

Kelvin Thomson MP
Federal Member for Wills

Tuesday 4th December 2007
'Farewell and Thank You' evening for Jim Downey CEO of Moreland Energy
Foundation
Brunswick Town Hall

The Moreland Energy Foundation was established with money from the former Coburg and Brunswick Electricity Supply Departments.

The Kennett Government Minister at the time Rob McLellan, wanted desperately to somehow claw back that money from the two Councils. He was probably only prevented from doing so by that provision of the Constitution which safeguards property rights.

I have a distinct recollection that it was Rob McLellan who coined the phrase, The People's Republic of Moreland, so I imagine the irony of the People's Republic of Moreland being protected by the property rights clause in the constitution was not lost on him.

Over the years, and particularly under the leadership of Jim Downey, it strikes me that MEFL and the cause for which it stands has undergone a distinct transformation from fringe to fashionable, from militant to mainstream, from rebel to respectable.

It is quite possible that there are some in MEFL who don't particularly aspire to be respectable, but there is no doubt in my mind that this transformation, and Jim's role in it, has been a very good thing.

For the battle about energy sources has become a primal battle. The planet cannot afford to have a glorious defeat on this one. We cannot be a voice crying in the wilderness, we have to win this. Defeat is not an option.

So Jim we thank you very much for your efforts. You go out on a high, with all the funding now in place- \$10 million of it- for the Coburg Solar Village. Jim Downey has calm and inner strength. He comes across as both laconic and intense at the same time. He reminds me a bit of that old line about the duck, smooth and effortless above the waterline, but paddling frantically beneath it. I wish you and your family all the best for the future. Well done.

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