

LIFE AFTER COAL

A Documentary Film



LOGLINE

A town sits on the precipice of one of Australia's largest coal mines — in the wake of industrial collapse community art helps the town discover a new identity as it transitions towards something new.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Life After Coal is set against the backdrop of Morwell, a Victorian mining town perched on the edge of the world's largest open-cut brown coal mine.

With the next mine closing by 2028, the economic landscape of an area once responsible for producing 85% of Victoria's electricity is set to change drastically.

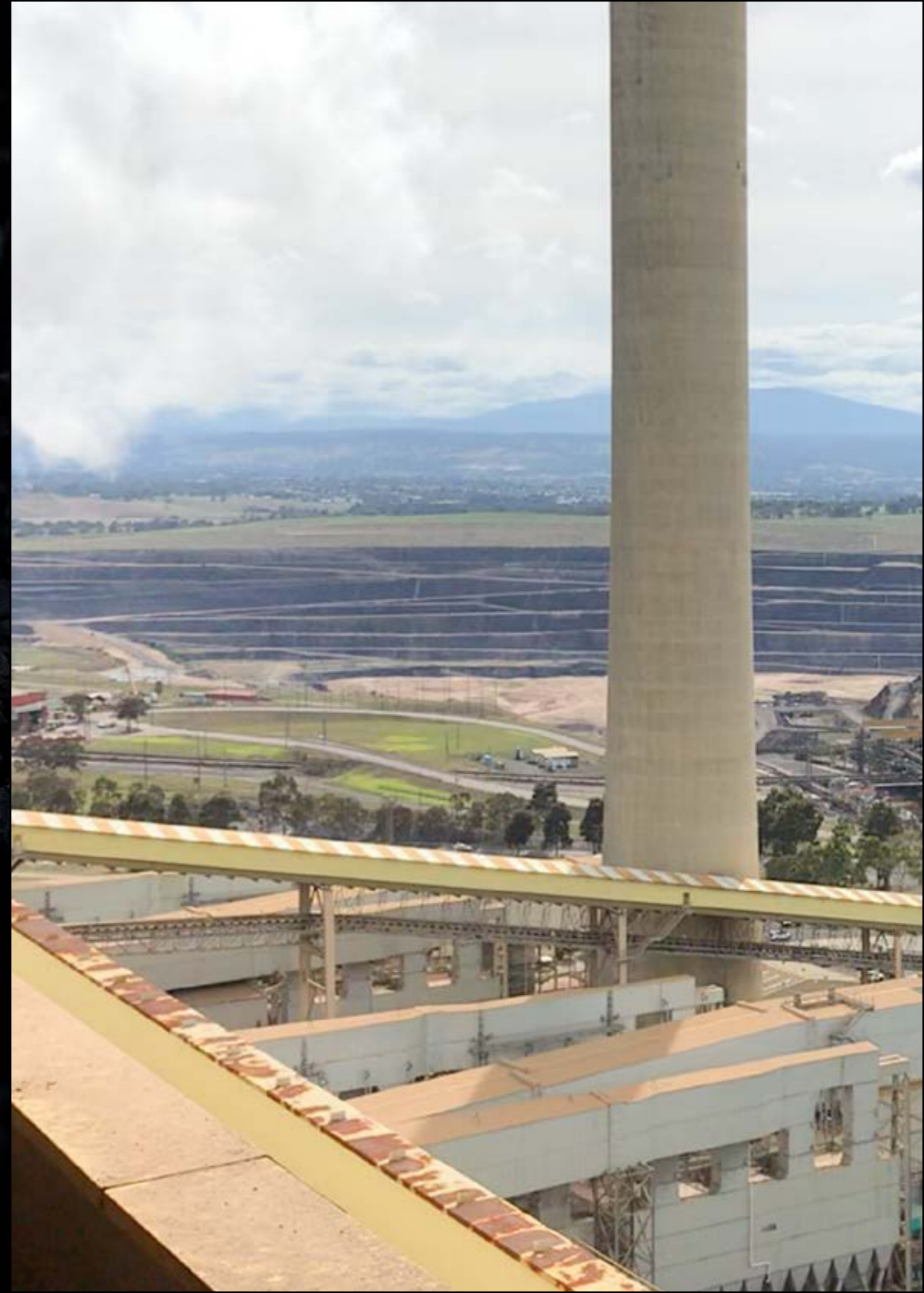
A group of colourful local artists set out to create new public artworks that delve into the inherited wicked problem facing their home. Through exploration of identity, technology, history and politics the artworks help the townspeople to envision a future and process the collective trauma of the end of the fossil fuel era. Paving the way for what life after coal could look like in Australia and the world.

PRODUCTION PHASE

We are in development around the central story and impact campaign. We've started documenting and shooting events as they unfold.

CREATIVE STYLE

Life After Coal is an arts doc, combining observational footage, the local artist's works, commissioned animations and paintings, and archive and cinematic illustrative footage. The unique landscape of the power industry and mines serve as the visual backbone of the film, showcasing the depleted and decaying rural areas and the environmental destruction, as well as the pockets of life and beauty that still call the area home.



THEMES

The film's multi-character narrative allows us to follow up on several themes. The central being, identity—what does life after coal look like in Australia? Secondary themes include the cultural shift away from fossil fuels, the power of art and the role of art in society to facilitate difficult conversations, the deepening socio-economic class divide and the global impact of climate change.



Photo by Pollyannar



DIRECTORS STATEMENT

When I was a kid, growing up in Morwell, I didn't realise there was anything unique about my town existing alongside a giant mine. I used to play with my cousins in the park that bordered the mine; we would climb up the back fence and try to throw stones all the way across the road into the gaping void. My Dad, who worked at Hazelwood, had my sister and I call the looming power station 'the cloud factory', because of the soft fluffy white plumes of smoke that constantly billowed out of the chimney stacks, right by our house.

I didn't know that Morwell was the epicentre of Victoria's electricity and that my community played a vital role in powering the state, but as the State Electricity Commission (SEC) was disbanded and privatisation came to pass, I began to see the cost. The sense of social and rural decay was palpable.

As a teenager, coming from The Valley it appeared my choices seemed limited. I watched as my classmates dropped out of school at a rapid rate. Some got pregnant, some got addicted to drugs, and some went to work in the mines seeking a way out of poverty.

I got out via higher education, and upon my return a decade later, I found a community in the swings of transition.

I want to intimately explore what happens to communities as their industries are closed down and their collective identities, for better or worse, are forced to change.

Using the hybrid, collage format, showcasing a range of local artists, I want to use this documentary as a tool for change. If we can help The Valley imagine a new future, then other post-industrial towns around Australia and the world can benefit from the same possibilities.



PRODUCERS STATEMENT

Having grown up on a farming property in the Latrobe Valley through the millennial drought and bushfires, against the backdrop of the power stations, I have been cognisant of the impacts of the changing climate my entire life.

For the Latrobe Valley, coal-fired power is no longer a safe or sustainable option and there is no clear transitional plan towards renewable energy or anything else. The loss of industry and the physical scars of mining have very real human consequences that are going to be felt for generations to come.

While there are many people putting in the work to figure out our options, a plan has yet to be made by those in power and the community is left without a vision for the future. I believe it is our role, as creatives and artists, to help people imagine futures that they may otherwise be unable to envision.

Over the course of our film, we will document the political and social landscape as decisions on how to deal with the mines are made and use art as a tool to reimagine the identity of the Latrobe Valley.

I have a background in grassroots activism, which guides my philosophy as a producer. I am passionate about creating change and bringing light to stories that are of significance to our times with a strong focus on human-centred narratives. I will guide this project with an emphasis on ethics, inclusivity, and diversity. I truly believe this project is an accessible and timely story about one town's journey, that is reflective of a global shift that is underway.



MULTIMEDIA AND IMPACT

IMPACT

Our project was a part of the 2020 New Perspective Pitch Lab, an initiative by Doc Society, AFTRS, Screen NSW and the Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC), to help emerging non-fiction talent with a social impact message. As well as the Doc Society and AIDC's 2021 Art and Impact Fellowship, designed to help documentary filmmakers create an impact campaign alongside their films.

Participating in these initiatives have solidified our commitment to the ethical production of this documentary with the wellbeing of our participants, crew and audience members in mind.

We will be creating an impact campaign which will leverage this film to make the maximum impact it can to facilitate positive change for the Latrobe Valley.

COAL FACE

To expand the scope of the stories we can tell, and to contribute to the impact of the documentary, we've created Coal Face. A six part podcast series featuring a range of experts, activists and locals in an accessible retell format. The podcast launched in Feb of 2022. You can find Coal Face on all podcast streaming platforms, or listen to it on the website at: coalfacepodcast.com

Synopsis: Best friends and Gippslanders Josie and Steph try to unpack what life after coal could look like in Australia, a nation still reliant on fossil fuels, one story at a time.



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