

ADJOURNMENT
Coburg Solar Village
House of Representatives 13/09/2007

[Mr KELVIN THOMSON](#) (Wills) (4.51 p.m.)—Since it came to power, the federal government have done nothing of any consequence in the electorate of Wills. When I complain about this, they say, 'This is because your area does not apply for anything.' That is absolute nonsense, and I want to put before the House one application which I believe is particularly meritorious and which this government has rejected.

The Moreland Energy Foundation brought together a consortium of partners to lodge a strong application under the Solar Cities program. The application is known as the Coburg Solar Village. The Moreland Energy Foundation was the first and, I believe, still the only organisation in Australia dedicated solely to reducing energy consumption within a local community. The Coburg Solar Village would result in a concentration of solar photovoltaic, solar thermal, energy efficiency, load management and cost reflective pricing in one of the most culturally and socially diverse municipalities in Australia.

The complete Coburg Solar Village project will cost \$10.2 million to deliver, \$4.9 million of which—less than half—is being requested of the Solar Cities program. The consortium will contribute \$5.4 million of resources to the project, including substantial contributions from the energy retailers Origin Energy and AGL. The Victorian government would contribute up to \$1.8 million to the project, demonstrating a real commitment to the Coburg Solar Village project.

This project is a terrific opportunity to show how renewable energy generation and energy efficiency can be placed on a sustainable economic footing. By combining solar photovoltaic generation with gas cogeneration within a significant urban redevelopment site, the project utilises the financial and technical suitability of gas cogeneration to meet baseload elasticity and heat requirements and absorbs PV capital cost, generation capacity and intermittency issues. The project utilises PV at scale to effectively schedule generation to contribute to peak demand and supplement on-site electricity services.

The Coburg Solar Village would install over 20 kilowatts of solar photovoltaic capacity in its first year. The Pentridge Village development site would host a 50-kilowatt PV array integrated with a 300-kilowatt gas fired cogeneration plant. Solar panels would adorn public walkways and recreation areas. The combined generation system would provide electricity for residential apartments, commercial operations and body corporate services. The heat load would be used for space heating and absorption cooling, swimming pool heating, supermarket refrigeration and hot water supply. The Coburg Solar Village also would recruit 100 households and businesses to install solar photovoltaic systems.

The Moreland Energy Foundation has an outstanding track record in achieving community take-up of energy efficiency and emission reduction programs. One would have thought that this government, which claims to be interested in practical measures to tackle greenhouse gases, would jump at the chance to fund this program. But, sadly, it has not. It has chosen to fund Solar Cities projects in areas of more strategic political significance for it. It has no interest in the electorate of Wills or in the cities of Moreland and Mooney Valley. Indeed, it has botched the whole Solar Cities program. I have spoken to proponents of the program in other cities and they are deeply unimpressed with the two-year delay

and the way in which they have been mucked around throughout the entire process.

The federal government's utter lack of interest in Wills stands in stark contrast to the state government. By way of example, the Victorian Labor government established the Victorian Space Science Education Centre at Strathmore Secondary College, located in the electorate of Wills. I pay tribute to the former education minister, Mary Delahunty, for her far-sightedness in doing this and also to the centre's founder and director, Michael Pakakis. I was delighted to see that, a few weeks ago, Michael Pakakis and co-founder Phillip Spencer were acknowledged for their commitment to science education by La Trobe University when they were awarded the Dean's Medal for Outstanding Service to Science and Engineering.

The centre is going from strength to strength. In August it also held an engineering and science careers expo in collaboration with Engineers Australia's National Committee for Space Science. They had representatives from industry such as Boeing and Hawker de Havilland and representatives from universities and TAFE colleges discussing courses with students, discussing their work and talking about their experiences of studying and working in a scientific field.

This is a sensational initiative—forward looking and thinking about our planet, just like the Coburg Solar Village. I urge the federal government to reconsider its rejection of the solar village. *(Time expired)*