



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Petition: HRL Coal fired Power Station**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 9 February 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Thursday, 9 February 2012  <b>Page</b> 72  <b>Questioner</b>  <b>Speaker</b> Thomson, Kelvin, MP</p>	<p><b>Source</b> House  <b>Proof</b> Yes  <b>Responder</b>  <b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Mr KELVIN THOMSON** (Wills) (16:35): I present a petition from 11,916 petitioners calling on the House to withdraw federal funding for the proposed new coal fired power station in Victoria, called HRL, and invest in a clean renewable energy future for Victoria instead.

*The petition read as follows—*

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Australian citizens draws to the attention of the House the Federal and Victorian Governments funding of \$150 million toward a new polluting coal-fired power station in Victoria, called HRL. At a time when Australia is taking historic steps to act on climate change, this coal-fired power station will pump millions of tonnes of greenhouse pollution into our atmosphere each year. We believe in a clean, renewable energy future for Victoria not new polluting coal. We the undersigned call on the House to withdraw all federal funding for this project and invest in a clean, renewable energy future for Victoria instead.

from 11,916 citizens

Petition received.

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON:** Victoria currently has 120 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year. Victoria has a legislated target, it is Victorian law, that this must reduce by 20 per cent by 2020—in other words, come down by 24 million tonnes a year. I am told by Environment Victoria that, if the HRL 600-megawatt power station proceeds, it will produce around four million tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

**Mr Chester:** Why don't we shut down the whole Latrobe Valley then?

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON:** The member talked about city members showing country members some respect. I listened to his nonsense about the Alpine National Park in silence. He should provide the same courtesy.

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gippsland will remain silent. He was heard in silence, as will be the honourable member for Wills.

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON:** It is hard to see how we can meet a target which is minus 24 million

tonnes if we proceed with projects that are plus four million tonnes. The only money this project has so far is government money. The Howard government allocated it \$100 million in 2007, but the money has not yet been spent, as the conditions for spending the money have not been met. The state government allocated \$50 million. I understand most of this money has not yet been spent. The HRL project has no private money. Environment Victoria has advised me that in 2009 HRL lost their major Chinese partner, who withdrew their 50 per cent stake and are no longer involved. In 2011 Australia's big four banks all announced that they would not be involved in the project, and in October 2011 a number of international banks declared that they too would not finance the proposed power station, with HSBC indicating that HRL was too polluting for them to invest in. According to Environment Victoria, HRL's project costs have blown out—from \$750 million in 2007 to at least \$1.1 billion now.

The Commonwealth government is presently reviewing this proposed outlay, and the state government should be doing the same. The Commonwealth government is committed to producing a budget surplus next year, which is not easy given the global economic circumstances, and there are better ways to spend, or not spend, \$100 million. And the state government says it cannot afford to underground powerlines in bushfire prone areas, even though the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission says it is a bad idea to have our electricity infrastructure and assets above ground on days of high fire danger risk.

The state government says this power plant is necessary to meet Victoria's power needs, but they put roadblocks in the way of renewable energy. They are requiring wind energy proposals to have the consent of every person living within two kilometres of the turbines. Seriously, have you ever heard of any other item of energy or transport infrastructure where this is the case—freeways, airports or power stations? I have constituents who are opposing the Brunswick terminal station upgrade who would give their right arm to have a two-kilometre-wide power of veto. The state government is ringbarking renewable energy while bankrolling fossil fuels.

On Monday last week the United Nations High Level Panel on Global Sustainability delivered its report to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. It has some heavy-duty players on it. I had the pleasure of listening to them at the United Nations in New York last year: Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland; Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa; Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd; and the former Prime Minister of Mozambique, Luisa Diogo. Among 56 recommendations, this panel recommended that governments should phase out subsidies for fossil fuels by 2020. I repeat: the United Nations High Level Panel on Global Sustainability last week recommended that governments phase out subsidies for fossil fuels by 2020. The HRL grants would be a good place to start.

The member opposite asked about jobs. People will naturally ask about jobs. This power station is likely to be built overseas, so there is not much in the way of construction jobs there. I am told that HRL said to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal that there would be 35 ongoing operational jobs, so there will be more jobs in alternative uses of the money promoting the renewable energy economy, which is the economy of the future. (*Time expired*)

The SPEAKER: The petition lodged by the member for Wills is received pursuant to standing order 207(b)(iii). I understand that it has been approved by the Petitions Committee.