



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Government must keep Hazelwood open

The prospect of a Hazelwood Power Station closure within months is unacceptable and the Victorian government must step in to take it over to ensure national energy security. Hazelwood supplies a quarter of Victoria's baseload electricity, but also helps power other states such as South Australia, particularly on calm days when wind power is useless.

Even Blind Freddy knows closing down a quarter of Victoria's baseload power generation will result in job losses, rising electricity bills, and likely brownouts and blackouts during peak demand. The only way to avoid such a disaster is to keep Hazelwood open until at least equivalent base load power generation is online. If the Andrews state government fails to do this, and foolhardily relies on intermittent renewables instead, it will be complicit in an impending economic catastrophe. Victoria will lose its remaining heavy industries, such as its last aluminium smelter at Portland, and its most poor and vulnerable citizens will be subject to extreme austerity, unable to afford electricity and unable to rely on it even if they could afford it.

Since the restructuring (job-slashing in preparation for privatisation) of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria commencing in 1989; the Kirner government's 40 per cent privatisation of Loy Yang B Power Station to US power company Mission Energy; and the Kennett government's full privatisation of the state's electricity assets, our energy security is now at the mercy of foreign investors. In the Latrobe Valley alone, power industry jobs reduced from a pre-restructuring peak of 10,000 in 1988 to less than 4,000 by 1995 and around 3,000 today. The once-thriving town of Morwell is now impoverished, ranked in the bottom 10 per cent of socioeconomic advantage according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Gippsland's coal reserves at 33 billion tonnes are enough to power Victoria for about 500 years at the current rate of consumption. With nuclear power, including breakthroughs in fusion, we should be weaned off coal-fired power long before then, but the coal will always have an application as a cheap and abundant chemical feedstock.

What about carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions?

Coal is a product of dead trees and other vegetable matter which resulted from the photosynthesis of CO₂ that was originally in the atmosphere. Burning coal merely liberates CO₂ back to the atmosphere where it came from in the first place! Any honest scientist knows CO₂ has never driven global warming and today's CO₂ concentration of around 400 parts per million (ppm) is historically on the low side. Late in the Ordovician Period, 450 million years ago, the earth went into an Ice Age when CO₂ levels exceeded 4,000 ppm—so much for CO₂-induced global warming! As for the supposed danger to the Great Barrier Reef, coral has thrived for millions of years throughout Earth's enormous natural climatic and atmospheric changes.

What about air pollution?

Victoria's coal is typically low in ash, sulphur, heavy metals and nitrogen, making it very low in impurities by world standards. Hazelwood Power Station uses electrostatic precipitator technology to filter out harmful fine particles from emissions. The Environment Protection Authority Victoria rates the Latrobe Valley's air quality in towns surrounding the coal-fired power stations as mostly "very good" and sometimes downgraded to "good". Air quality in Melbourne's suburbs is often much worse due to vehicle exhausts. The Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire of February/March 2014 did significantly increase pollution levels, but there is ample evidence that this fire would never had been so severe if the privatised power company had not slashed its workforce, gutted its dedicated fire service group, and removed critical firefighting infrastructure, [including water supply](#), to save money.

What must be done?

All privatised electricity assets must return to state ownership. The federal government must cancel its Paris emissions reduction commitment and repeal the Renewable Energy Target. Hydropower and coal-fired power stations must be built and a nuclear power industry established, all funded with government credit. Politicians who accept Hazelwood's closure should be punished for betraying the public interest and booted out of office.

