advisory Council and the Yallourn Chamber of Commerce. The Commission will progressively reduce rentals for Yallourn traders whose trade will be affected because of reduced population.

In addition, compensation will be paid for improvements of community properties such as churches and clubs as these properties have to be vacated. The question of advance compensation to churches will be negotiated if the circumstances require.

While the question of compensation has been considered here only in general terms an assurance is given by the Commission that it will handle the matter with sympathy and understanding.