

The Senate

Select Committee on Information
Integrity on Climate Change and
Energy

The Integrity Gap: Restoring Trust in the
Climate and Energy Debate

March 2026

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ISBN 978-1-76093-915-1 (Printed version)

ISBN 978-1-76093-915-1 (HTML version)

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Printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra

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Terms of reference

The Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy was appointed by resolution of the Senate on 30 July 2025, to inquire into and report on:

- (a) the prevalence of, motivations behind and impacts of misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy;
- (b) how misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy is financed, produced and disseminated, including, but not limited to, understanding its impact on:
 - (i) Australian politics,
 - (ii) domestic and international media narratives, and
 - (iii) Australian public policy debate and outcomes;
- (c) the origins, growth and prevalence of 'astroturfing' and its impact on public policy and debate;
- (d) connections between Australian organisations and international think tank and influence networks associated with the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation related to matters of public policy;
- (e) the role of social media, including the coordinated use of bots and trolls, messaging apps and generative artificial intelligence in facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation;
- (f) the efficacy of different parliamentary and regulatory approaches in combating misinformation and disinformation, what evidence exists and where further research is required, including through gathering global evidence;
- (g) the role that could be played by media literacy education, including in the school curriculum, in combating misinformation and disinformation; and
- (h) any other related matters.

Abbreviations & acronyms

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACCAN	Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADM+S	ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society
ADN	Australian Democracy Network
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AEIC	Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AI	artificial intelligence
ANU ICEDS	ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions
ARC 21C	ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century
the bill	Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024
Brown University	Brown University Climate and Development Lab
C&DL	
CAAD	Climate Action Against Disinformation
Carnegie Endowment	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Climate Communications	Climate Communications Australia
Climate Council	Climate Council of Australia
CIS	Centre for Independent Studies
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
the Code	Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPI	Centre for Public Integrity
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CSSN	Climate Social Science Network
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Declaration	Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change
DIGI	Digital Industry Group Inc.
DITC	Disinformation in the City
DP-REG	DP-REG

DRS	Developer Rating Scheme
DRW	Digital Rights Watch
DSA	Digital Services Act (European Union)
EU	European Union
Global declaration	Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online
Global Initiative	Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change
IPA	Institute of Public Affairs
IPIE	International Panel on the Information Environment
LINA	Local & Independent News Association
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
mis/disinformation	misinformation and/or disinformation
NMRC	News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSA	<i>Online Safety Act 2023 (UK)</i>
QUT DMRC	Queensland University of Technology Digital Media, Research Centre
RMIT Hub	RMIT Information Integrity Hub
SA	South Australia
Strategy	National Media Literacy Strategy (Australia)
TIA	Transparency International Australia
TNI	Trusted News Initiative
UC	University of Canberra
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UoM	University of Melbourne
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UQ	University of Queensland
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WWF Australia	World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Australia

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

- 9.23 The committee recommends the Australian Government support and adopt the United Nations Global Principles on Information Integrity and work to coordinate the application of these principles across government.

Recommendation 2

- 9.26 The committee recommends the Australian Government officially endorse the Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change launched at COP30 in Belem, Brazil.

Recommendation 3

- 9.33 The committee recommends the Australian Government ensure the adequacy of resourcing for regulators such as Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to combat and expose corporate greenwashing.

Recommendation 4

- 9.34 The committee recommends the Australian Government explore ways to ensure greater transparency of campaign activities, such as the creation of third parties, that are resourced by commercial/corporate interests in the lead up to a federal election.

Recommendation 5

- 9.40 The committee recommends the Australian Government continue to provide funding support for regional and independent media outlets.

Recommendation 6

- 9.41 The committee recommends the Australian Government increase funding for social sciences research relating to threats to climate and energy information integrity including potential solutions.

Recommendation 7

- 9.42 The committee recommends the Australian Government explore funding models for independent monitoring support (for example, via the Australian Internet Observatory) to track hidden digital influence ecosystems and provide independent transparency and accountability of platforms.

Recommendation 8

9.45 The committee recommends the Australian Government, through the regular Education Ministers' Meeting curriculum review cycle, broaden the Australian Curriculum 'digital literacy' general capability to strengthen media literacy.

Recommendation 9

9.46 The committee recommends the upcoming National Media Literacy Strategy incorporate the information integrity framework with examples from the climate and energy domain.

Recommendation 10

9.47 The committee recommends the Australian Government, coordinated through the Education Ministers' Meeting, establish stronger oversight and disclosure requirements for corporate engagement within school systems, with clear policies regulating philanthropic or corporate relationships that may interfere with educational integrity.

Recommendation 11

9.55 The committee recommends the Australian Government consider legislative or regulatory reform which identifies psychosocial harms, places the onus of responsibility in addressing these harms onto digital platforms and monitors effectiveness of their mitigations through regulatory and civic oversight.

Recommendation 12

9.56 The committee recommends the Australian Government improve the quality of data reported to the Australian Communications and Media Authority from the digital platforms to include for example, thematic breakdown of their reporting inclusive of climate and energy data, denominator data, removal actions and paid advertising related to climate and energy.

Recommendation 13

9.57 The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider how researchers could be provided adequate legal protection to undertake their work in the digital platform space.

Recommendation 14

9.58 The committee recommends the Australian Government consider how to improve the complaints resolution process, including about false and misleading information online.

Recommendation 15

9.64 The committee recommends the Australian Government ensure the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner is adequately funded for community engagement.

Recommendation 16

9.65 The committee recommends the Australian Government require the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner to provide a summary of threats to climate and energy information integrity in their annual report.

Recommendation 17

9.66 The committee recommends that the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation consider social licence on renewable energy projects. This could include:

- hiring new staff with expertise in social science, behavioural science, and community engagement, and;**
- ensuring their decision making and advisory bodies have social licence expertise represented.**

Recommendation 18

9.67 The committee recommends that the Australian Government task the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to provide advice on the costs and benefits of renewable energy creation, storage and transmission alongside clean manufacturing to create data needed to address local social licence concerns.

Recommendation 19

9.68 The committee recommends the National Health and Medical Research Council fund new research on the effects of wind energy on human health.

Recommendation 20

9.69 The committee recommends the Australian Government continue to strengthen communication and social licence capability across government agencies and departments. Improved information flow between jurisdictions and across departments will help address knowledge fragmentations across multiple sectors of the economy (e.g. transport, electricity, agriculture, emergency services).

Recommendation 21

9.70 The committee recommends the Australian Government resource community led engagement driven by organisations with proven track records in local

communities. These models may include capacity building for local leaders in rural and regional areas, support for local governments that are contingent on their engagement with community organisations or groups with a proven track record.

Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 The Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy (the committee) was appointed by resolution of the Senate on 30 July 2025, to inquire into and report on:
- (a) the prevalence of, motivations behind and impacts of misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy;
 - (b) how misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy is financed, produced and disseminated, including, but not limited to, understanding its impact on:
 - (i) Australian politics,
 - (ii) domestic and international media narratives, and
 - (iii) Australian public policy debate and outcomes;
 - (c) the origins, growth and prevalence of 'astroturfing' and its impact on public policy and debate;
 - (d) connections between Australian organisations and international think tank and influence networks associated with the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation related to matters of public policy;
 - (e) the role of social media, including the coordinated use of bots and trolls, messaging apps and generative artificial intelligence (AI) in facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation;
 - (f) the efficacy of different parliamentary and regulatory approaches in combating misinformation and disinformation, what evidence exists and where further research is required, including through gathering global evidence;
 - (g) the role that could be played by media literacy education, including in the school curriculum, in combating misinformation and disinformation; and
 - (h) any other related matters.¹
- 1.2 The committee's initial reporting date was 4 February 2026. On Monday, 3 November 2025, the Senate granted the committee an extension of time to present the final report to Tuesday, 24 March 2026.²

Conduct of the committee's inquiry

- 1.3 The committee advertised the inquiry on its website and wrote to organisations and individuals inviting submissions by 12 September 2025.

¹ *Journals of the Senate*, No. 6, 30 July 2025, pp. 197-200.

² *Journals of the Senate*, No. 20, 3 November 2025, p. 647.

- 1.4 The committee accepted and published 243 submissions from stakeholders, peak bodies, not-for-profit organisations and individuals.
- 1.5 A list of submissions is at Appendix 1.
- 1.6 The committee held the following public hearings:
 - 29 September 2025 in Canberra, ACT
 - 30 September 2025 in Canberra, ACT
 - 11 November 2025 in Melbourne, VIC
 - 12 November 2025 in Melbourne, VIC
 - 13 November 2025 in Sydney, NSW
 - 6 February 2026 in Canberra, ACT;
 - 16 February 2026 in Canberra, ACT;
 - 17 February 2026 in Canberra, ACT;
 - 5 March 2026 in Canberra, ACT; and
 - 12 March 2026 in Canberra, ACT.
- 1.7 A list of the witnesses that appeared at the hearings is at Appendix 2.
- 1.8 All public submissions and *Hansard* transcripts of hearings are available in full on the committee's website, along with other documents received and considered by the committee.

Scope of this report

- 1.9 This report of the committee comprises eight chapters, including this introductory and background chapter, with the remaining chapters set out as follows:
 - Chapter 2 discusses the prevalence of threats to climate information integrity, including how they spread in Australia.
 - Chapter 3 looks at the playbook of climate obstruction.
 - Chapter 4 outlines the social and economic impact of climate obstruction.
 - Chapter 5 discusses an approach to strengthening information integrity in Australia.
 - Chapter 6 outlines inquiry participants' views and recommendations in relation to building trust, resilience and transparency in climate and energy related information.
 - Chapter 7 addresses inquiry participants' views and recommendations on the monitoring and regulation of digital platforms.
 - Chapter 8 details inquiry participants' views and recommendations in relation to renewable energy project planning and implementation processes.
 - Chapter 9 provides the committee's view and recommendations.

Acknowledgements and references

- 1.10 The committee thanks all those individuals and organisations who made submissions and gave evidence at the public hearings.
- 1.11 References in this report to Committee Hansard are to proof transcripts. Page numbers may vary between proof and official transcripts.

Growing concern about threats to climate information integrity

- 1.12 Repeated surveys have shown that Australians are concerned about the spread of misinformation and disinformation (mis/disinformation). This concern was reflected in the evidence heard by the committee in relation to debates around the issues of climate change and energy.
- 1.13 According to the News and Media Research Centre (NMRC) survey from 2025, concern about misinformation in Australia is high—at 74 per cent—and is the highest globally. Australians were most likely to consider online influencers and personalities as a major source of misinformation (57 per cent), followed by activists (51 per cent), foreign governments (49 per cent), Australian political actors (48 per cent) and news media and journalists (43 per cent). Australians concerned about online influencers driving misinformation was also the highest globally.³
- 1.14 Additionally, NMRC's *Digital News Report: Australia 2024* indicated that climate change or the environment was one of the top topics (35 per cent) that Australian audiences cited when asked what types of misinformation they have encountered in the past week.⁴ Another study in 2024 also showed that of 3852 adult Australians surveyed, six in ten, or 59 per cent, had seen 'false or misleading information online in the past week'.⁵
- 1.15 The Department of Home Affairs' report *Strengthening Australian Democracy* noted that rising mis/disinformation—amplified with the speed and reach of social media platforms—can destabilise trusted relationships between people and governments. The report identified mis/disinformation as a key challenge to Australia's democracy, specifically noting that 'false information has fuelled

³ S. Park, C. Fisher, K. McGuinness, J. Lee, M. Fujita, A. Haw, K. McCallum and G. Nardi, *Digital News Report: Australia 2025*, Canberra, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, 2025, p. 12.

⁴ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 5. See also, Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 36.

⁵ Tanya Notley, Simon Chambers, Sara Park and Michael Dezuanni, *Adult Media Literacy in 2024: Australian Attitudes, Experiences and Needs*, Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra, 2024, pp. 7 and 9; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 6.

conspiracy theories about the government's response to fires and floods, and prompted protests against 5G technology'.⁶

1.16 Further discussion about the community impacts of climate change and energy-related mis/disinformation is provided in Chapter 4.

Challenges in defining and identifying mis/disinformation

1.17 In Australia, there is no universally agreed definitions of mis/disinformation. However, most discussion in relation to definitions distinguishes between the two based on the presence or absence of intention. Generally, disinformation has been categorised as the 'deliberate spread of misleading information, crafted to deceive or manipulate' while misinformation is defined as the 'spreading of false information without intent'.⁷

1.18 The Australian Electoral Commission's Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce has defined misinformation and disinformation as follows:

- *Disinformation*: 'knowingly false information designed to deliberately mislead and influence public opinion or obscure the truth for malicious or deceptive purposes'.
- *Misinformation*: 'false information that is spread due to ignorance, or by error or mistake, without the intent to deceive'.⁸

1.19 In other words, both definitions relate to the spreading of false information 'but only disinformation is wrong on purpose'.⁹ According to the United Nations Development Programme, unlike 'misinformation, which can often be corrected through education and better communication, disinformation is more difficult to address and requires targeted efforts to expose and counter the deliberate falsehoods being spread'.¹⁰

⁶ Strengthening Democracy Taskforce (2024), [Strengthening Australian democracy: A practical agenda for democratic resilience](#), Department of Home Affairs, p. 32 (citation omitted).

⁷ Monash University, [The cost of misinformation in a changing climate](#), 20 February 2025 (accessed 7 August 2025).

⁸ Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce, [Disinformation and misinformation](#) (accessed 11 November 2025). See also: Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 6; Monash University Climate Change Communication Research Hub, [The cost of misinformation in a changing climate](#), 20 February 2025 (accessed 11 November 2025); News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 20.

⁹ Monash University Climate Change Communication Research Hub, [The cost of misinformation in a changing climate](#) (accessed 11 November 2025).

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme, [What are climate misinformation and disinformation and how can we tackle them?](#), 1 May 2025 (accessed 11 November 2025).

1.20 The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has noted that the issue of disinformation is not just about false information, as it also involves the deliberate manipulation of public discourse:

Disinformation campaigns (often coordinated, and sometimes foreign-backed) exploit digital platforms to spread doubt and weaken democratic engagement on important topics like climate action.¹¹

1.21 Both types of false information can be found across all issues that are discussed in the digital town square—that is made up of social media and online discourse. Indeed, mis/disinformation can cover issues as diverse as health, law and order, celebrities, product advice, parenting, current events and climate change. Information integrity concerns both how information is produced, and what happens to that information once it is published and spread outside the editorial control of its authors.¹²

1.22 The Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation (the Code), an industry code developed by the Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI), defines misinformation as digital content that is:

- verifiably false or misleading or deceptive;
- propagated by users of digital platforms; and
- reasonably likely (but may not be clearly intended to) cause harm through dissemination.¹³

1.23 The Code also defines the following aspects of disinformation as digital content:

- that is verifiably false or misleading or deceptive;
- propagated among users of digital platforms via inauthentic behaviour (which includes spam and other forms of deceptive, manipulative, bulk or aggressive behaviours); and
- which is reasonably likely to cause harm if it is disseminated.¹⁴

1.24 Additionally, the Code defines harm as that which poses 'a credible and serious threat to democratic political and policymaking processes such as voter fraud, voter interference, voting misinformation; or public goods such as the protection of citizens' health, protection of marginalised or vulnerable groups, public safety and security or the environment'.¹⁵

¹¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4.

¹² UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 3.

¹³ Digital Industry Group Inc., [Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation](#), 22 December 2022, p. 6, para 3.6.

¹⁴ Digital Industry Group Inc., *Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation*, pp. 5–6, paras 3.2 and 3.5.

¹⁵ Digital Industry Group Inc., *Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation*, p. 6, para 3.4.

- 1.25 Some submitters to the inquiry, such as Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, argued that blunt definitions of mis/disinformation 'lack any explanation of how truth is determined, which is imperative for identification and evaluation of misinformation and disinformation'. They further noted that 'significant differences among people as to what constitutes truth, makes proposed approaches to "combating misinformation and disinformation" highly contestable'.¹⁶
- 1.26 The AHRC considered that mis/disinformation 'are distinct from controversial or unpopular opinions. A healthy democracy depends on the ability to challenge dominant narratives and engage in robust debate'. The AHRC noted that the challenge in this space 'is to navigate this distinction carefully' and to ensure 'that efforts to counter mis/disinformation do not inadvertently suppress diverse viewpoints or critical discourse'.¹⁷
- 1.27 Research conducted by Resolve Strategic in 2022 indicated a lack of consensus in Australia on the meaning of 'misinformation'. Further, 'Australians' assessment of whether material concerning politically contentious topics such as the effects of climate change, is misinformation or truthful is sharply divided, according to their allegiance to different political parties'.¹⁸
- 1.28 In general, people's perceptions of misinformation are very loose, and are often tied to their identities and beliefs, rather than determined via vigorous fact-checking.¹⁹ For example, research cited by DIGI suggests that people who are most likely to interact with and share misinformation typically already agree with its advocated political stance.²⁰ The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner also told the committee that people tended to 'gravitate towards information that they trust' and that 'people pick and choose what sort of information resonates with them'.²¹
- 1.29 Dr John Cook, an expert from the University of Melbourne, noted that one 'working definition for misinformation is any argument or information that conflicts with the best available evidence and experts'. However, another approach involves 'assessing the presence of misleading rhetorical techniques

¹⁶ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 4.

¹⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Digital Industry Group Inc., [Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation: 2025 Review Discussion Paper](#), 30 September 2025, p. 6.

¹⁹ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 4.

²⁰ Digital Industry Group Inc., *Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation: 2025 Review Discussion Paper*, p. 6.

²¹ Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 3–4.

and fallacies in misinformation'.²² Examples Dr Cook gave of misinformation included questions about the science and the impact of climate change; information casting doubt about solutions and attempts to reduce emissions; and attacks on scientists and anyone supporting climate action with the aim of eroding public trust in climate science and discrediting scientists, including by casting them as biased and partisan.²³

1.30 The different ways in which climate change and energy-related mis/disinformation is spread is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

International context

1.31 The issue of mis/disinformation has increasingly been raised at the international level, particularly in relation to climate science and mitigation efforts. For example, several organisations/political bodies have highlighted the challenges of addressing mis/disinformation, including the:

- World Economic Forum (WEF);
- International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE); and
- United States (US) House Oversight and US Senate Budget Committee.

WEF Global Risks Reports

1.32 The WEF annual *Global Risk Report* identifies and analyses the most significant threats to the world over the short and long term, analysing geopolitical, environmental, societal and technological domains.

1.33 In both 2024 and 2025, the *Global Risk Report* identified mis/disinformation across all subject areas as the biggest short-term risk (spanning the next two years), while extreme weather events were ranked second. In the long-term rankings, matters relevant to climate change (extreme weather events, critical change to Earth's systems, biodiversity loss and natural resource shortages) ranked as the top four risks for both reports. This is shown in Figure 1.1 below.²⁴

²² Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 32.

²³ Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 33-34. For more on the targeting of climate scientists, see Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 55; Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 5.

²⁴ World Economic Forum, [The Global Risks Report 2025](#), January 2025; World Economic Forum, [The Global Risks Report 2024](#), January 2024.

Figure 1.1 Global risks: 2025

FIGURE C

Global risks ranked by severity over the short and long term

Please estimate the likely impact (severity) of the following risks over a 2-year and 10-year period.



Source: World Economic Forum: *The Global Risks Report 2025*, p. 8.

1.34 The 2025 report also noted that efforts to combat mis/disinformation are being made more difficult with the increased use of AI which can generate 'false or misleading content that can be produced and distributed at scale'.²⁵

IPIE report on information integrity about climate science

1.35 The IPIE is an independent and global science organization providing scientific knowledge about the health of the world's information environment. The IPIE provides 'actionable scientific assessments about threats to the information environment, including AI bias, algorithmic manipulation, and disinformation' that can be used by policymakers, industry, and civil society.²⁶

1.36 In June 2025, the IPIE released its report *Information Integrity about Climate Science*. The report found that the global response to climate change is being obstructed and delayed by the production and circulation of misleading information about the nature of climate change and the available solutions.²⁷

1.37 Its findings indicated that powerful actors—including corporations, governments, and political parties—intentionally spread false or misleading narratives about anthropogenic climate change. These narratives circulate across digital, broadcast, and interpersonal communication channels. The report argued that this results in a decline in public trust, diminished policy coordination, and a feedback loop between scientific denialism and political inaction.²⁸

²⁵ World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2025*, p. 4.

²⁶ International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), *About IPIE*, ipie.info/about (accessed 2 September 2025).

²⁷ IPIE, *Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review*, June 2025, ipie.info/research/sr2025-1 (accessed 7 August 2025).

²⁸ IPIE, *Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review*, p. 3.

- 1.38 The report also noted that the primary actors behind these false and misleading narratives 'have been powerful economic and political interests, from fossil fuel companies to governments and nation-states' and that these actors create alliances to 'obstruct and delay timely climate action'. This is aided by 'scientific hired hands', described as pseudo-experts or quasi-scientists, who aid the dissemination of fringe or partisan claims with a weak scientific basis.²⁹ The report recommended further research into the activities of these actors and the alliances, particularly in the Global South.³⁰
- 1.39 While social media and digital communication is a key source of these false and misleading narratives, the report also noted that traditional media is also implicated, particularly in the Global South.³¹

Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil's Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change

- 1.40 In April 2024, US Congressman Jamie Raskin and US Senator Sheldon Whitehouse released a joint staff report *Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil's Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change*. The report was the result of a three-year investigation by Democratic Party staff in the US House Oversight and US Senate Budget Committee.³²
- 1.41 The report explores the efforts large fossil fuel companies—including ExxonMobil, Chevron Corporation and Shell—allegedly undertake to deceive the public and investors about the effect of fossil fuels on climate change and how they undermine efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 1.42 Key observations within the report include:
- Fossil fuel companies have understood the effects of fossil fuels on the climate since at least the 1960s but have worked to undermine public understanding of this.
 - The campaign against climate action waged by these companies has evolved from outright denial of climate change to undermining action using a playbook of deception and disinformation.
 - The fossil fuel industry uses intermediaries like trade associations and thinktanks to spread false and misleading narratives against climate action.

²⁹ See, for example, Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 5 and QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. [16].

³⁰ IPIE, *Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review*, pp. 96–97.

³¹ IPIE, *Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review*, p. 97.

³² United States House Committee on Oversight and Accountability & US Senate Budget Committee, [*Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil's Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change*](#), April 2024.

- The industry strategically partners with universities to lend credibility to its deception campaigns while silencing or attacking opposing voices.³³
- 1.43 The report did not make recommendations, but noted that the investigation and report had 'set out new evidence about the extent of the fossil fuel industry's evolving efforts to avoid accountability for climate change' and concluded that it was 'long past time to hold Big Oil accountable for its deception campaign and to take action to undo the harms it has perpetrated'.³⁴

Previous inquiries of relevance in Australia

- 1.44 While previous parliamentary committees in Australia have not directly inquired into matters regarding climate change information and integrity, other inquiries relating to climate change and general misinformation are relevant.

Senate Inquiry into Offshore Wind Industry Consultation Process

- 1.45 On 3 July 2024, the Senate referred an inquiry into the offshore wind industry consultation process to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications. The committee tabled its report on 5 June 2025.³⁵
- 1.46 The report found that bad faith actors had weaponised mis/disinformation to exacerbate community concerns and resistance to offshore wind. In particular, mis/disinformation about the effect of wind turbines on ocean life was said to have circulated through posts on social media platforms, thus amplifying community opposition and creating polarisation. The report highlighted links between this mis/disinformation and fossil fuel companies.³⁶
- 1.47 Recommendation four of the report states that 'the Australian Government and DCCEEW [the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water] [should] proactively ensure that foreign actors, spam engagement, and misinformation and disinformation do not overpower local community voices from being heard in local public debate'.³⁷

³³ *Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil's Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change*, pp. i-ii.

³⁴ *Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil's Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change*, p. 60.

³⁵ Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, [Offshore wind industry consultation process](#), June 2025.

³⁶ Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, [Offshore wind industry consultation process](#), pp. 50–52.

³⁷ Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, [Offshore wind industry consultation process](#), p. xiii.

Senate Inquiry into Greenwashing

- 1.48 On 29 March 2023, the Senate referred an inquiry into greenwashing³⁸ to the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications. The committee is expected to table its report on 25 June 2026.³⁹
- 1.49 Of particular relevance to this committee are the terms of reference for the greenwashing inquiry, which include the impact of misleading environmental and sustainability claims on consumers.

Inquiry into the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024

- 1.50 On 19 September 2024, the Senate referred the provisions of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024 (the bill) to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee.⁴⁰
- 1.51 The bill would have provided the Australian Communications and Media Authority with new regulatory powers to require digital communications platform providers to take steps to manage the risk that mis/disinformation on digital communications platforms pose in Australia. These would include obligations on providers to assess and report on risks relating to mis/disinformation, to publish their policy in relation to managing mis/disinformation and develop and publish a media literacy plan.
- 1.52 The report for the bill's inquiry was tabled on 25 November 2024. In tabling the report, the Senate agreed to the committee's sole recommendation that the bill be withdrawn and immediately discharged from the notice paper.⁴¹ This withdrawal was due to the bill's unlikely prospects of passing the Senate and the government's position not to proceed with the bill as advised by a letter to the Chair from the (now former) Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP.⁴²

³⁸ Greenwashing is the deceptive tactic of portraying a company, product, or service as more environmentally friendly or sustainable than it actually is.

³⁹ Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications, [Greenwashing](#) (accessed 26 November 2025).

⁴⁰ Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications, [Communications Legislation Amendment \(Combating Misinformation and Disinformation\) Bill 2024](#), (accessed 12 August 2025).

⁴¹ *Journals of the Senate*, [No.143](#), 25 November 2024, p. 4352.

⁴² Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, [Communications Legislation Amendment \(Combating Misinformation and Disinformation\) Bill 2024](#), November 2024, pp. 133–134.

Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media

- 1.53 On 24 November 2022, the Senate resolved to establish a Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media to inquire into and report on the risk posed to Australia's democracy by foreign interference through social media.⁴³
- 1.54 The committee handed down its final report on 1 August 2023. The report found that platforms like TikTok, WeChat and others are being exploited by foreign state actors to covertly influence Australian political discourse, undermine democratic processes, and harvest data. It highlighted emerging risks such as 'foreign-interference-as-a-service' and noted that Australia's fragmented governance on this issue made it more vulnerable.⁴⁴
- 1.55 The report called for strict transparency requirements for large social media companies—such as having an Australian legal presence, labelling state-affiliated media, and disclosing government content directives—with penalties including fines or bans for non-compliance. It also recommended clearer reporting pathways, stronger agency coordination, and measures that balance free expression with safeguarding democracy from authoritarian influence.

Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society

- 1.56 The Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society made its final report, *Social media: the good, the bad, and the ugly*, in November 2024. The report noted that 'the broader online environment is a highly complex space that requires a complex regulatory response'.⁴⁵
- 1.57 While generally focusing on the harms caused to individuals by social media, the committee was of the view that social media platforms 'are actively choosing not to provide the same levels of protections for users, transparency, and accountability mechanisms in Australia that they do in other jurisdictions' and thus are 'rapidly diluting their social licence to operate in Australia'.⁴⁶
- 1.58 Recommendations of that committee relevant to this inquiry include:
- amending regulation and legislation, to effectively bring digital platforms under Australian jurisdiction;
 - legislative provisions to enable effective, mandatory data access for independent researchers and public interest organisations, and an auditing process by appropriate regulators; and

⁴³ [Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media](#), (accessed 12 August 2025).

⁴⁴ Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media, [Select Committee on Foreign Interference through Social Media: Report](#), August 2025.

⁴⁵ Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society, [Social media: the good, the bad, and the ugly, November 2024](#), p. 116.

⁴⁶ Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society, [Social media: the good, the bad, and the ugly, November 2024](#), p. 117.

- legislative provisions requiring social media platforms to have a transparent complaints mechanism that incorporates a right of appeal process for complainants that is robust and fair.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society, [*Social media: the good, the bad, and the ugly*](#), pp. 119–121.

Chapter 2

What is climate and energy obstruction?

- 2.1 This chapter provides an overview of how threats to climate change and energy information integrity manifest. The chapter discusses the extent of false and misleading climate change information, how and why it is spread, the roles of traditional media and online media platforms, with artificial intelligence (AI) as an accelerant.
- 2.2 The chapter begins by examining broader questions about the nature of free speech in Australia. It also considers how Australians' views on what constitutes mis/disinformation are deeply embedded in individual ideological and political views of the world. As this chapter sets out, identifying disinformation—information a person shares knowing it is wrong—is in many instances far easier, and far less subject to controversy, than identifying misinformation—information a person does not realise is wrong.
- 2.3 Given its political nature, concluding decisively what constitutes misinformation in the climate change and energy debate, as opposed to opinion and policy disagreement, and determining the parameters of what amounts to fair public discussion, is deemed controversial by some—as heard by the committee from a range of participants, including experts, community members, representatives of government agencies and advocacy organisations.

Questions concerning free speech in Australia

- 2.4 In recent years, efforts to support information integrity have become increasingly politicised.¹ Confirmation bias² combined with online echo chambers driven by algorithms have fuelled the spread of misleading content, reinforced existing beliefs and exacerbated polarisation, leading to doubt, division and hostility.³
- 2.5 As a result, individuals have different ideas of what constitutes mis/disinformation, and what should be considered free speech. As one submitter questioned, where does a legitimate contest of policy positions and political ideas end? What 'constitutes "fair game" and acceptable free speech'?⁴

¹ RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 4.

² Confirmation bias is the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories. Information that does not reflect the existing belief is ignored or downplayed.

³ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4; Local and Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 6; Doctors for the Environment, *Submission 100*, p. 5.

⁴ Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 3.

- Another submitter noted that one 'man's misinformation is still another man's truth. It is subjective, it is messy, but ... free speech is a net good for society'.⁵
- 2.6 The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) emphasised that mis/disinformation are not controversial or unpopular opinions. Indeed, a 'healthy democracy depends on the ability to challenge dominant narratives and engage in robust debate'.⁶
- 2.7 Nonetheless, there was disagreement in evidence received about whether current debates on climate change and energy should be categorised as free speech or misinformation and/or disinformation. Some evidence argued that 'there is a crucial difference between good-faith disagreement and systematic disinformation that is designed to deceive, not inform'.⁷
- 2.8 Some submitters noted that the debate on climate change can blur the lines between free speech and harm. The Jewish Climate Network raised concerns that some 'political movements often support very broad definitions of free speech that include the potential for hate speech ... Free speech is an important right, but without guardrails it can degrade the fabric of society, enabling people to propagate hateful and/or harmful views'.⁸
- 2.9 Other evidence raised concerns that disagreement about approaches to climate action, like renewables, may be defined as misinformation in order to suppress dissent, and called for free speech to be protected.⁹ For example, one submission from independent engineers, scientists and professionals argued that any 'attempt at legislating censorship or controls on free speech concerning climate change and energy policy will be viewed as profoundly anti-democratic and authoritarian'.¹⁰
- 2.10 The National Rational Energy Network argued ideas 'should be contested openly, not pre-judged as "misinformation" because they challenge orthodoxy'

⁵ Logan Smith, *Submission 44*, p. 1.

⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4.

⁷ Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, p. 3.

⁸ Jewish Climate Network, *Submission 120*, p. 5.

⁹ Robert Onfray, *Submission 50*, p. 2. See also Australia Exits the WHO [World Health Organization], *Submission 76*, which raises concerns about the regulation of free speech; and CWO REZist Inc, *Submission 25*, p. 3, which raised concerns about pro-climate and pro-renewable energy information not being subject to warning notices or removal on social media. Similarly, Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, p. 9, also suggested that 'community pages are throttled, restricted, or shadow-banned without explanation, recourse, or right of appeal'.

¹⁰ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 25.

and free 'speech is the first safeguard against misinformation, not a casualty of it'.¹¹ Another submitter argued:

Falsely accusing others of misinformation, disinformation and astroturfing, is in itself doing what you are accusing of others. This is one reason why free speech is so essential in a democracy like ours. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. Censorship, especially of experts who disagree with you, is bad for democracy.¹²

2.11 Dr Kesten Green argued that if the committee's aim is to reduce the harm of mis/disinformation on climate and energy, 'the solution is to *encourage* free speech on those issues, and not to enforce an ill-founded conformity'.¹³

Reframing climate obstruction: from outright denial to undermining the solutions

2.12 The climate change and energy debate, which is highly political in nature, is particularly vulnerable to misperception, misinterpretation, as well as mis/disinformation, with it being one of the main topics of misinformation that Australians encounter relating to climate and environmental issues.¹⁴ For example, Dr Allie Gallant of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century told the committee that while 'the influence of humans on global warming is beyond doubt', the 'shades of grey in what we can say about the details of how climate change has and will affect us' means the field is 'ripe for exploitation by bad-faith actors seeking to delay action and to cause doubt'.¹⁵

2.13 According to the United Nations' Development Programme, climate obstruction can take the following forms:

- Climate denial, which includes 'misleading arguments that exaggerate natural climate variability or misrepresent climate data', or 'highlight other urgent issues as a justification for delaying or opposing responses'.
- Climate delay strategies, which 'aim to obstruct or hinder action' and 'dispute the feasibility, necessity or fairness of climate policies by claiming measures are too costly or emphasising uncertainties and unintended consequences'.
- Greenwashing, 'in which companies or institutions exaggerate or falsely claim environmental benefits to maintain their market position without making real changes'.

¹¹ National Rational Energy Network, *Submission 109*, p. 8.

¹² Col Poulter, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

¹³ Dr Kesten Green, *Submission 187*, p. 5.

¹⁴ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director, Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 23.

- Conspiracy narratives, which 'attempt to delegitimize climate science, policies and activists by suggesting they are part of a hidden agenda'.
- Cherry-picking data.¹⁶

2.14 Dr Andrew Dessler contrasted a recent climate report by the United States Department of Energy that was 'written in secret by five hand picked contrarians', with assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and others that are 'authored by hundreds of experts':

... the [Department of Energy report] is not a credible scientific assessment. It was written in secret by five hand picked contrarians without peer review, and it ignores more than 99 per cent of the climate science literature. Instead, it cherrypicks outdated or discredited studies, misrepresents mainstream research and makes simple errors of scientific understanding. In my opinion, the goal of this report is to inject doubt in the public's mind about climate science. This is the same strategy once used by the tobacco industry to delay regulations.

In contrast, legitimate assessments like that of the IPCC or the US national climate assessment are authored by hundreds of experts, reviewed transparently and show clearly that climate change is real, human caused and dangerous to human health and welfare. Policymaking must rely on credible science, not manufactured doubt.¹⁷

2.15 Despite widespread agreement on the science and causes of climate change by the scientific community, Australians remain vulnerable to false and misleading climate information. Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, noted that the issue itself had become deeply politicised:

We see more and more examples from the USA and other jurisdictions where it goes beyond climate change as a single issue and is rather about the idea of using climate change as a political tool to try and make other forms of political argumentation. So, unfortunately, climate change has become a highly politicised issue. It's one where the science is clearly settled, but it's also one where you can make a lot of political bank from pushing this and creating confusion. So there are a lot of groups that stand to gain from that by, for example, delaying meaningful action on this.¹⁸

2.16 Dr John Cook of the University of Melbourne argued that climate obstruction has evolved over time from 'science misinformation, arguing that it's not real or that the impact won't be that bad, to solutions misinformation'. Dr Cook went

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme, [What are climate misinformation and disinformation and how can we tackle them?](#), 1 May 2025 (accessed 11 November 2025). See also, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, pp. 4 and 15.

¹⁷ Dr Andrew Dessler, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 1.

¹⁸ Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 20.

on to note that there are three general lines of argument of science denial, solutions misinformation and attack:

All of them always lead to the same conclusion, which is, 'Therefore, we should delay climate action.' So it can be 'Climate change isn't real; therefore, we should delay,' 'Solutions don't work; therefore, we shouldn't implement any solutions,' or 'We can't trust scientists; therefore, we shouldn't act on what they're telling us.' So delay and maintaining the status quo is always the final goal. But the misinformation or the arguments that try to get us to that point can vary.¹⁹

- 2.17 Likewise, Professor Christian Downie of the Australian National University argued that climate mis/disinformation narratives had shifted over time from climate denial to climate action delay:

The short answer is there still a little bit of denial in there, but there has been a change in how these discourses have been framed. In the past we've seen most of the efforts being on denying the scientific basis of climate change, denying that it's induced by human activities like burning oil, gas and coal. But today ... [t]here is a lot of focus on undermining the solutions and claiming that renewable energy doesn't work, or that wind turbines kill whales and these types of things. We're seeing a shift in the strategies and the discourses, but the underlying intention remains the same, which is to delay action on climate change.²⁰

- 2.18 Professor Downie also noted another type of climate obstruction, in the form of economic modelling:

It's also a key strategy of those organisations that have sought to obstruct action on climate change to commission modelling that uses assumptions that are very tenuous at best to inflate the cost of solutions. They will commission reports that suggest that renewable energy technology is five times the price of what it is. This isn't new; they've been doing it for decades. It's part of their political playbook. But it does dilute the quality of public debate around these topics.²¹

- 2.19 Mr Jack Herring of InfluenceMap considered that misinformation in the context of climate change should be understood as 'misleading content that a) undermines the existence or impacts of climate change and the need for corresponding or urgent action; b) misrepresents scientific data, including by omission or cherry-picking in order to erode trust in climate science or climate solutions; and c) falsely publicises efforts as supporting climate goals when they

¹⁹ Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 27 and 29.

²⁰ Dr Christian Downie, Professor, Australian National University; and Member, Climate Social Science Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 44.

²¹ Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 52.

in fact contribute to climate warming or contravening the scientific consensus or mitigation'.²²

2.20 Other submitters proposed broader definitions of climate mis/disinformation. For example, the UTS Centre for Media Transition pointed to a report from the International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), which identified four criteria to use as a benchmark for evaluating climate communication:

- Accuracy: the alignment of the information environment with the findings of climate science;
- Consistency: the stability of the information available at different times and in different places about the natural and human causes of climate change;
- Reliability: the explication of the origins of the information in question and its relevance and application to climate change; and
- Transparency: the possibility for citizens to trace the trajectories of information about climate change from its sources and throughout the infrastructures enabling its communication to recipients.²³

2.21 However, other stakeholders argued that such definitions of mis/disinformation are deliberately constructed to silence opposing voices. The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) argued that 'misinformation is a subjective concept which enables the censorship or silencing of people based on the opinions and views they hold'. The IPA considered the 'inherent ambiguity' in what comprises mis/disinformation 'has enabled their use for explicitly censorious purposes, as it requires a person to form an assessment about the accuracy of information'.²⁴

2.22 Additionally, some submissions noted that contention still exists around what constitutes mis/disinformation in relation to climate change and energy. For example, a group of independent engineers, scientists and professionals argued:

Using a consensus of opinion from a defined group of people—even 'experts—is equally fraught. Using a defined organisation as the source of truth contains dangerous overtones of unbridled authoritarianism ... significant differences among people as to what constitutes truth, makes proposed approaches to 'combating misinformation and disinformation' highly contestable.²⁵

²² Mr Jack Herring, Australia Program Manager, InfluenceMap, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 38.

²³ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 5; IPIE, [*Facts, Fakes, and Climate Science: Recommendations for Improving Information Integrity about Climate Issues*](#), Zurich, Switzerland, 2025, p. 9.

²⁴ Institute of Public Affairs, *Submission 57*, pp. 1–2.

²⁵ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 4.

2.23 The same submission outlined some of the challenges involved in defining mis/disinformation, contending:

There are basically two sides to the climate debate ... Each side of a debate can accuse the other of promoting misinformation and disinformation because they believe in their own truth. In this febrile atmosphere of (at times uncivil) debate, passion and propaganda lose sight of facts and rational logic. Who is in the best position to moderate the debate and rule on what is misinformation and disinformation?²⁶

2.24 The QUT Digital Media Research Centre (DMRC) contended that 'people are, of course, entitled to have, and express, genuine concerns about emissions-reduction actions and policies'. However, QUT DMRC argued 'the issue is when these genuine concerns are misrepresented, amplified, or stoked by well-funded and coordinated vested interests'.²⁷

Contention over climate science and renewable energy projects

2.25 The committee received a range of submissions challenging the scientific consensus of climate change itself. Some submissions argued that the views held by most experts on climate science should continue to be subject to debate, particularly on the basis that the 'unencumbered contest of ideas and information is central to both the scientific method and the development of policy in a liberal democracy'.²⁸

2.26 Professor Ivan Kennedy argued that scientific 'information is a developing process of the latest research and is never settled nor determined by consensus'. Professor Kennedy argued that despite 'common opinions that there is a scientific and thus political consensus, there can never be such uniformity in scientific viewpoints where more research is needed. Indeed, current understanding of climate science and its rate of change does not dictate a way forward with any certainty'.²⁹

2.27 Some participants were of the view that, while there has been broader acceptance of climate science, disagreement arises over interpretation, the causes of climate change, and the feasibility and effectiveness of actions proposed in response to the conclusions of the majority of experts.³⁰

²⁶ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 12.

²⁷ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 14.

²⁸ For example, Professor Aynsley Kellow, *Submission 27*, p. 4. Scott McCamish, *Submission 146*, p. 1; Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, pp. 12–13; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 4; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 1; Dr Michael Seebeck, *Submission 227*, p. 8.

²⁹ Professor Ivan Kennedy, *Submission 223*, pp. 1–2.

³⁰ See, for example, UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 5, citing International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), *Facts, Fakes, and Climate Science: Recommendations for Improving*

Some research also suggested that Australia has among the highest scepticism and least concern about climate change in the world, with only two-thirds of Australians accepting that human-caused climate change is happening.³¹

- 2.28 Other submitters emphasised the importance of scientific consensus beyond disagreements about climate policy. For example, an interdisciplinary group of academics submitted that when 'scientific expertise becomes politically contested, it undermines the knowledge systems necessary for innovation, productivity, and effective governance' with consequences that 'extend beyond environmental policy to encompass public health, technological development, and economic competitiveness'. They argued that countries that 'maintain strong scientific institutions and evidence-based policy frameworks will gain significant advantages over those where anti-science sentiment undermines rational decision-making'.³²
- 2.29 The committee also received a range of evidence outlining community concerns about renewable energy projects, including the level of consultation and the impacts of the projects.³³ This was not isolated to Australia as Professor Klaus Bruhn Jenson, the Chair of the Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science noted that similar debates are occurring in Denmark, which he characterised as arguments of 'not in my backyard' proponents.³⁴
- 2.30 The issue of planning implementation and community consultation in relation to renewable energy-related developments is discussed further in Chapter 8.
- 2.31 This inquiry is about information integrity in relation to climate change and energy. This inquiry is not questioning the veracity of climate science, nor specifically about consultation on or the impacts of renewable energy projects but evidence to the committee made clear the importance of a robust information ecosystem to these related matters. However, as noted earlier, variations in the definitions and examples of mis/disinformation limit its usefulness in advancing debate.

Information Integrity about Climate Issues, Zurich, IPIE, 2025. See also QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, pp. 4, 13; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 9.

³¹ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

³² Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 4. See also, Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 9.

³³ See, for example, Mr Tony Mahar, Commissioner, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 1–2, 5–6 and 10; Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 6; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 32 and 35–36; Ms Celeste Pater, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

³⁴ Professor Klaus Bruhn Jenson, the Chair of the Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science, IPIE, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 62–63.

How threats to climate change information integrity shape public perceptions in Australia

2.32 As noted in Chapter 1, climate change or the environment was one of the top topics that Australian audiences encounter when asked what types of misinformation topics they encountered.

2.33 Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD) and the Conscious Advertising Network conducted a study in Australia, Brazil, Germany, India, the UK and the US in October 2022 on the origin and impact of climate misinformation on public perception. The study presented respondents with statements on the climate, and reported Australian's beliefs as follows:

- 33 per cent believe that climate change is a natural phenomenon, and 5 per cent believe that the climate is not changing;
- 37 per cent believe that a significant number of scientists disagree on the cause of climate change;
- 31 per cent believe that climate change mitigation efforts punish citizens;
- 37 per cent consider renewable energy to be more expensive than energy from fossil fuels; and
- 37 per cent of Australians believe that batteries from electric vehicles cannot be reused or recycled and will pollute the environment.³⁵

2.34 The News and Media Research Centre (NMRC) at the University of Canberra submitted that according to their research, men are significantly more likely than women to report that they have encountered false or misleading information about climate change. This gender gap is greater compared to other topics involving misinformation. It also appears to be widening, with 36 per cent of men in 2021 compared to 23 per cent of women reporting that they had encountered misinformation on climate change and the environment, compared with 43 per cent of men in 2024 and 27 per cent of women.³⁶

2.35 Periods of vulnerability were highlighted; Ms Kate Cell from the Union of Concerned Scientists noted that disinformation tends to spike around extreme weather events.³⁷ Similarly,

2.36 Dr Cook outlined the impacts this has on public discourse in Australia:

Using psychology experiments, measuring the impacts of disinformation and trying to measure what effects it does have on people as individuals, we see a whole range of negative impacts from climate disinformation ... the two most concerning impacts of climate misinformation are, firstly, it can

³⁵ Climate Action Against Disinformation and the Conscious Advertising Network, [The Impacts of Climate Disinformation on Public Perception](#), November 2022, pp. 8–11 and 15.

³⁶ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 5–7.

³⁷ Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 9.

cancel out the attempts to communicate factual information. So, when people are presented with misinformation and factual information, if they don't have the ability to discern which is which then they just tend to disengage and believe neither. So facts can be cancelled out by misinformation. The other thing, which I think is potentially even more concerning, is that, when people are exposed to conspiracy theories about climate change, that has a range of effects on reducing trust in institutions and even reducing people's intent to get civically engaged, which I think means that climate misinformation can have this flow-on effect more broadly and civically.³⁸

Motivations behind climate obstruction

- 2.37 Motivations for climate obstruction are complex and varied, ranging from genuine community concerns to manufactured ideological and commercial narratives that can amplify or delay climate action, protect established business models, or increase community divisions.
- 2.38 As the NMRC noted, climate change 'is a topic that is often tied to one's values and belief systems, which makes people particularly vulnerable to disinformation campaigns around the issue'. The NMRC submitted that misinformation 'is often spread by ordinary citizens, without the intent to harm, and without knowing that it is false information'. Therefore, the boundaries between mis/disinformation are not easy to determine, nor is it important. The NMRC argued that it is more important 'to make sure that ordinary citizens have access to a diverse and healthy news ecosystem where they can make informed choices about various issues'.³⁹
- 2.39 WePlanet Australia suggested that misinformation results 'from a lack of exposure to objective, non-partisan information'. Further, it argued that misinformation 'is fuelled by frustrations felt by individuals', including the high cost of energy bills, the visual, noise and construction impacts of energy projects, inability to influence policy decisions, feelings of economic or political disempowerment, and individuals feeling that politicians are not engaging with their individual concerns'. They suggested that 'most people and organisations who engage in misinformation ... believe what they share to be correct because they trust the source of that information, primarily because they want similar outcomes within society'.⁴⁰
- 2.40 Nonetheless, submitters pointed to broader motivations for generating and disseminating false and misleading narratives. Motivations identified—just like the types of examples given—generally depended on the views of the submitter towards climate science and renewable energy. For example:

³⁸ Dr John Cook, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 34.

³⁹ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 20.

⁴⁰ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 2.

- WePlanet Australia argued that motivations fall within the two broad categories of profit motive ('advancing commercial interests for a particular industry') and political motive ('i.e. to win an election, advance a political agenda, or achieve specific policy outcomes').⁴¹
- The ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society argued that 'Astroturfing is mainstream. Campaigns designed to appear grassroots are in fact coordinated, well-financed, and often linked directly to major political parties, donors or lobby groups ... Astroturfing in climate and energy debates is not the work of fringe actors. It is a systematic strategy of mainstream political and corporate players'.⁴²
- The QUT Digital Media Research Centre pointed to the overlap between the conspiracy theory network and 'climate denial'. They also flagged 'a global network of free market conservative think tanks ... known for opposing climate policy progression'.⁴³
- Dr Adam Lucas also argued 'Australian individuals, groups and institutions are embedded in transnational networks that amplify' the effects of mis/disinformation.⁴⁴
- Dr Michael Seebek argued that the 'information and disinformation relating to climate change and energy is financed by the renewables industry, renewable energy investors, and colluding/captured governments, and billionaire philanthropy', with chief conduits being 'mainstream media and

⁴¹ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, pp. 2, 9 and 13. See also IPIE, [Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review](#), Zurich, Switzerland, 2025, p. 25, which argues that research indicates 'that challenges to and disruptions of information integrity primarily originate from actors with an economic or political interest in representing events and issues in ways that disregard, circumvent, or otherwise undermine climate science'. Dr Adam Lucas (*Submission 16*, p. 1) argued that there has been 'corporate state capture of key leadership positions in government and state and federal bureaucracies. This includes ministerial portfolios in which corporate actors are often embedded to serve as ministerial advisors, and in government departments where they often serve in senior secondment positions'. See also Adam Lucas, 'Investigating networks of corporate influence on government decision-making: The case of Australia's climate change and energy policies', *Energy Research and Social Science*, vol. 81, 2021, 102271. For more on business motivations, see Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, pp. 2–3; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 6–7; Professor J Timmons Roberts noted that 'People do care about their places and are willing to fight for them, and I respect that very much. When those fears are whipped up by external interests that have a self-interest which is based on their commercial attempts to do whatever it is, there are other outside interests that want to manipulate these communities, and I think that's deeply problematic' (*Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 13).

⁴² ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 2–3.

⁴³ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, pp. 6–7, 13. See also, for example: Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 4–5, 7; Drilled Media, *Submission 200*, pp. 7–9; Ms Caroline Gardam, PhD Candidate, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 20–21.

⁴⁴ Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, p. 1.

"environmental" charities which receive funding from billionaire philanthropic organisations'.⁴⁵

- The Climate Social Science Network highlighted work by scholars and investigative journalists concluding that 'emissions intensive industries in the gas, coal and utility sectors, among others, have worked to mislead policymakers and the public about climate change science and policy ... Even firms not traditionally associated with climate obstruction, such as superannuation firms, have been found guilty of climate misinformation'.⁴⁶
- The IPA argued that 'it is open to question whether the urge to investigate alleged mis/disinformation in relation to climate and energy is motivated by a concern for accuracy as much as it is about limiting the expression of opinions that fail to reflect the values and preferences of the political class'.⁴⁷
- In a similar vein, the Centre for Independent Studies suggested 'claims of increasing "misinformation" and "disinformation" represent an excuse for government to exercise greater control over the speech of individuals'.⁴⁸
- Dr Jennifer Marohasy suggested that there may be 'selective framing of environmental data to support policy agendas such as net zero emissions'.⁴⁹
- The AHRC pointed to potential links between misinformation, disinformation, astroturfing and foreign interference, noting that the 'coordinated use of bots and trolls is a key tactic in disseminating climate-related disinformation. These tactics may be deployed as part of broader foreign interference operations, where state and non-state actors seek to manipulate public discourse'. The Commission also flagged the risk of foreign actors using deepfakes.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Dr Michael Seebek, *Submission 227*, pp. 54–56.

⁴⁶ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Institute of Public Affairs, *Submission 57*, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁸ Centre for Independent Studies, *Submission 68*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Dr Jennifer Marohasy, *Supplementary to Submission 194*, p. 1. Similarly, another submission (Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 21) argued that some government agencies 'are beholden to support government policy, whatever it may be'.

⁵⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 14–16. See also UQ Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 2–3, 5 and 9–10; Dr Matthew Rimmer, *Submission 28*, pp. 2 and 38–39; Coal Australia, *Submission 64*, pp. 2–6 (particularly on the matter of foreign donations); and RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 3, which argued that during 'the 2021 summer bushfire crisis ... social media bots were found to be spreading—and countering—disinformation that exaggerated the role of arson. Their activity resembled foreign interference campaigns aimed at sowing public discord rather than generating profit'. Mr Alex Murray from Climate Action Against Disinformation (*Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 68) argued that 'there are enough localised disinformation networks in Australia and other countries to be causing concern, but we are increasingly seeing how foreign information manipulation is being undertaken'.

- Climate Action Against Disinformation noted that often the motivation is not related to climate change views at all and can be simply to generate 'clickbait' to increase online traffic and therefore advertising revenue.⁵¹
- 2.41 In general, submitters were able to be more specific about disinformation. For example, Ms Kate Cell from the Union of Concerned Scientists suggested that there are 'a small number of people, probably on the scale of 300 in the world, who spread most of the disinformation about climate change'. Ms Cell observed that disinformation is 'a global problem but with a relatively small number of actors that are driving the disinformation about global warming ...'. She also suggested that 'disinformation spikes at crucial moments. It spikes before every conference of the parties to the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change]. It spikes around elections. It spikes around opportunities for action'.⁵²
- 2.42 Ms Elisa Morgera, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, argued that there are 'certain distinctive actors in the fossil fuel industry who have been, over time, the main architects of that playbook of climate disinformation'. Ms Morgera contended that a 'track record of deliberate action on climate disinformation should distinguish actors that can no longer be considered trustworthy or legitimate partners in public debate'. However, she considered that others 'should have an opportunity to express their ideas freely and, in fact, have meaningful dialogue where everyone can share their doubts about climate science, their doubts about climate action, which are not motivated by a longstanding, well-proven, deliberate effort to misinform and exercise undue commercial influence ... we need to protect freedom of expression from undue commercial influence'.⁵³
- 2.43 In summary, as with examples of what comprises mis/disinformation, there were a range of views expressed about the motivations behind climate obstruction and debate.

How are false and misleading narratives spread?

- 2.44 False and misleading narratives about climate change can more easily spread in the modern world due to the increased prevalence and use of information sharing platforms. While some content is spread maliciously by anonymous internet trolls, some of the most powerful misinformation is 'shared by

⁵¹ Mr Alex Murray, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 70.

⁵² Ms Kate Cell, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 4.

⁵³ Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 58.

prominent actors with higher degrees of connectedness within and across media platforms'.⁵⁴

2.45 According to participants, some of the primary methods of dissemination include:

- mainstream media, including television, newspaper and online content;⁵⁵
- social media platforms⁵⁶ and associated advertising;⁵⁷
- think tank websites⁵⁸ and internet blogs;⁵⁹ and
- AI-generated content.⁶⁰

Role of traditional media

2.46 The role of mainstream media in amplifying climate mis/disinformation was emphasised by several stakeholders. For example, Climate Communications Australia (Climate Communications)—which developed a misinformation index of climate solution claims in the Australian media—found that 14 per cent

⁵⁴ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Climate Communications Australia, *Submission 197*, pp. 2–3; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 8; Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 26; Professor Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Chair, Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Change, IPIE, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 63; Ms Carly Lubicz-Zaorski, PhD Researcher, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 25.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, pp. 8–9; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 4 and 12–13; Doctors for the Environment, *Submission 100*, p. 5; Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*, pp. 9–11; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, pp. 5–6; Australian National University Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, pp. 6–7; Dr John Cook, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 28; Professor Klaus Bruhn Jensen, IPIE, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 63; Ms Satya Tanner, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 32; Dr Rebecca Huntley, Director of Research, 89 Degrees East, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 42.

⁵⁷ See, for example, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 3, 5; United Nations Special Rapporteur on climate change and human rights, *Submission 41*, pp. 5–6.

⁵⁸ Dr John Cook, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 28; Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 46.

⁵⁹ Dr John Cook, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 28; Ms Carly Lubicz-Zaorski, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 25.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 1*, p. 2; RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 4; Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*, pp. 10–11; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, pp. 33–34; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 14–15.

of articles analysed contained misinformation or disinformation on climate solutions'.⁶¹

- 2.47 In addition, Climate Communications highlighted that traditional news outlets 'with the highest degree of misinformation on climate solutions were Sky News, The Adelaide Advertiser, Daily Telegraph, The Australian and Courier Mail, the Herald Sun, Hobart Mercury and NT News'. Climate Communications also noted that '18 kinds of climate solutions mis/disinformation were found across 22 media outlets which were highly concentrated in just one news group'.⁶²
- 2.48 Likewise, CAAD analysed the role of right-leaning media in spreading climate disinformation during COP29. CAAD found that 'right-wing Australian media with a history of publishing and amplifying climate misinformation have taken a different approach from left-leaning and centrist media':

Specifically, the report points out that Sky News in Australia used opinion pieces to portray the Labor government's climate policies as misguided and out of touch with voters' concerns. The outlet contrasted the government's 'climate war' with President-elect Trump's 'anti-woke military agenda'. The document mentions that such critical articles or videos are often presented as 'opinion pieces,' which allows outlets to amplify anti-climate talking points without presenting them as their own views.⁶³

- 2.49 On the other hand, Mr Michael Miller, Executive Chairman of News Corp Australia, argued that it was important that various opinions were debated and noted that News Corp Australia's publications covered a diversity of views:

Whether it be news.com.au, which is our biggest news brand, or whether it be the *Australian*, the *Hobart Mercury* or the *Northern Territory News*, there are a range of views that are expressed across our various mastheads. They are not just the views of our columnists and opinion writers; it's the people we interview, who also have also have diversity of views. And that is fine because healthy democracies are built on healthy debate.⁶⁴

- 2.50 Internationally, Professor Julia Steinberger submitted that traditional media in the United Kingdom (UK) has been 'shockingly vulnerable to the uncritical broadcasting of climate disinformation'. She argued that:

The BBC itself had a policy, active through 2018, of including 'both sides of the debate' on climate in their articles and on their radio and TV shows. Again, I experienced this myself: they would invite climate scientists and either invite or quote climate deniers in their reporting, as though both had equal validity. In general, the UK media was an easy prey for manipulation by the Atlas Network think tanks and their allies. For example, the Global

⁶¹ Climate Communications Australia, *Submission 197*, [p. 2].

⁶² Climate Communications Australia, *Submission 197*, [p. 2].

⁶³ Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Mr Michael Miller, Executive Chairman, News Corp Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 2.

Warming Policy Foundation (now Net Zero Watch), a climate and energy denial and disinformation organization founded by Nigel Lawson, was regularly quoted in traditional media as a legitimate actor, even masquerading as an 'educational charity', despite their lack of scientific expertise and their overt political rather than scientific messages.⁶⁵

Social media and online platforms

- 2.51 Many submitters emphasised the significant role of online platforms in the spread of mis/disinformation. For example, the AHRC noted that social media platforms play a central role largely because their 'algorithms often prioritise engagement over accuracy, creating echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and can amplify misleading content'. This, in turn, 'amplifies outrage and fear, making it harder for evidence-based climate policy to gain traction'.⁶⁶
- 2.52 The United Nations Development Programme found that people online tend to form social connections based on similar beliefs which can, in some circumstances, lead to echo chambers centred around false information.⁶⁷
- 2.53 The echo chamber effect is enabled by 'algorithmic bias' in which social media algorithms are designed to maximize engagement. As such, they often promote content based on a user's past interactions rather than the content's credibility or accuracy. In terms of information about climate change, this means that users are more likely to see content that aligns with their existing beliefs on climate, rather than diverse or fact-based perspectives.
- 2.54 Moreover, false information is also actively spread by inauthentic behaviour, including bots, trolls and coordinated disinformation campaigns. These actors deliberately create and amplify misleading narratives to shape public perception, attempt to undermine trust in scientific institutions or serve certain political and/or economic interests.
- 2.55 Mr Alex Murray from Climate Action Against Disinformation argued that while social media platforms are keen to emphasise 'the fact that everyone has the ability to engage in open debate and discussion' in the digital town square, 'there is not open debate and discussion when you have an information ecosystem that is effectively being polluted by misinformation and disinformation'.⁶⁸
- 2.56 Professor Daniel Angus of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society noted that the lack of transparency in how social media algorithms operate can make it very challenging for researchers to

⁶⁵ Professor Julia Steinberger, *Submission 135*, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4.

⁶⁷ United Nations Development Programme, [What are climate misinformation and disinformation and how can we tackle them?](#), 1 May 2025 (accessed 7 August 2025).

⁶⁸ Mr Alex Murray, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 74.

effectively track mis/disinformation campaigns in real time.⁶⁹ Professor Angus pointed to how mis-disinformation can begin on social media platforms and then move to mainstream media and then into real world conversations:

You often find what's called in academic circles a multistep flow, where what happens is that social media is a space where an idea is floated. It can be sponsored and put out there through that form of paid—it may be astroturfing, but then it's often amplified by traditional media who unscrupulously pick it up and then run it as a story. Then you find it actually receives far more attention across the Australian sector and becomes an issue that is discussed at barbecues, parties and out there in third spaces. So there are multiple strategies here at play.⁷⁰

- 2.57 Some evidence pointed to the significant role inauthentic behaviour on social media can play in spreading false and misleading information.⁷¹ However, according to the NMRC, the 'most powerful misinformation isn't spread solely by anonymous internet trolls. Rather, it is shared by prominent actors with higher degrees of connectedness within and across media platforms'.⁷²
- 2.58 89 Degrees East argued that incidental information exposure lacking conscious engagement 'leaves Australians more vulnerable to misinformation'. This, combined with a tendency towards passive information consumption, such as through TV or news website, 'means that we lack the foundation for conversation and action that reflects the reality of the climate and energy landscape in Australia'.⁷³
- 2.59 According to the NMRC, where consumers of information encounter news online that they suspect may be false and decide to check it, almost two in five report that they turn to trusted news sources, official websites and search engines; 28 per cent seek out fact checking websites; 23 per cent turn to people they trust; and 18 per cent rely on comments from others. Most, however, ignore it (44 per cent). In general, people without news literacy education are much less likely to verify information.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Professor Daniel Angus, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Professor Daniel Angus, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 24.

⁷¹ Doctors for the Environment, *Submission 100*, p. 5; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, pp. 32–33; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 14. However, Ms Caroline Gardam, QUT Digital Media Research Centre (*Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 28) stated she had not seen much evidence of the use of bots, noting that 'certain studies' saw 'a little bit of coordinated bot activity' around the 2019–20 bushfires, 'but others haven't'.

⁷² News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 4.

⁷³ 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 11–12.

AI-generated content

- 2.60 The increasing scale, availability and functionality of AI systems to generate content was raised by multiple submitters and witnesses as additional risk factors in ensuring information integrity. Three main risks were identified: firstly, that AI models can inadvertently perpetuate existing misinformation or falsehoods; secondly that AI can be used to deliberately generate false, fake or misleading content; and lastly, that AI tools can be used to automate the spread of disinformation, and thus greatly expand its potential reach.⁷⁵
- 2.61 Anthropic noted that the information integrity risks with AI generated content are different to that presented by social media platforms, in that AI generators—such as Claude—don't 'have a recommendation algorithm or content feed. It's a pull system rather than a push system. Content does not surface to a user unless they actively request it, and that means that some of the spread of synthetic media and deepfake concerns that often dominate this conversation are less central to our risk profile'. However, it was revealed that Claude was used deliberately to 'automate or scale influence operations activity'.⁷⁶
- 2.62 The United Nations Special Rapporteur highlighted 'collaboration with the big tech industry to use very obscure value chains in the context of social media, advertising and AI generated messaging that expands climate disinformation'. She noted recent research suggesting that 'as opposed to being a loss of profit or investment for fossil fuel companies to invest in all these activities on climate disinformation, there are now ways to make it a profit-making and profit-sharing agreement with social platform managers and AI related content developers'.⁷⁷
- 2.63 WePlanet Australia suggested that what 'began as isolated cases of inaccurate or sensationalist claims is now becoming a self-reinforcing cycle of misinformation, enabled by the way generative AI systems are trained and deployed'. They noted that AI systems are unable to assess the credibility or reliability of information, leading 'to a compounding effect. Once AI creates new content in the form of blogs, social media posts, or articles, that content enters the digital ecosystem and becomes part of the material scraped by other AI systems in the future'.⁷⁸
- 2.64 In addition, WePlanet Australia argued that there are serious risks associated with AI-generated content. In particular, AI-generated content used to create

⁷⁵ Mr Evan Frondorf, Head, External Policy and Partnerships, Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Mr Evan Frondorf, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, pp. 1 and 5.

⁷⁷ Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 55.

⁷⁸ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 8.

disinformation may 'reinforce distrust, harden ideological divides, and undermine evidence-based planning'.⁷⁹

- 2.65 Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action considered that the increasing use of AI-generated 'videos and images around disasters and increasing spread of "government weather manipulation" raises new and significant risks for disaster response, public trust in emergency services and government, and we anticipate it will increase disbelief in real climate disasters'. They noted that generative 'AI has the power to quickly spread mis/disinformation and overwhelm social media users' ability to tell real from fake'.⁸⁰
- 2.66 During this inquiry, media reporting uncovered incorrect information in Rainforest Reserves Australia's submissions to various inquiries, including this one, that was generated by AI. The incorrect information included a non-existent windfarm, government authorities that no longer exist and/or have changed their names, academic articles that do not appear to exist, and citations of academic articles that may not have supported the argument claimed.⁸¹ The author of the submission, in response to the allegations, argued that the issue before the committee is not the use of AI 'but the factual content of the material submitted and the environmental, governance, and policy matters it raises'.⁸²
- 2.67 However, where AI is used to source evidence and that evidence is incorrect, it undermines the credibility of the submission and the organisation making the claims.

⁷⁹ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, pp. 14–15.

⁸¹ Graham Readfearn, '[Queensland anti-renewables group cited nonexistent papers in inquiry submissions using AI, publisher says](#)', *The Guardian Australia*, 18 October 2025; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*; see also *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp. 26–29; Adverse comment response to Submission 14, Rainforest Reserves Australia, from Dr Robert Brulle, received 28 October 2025.

⁸² Letter from Dr Anne Smith, tabled by Rainforest Reserves Australia at the public hearing on 12 November 2025.

Chapter 3

The playbook of climate obstruction

- 3.1 As noted in the previous chapter, some of the most influential content is shared not by anonymous internet trolls but by networks of prominent actors. This point was reinforced by Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy at McGill University, which noted that climate disinformation 'operates through a complex and historically situated network of powerful actors with vested interests'.¹
- 3.2 These networks and their activities are variously described as the climate change counter movement, the 'denial machine', organised denial, and climate obstruction.² Climate obstruction was a term mentioned by various contributors to the inquiry,³ with the Climate Social Science Network (CSSN)—an international collaboration of 800 scholars—providing the following definition in its recent publication, *Climate Obstruction: A Global Assessment*:
- We define climate obstruction as intentional actions and efforts to slow or block policies on climate change that are commensurate with the current scientific consensus of what is necessary to avoid dangerous human-caused interference with the climate system. That scientific consensus is summarized and brought up to date in the assessments by the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change].⁴
- 3.3 According to the QUT Digital Media Research Centre (QUT DMRC), these 'ideologically-aligned actors' aim to 'undermine climate science and curtail emissions reduction policy and action' by deploying tactics similar to those used during the days of anti-tobacco regulation.⁵ A similar point was made by Dr Adam Lucas, who used a well-known tobacco industry quote to sum up these tactics—'doubt is our product'.⁶

¹ Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University, *Submission 104*, pp. 1–2.

² QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 12].

³ See, for example, Dr Kyla Tienhaara and Dr Fergus Green, *Submission 54*, [pp. 2, 3 and 4]; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 2; Brown University Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, pp. 3 and 13

⁴ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 1 and Roberts, J. Timmons, and others (eds), *Climate Obstruction: A Global Assessment*, Oxford University Press, 2025, pp. 1 and 2.

⁵ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 12].

⁶ Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 5].

- 3.4 Dr Jeremy Walker from the University of Technology Sydney concurred and told the committee that fossil fuel interests have funded these networks to undermine and delay climate policy via disinformation campaigns:

These organisations exist for one reason only: to manipulate public opinion and to shape law and policy on behalf of hidden, undisclosed donors like Exxon, Shell, Santos and so on. Their messaging shapes elections, destabilises governments and obstructs, represses and cancels investment in the replacement of fossil energy by solar, wind, battery and EVs. They have turned effective policies, like carbon taxation, into political poison and printed entirely false claims into the public memory through proxy front groups. These are things like, 'Climate change isn't real,' 'Wind farms kill whales,' and so on.⁷

- 3.5 While acknowledging difficulties in determining the precise impact of these strategies, Professor Christian Downie of the Australian National University stated that climate obstruction networks have played a large part in delaying action on climate change:

For social scientists, it's notoriously difficult to try and reach very robust conclusions on the effectiveness of one particular strategy, but I think we can safely assume that one of the main reasons that we're failing to implement, perhaps, climate policies that are consistent with what climate scientists have been calling for is the activities of some of these organisations. It's not the only reason, but I think it's a key part of the explanation.⁸

- 3.6 The remainder of this chapter explores who is involved in these networks of influence and obstruction and how they operate, including the growing use of astroturfing, particularly in the context of political advertising and elections.

Who is involved in obstructing climate action?

- 3.7 The committee received significant evidence in relation to international networks of influence and climate obstruction, particularly in relation to their affiliations and operation in the United States (US).

- 3.8 According to the CSSN, the networks of influence involved in climate obstruction in the US are 'substantial', with 'fossil fuel and allied corporations and wealthy individuals' using various channels to seek favourable policy outcomes (see Figure 3.1). These channels include:

... media ownership and influence, lobbying firms, campaign donations and organizations, advocacy groups in national capitals and across countries, trade organizations, think tanks, and funding funnelled to researchers and

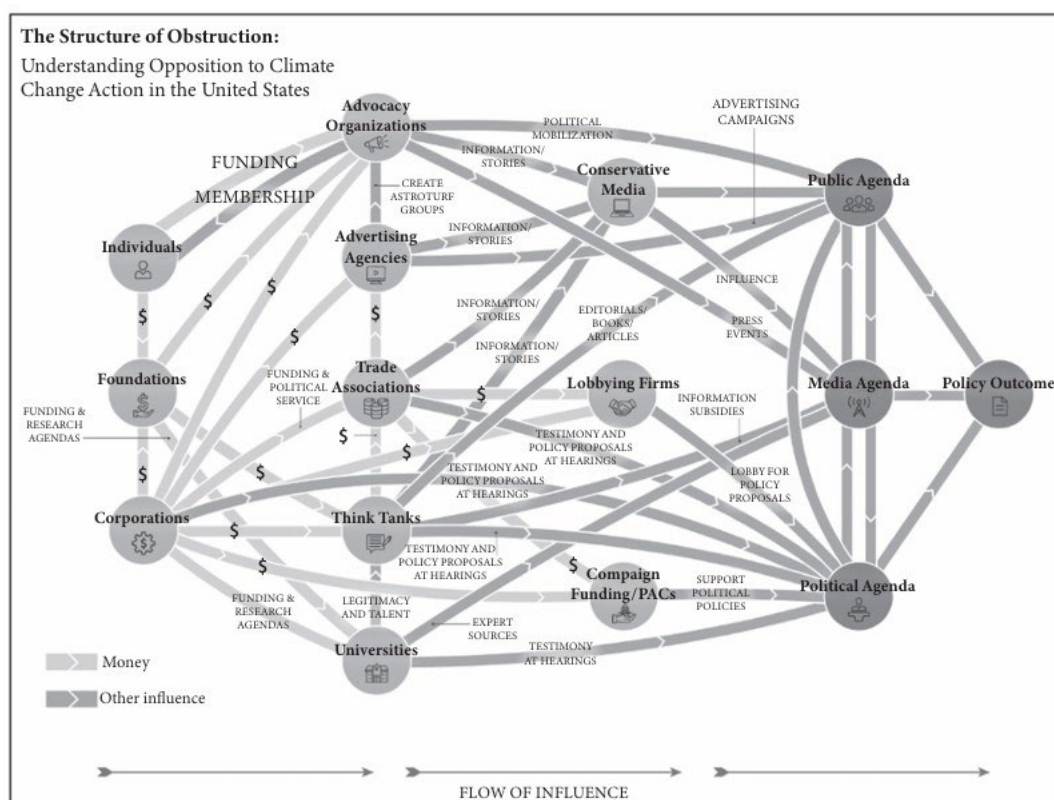
⁷ Dr Jeremy Walker, Senior Lecturer, Climate Society and Environment Research Centre, Social and Political Sciences Program, School of Communications, Faculty of Design and Society, University of Technology Sydney, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 22.

⁸ Dr Christian Downie, Professor, Australian National University and Member, Climate Social Science Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 44.

centers at strategically selected universities. This funding flows through family or corporate foundations as well as through "donor advised funds," which hide the funders' identities from public view.⁹

- 3.9 CSSN expanded on this and explained that although the 'the oil and gas industry led the way on climate misinformation and obstruction' in the US, it has since been joined by other industries, such as coal and utility companies, car manufacturers, and meat and dairy producers, as well as up and downstream supply chain partners, thereby creating 'economy-wide coalitions of business interests that collectively oppose climate policies'.¹⁰

Figure 3.1 Structure of Climate Obstruction in the United States



Source: Roberts, J. Timmons, and others (eds), *Climate Obstruction: A Global Assessment*, Oxford University Press, 2025, p. 3.

Players influencing climate obstruction in Australia

- 3.10 While there has been 'less empirical work' dedicated to mapping these networks in Australia due to opaque financial disclosures,¹¹ the CSSN reflected that the failure of climate policy in Australia, as in the US, 'largely reflects the power and influence of the incumbent fossil fuel industries', with climate policies often coming 'unstuck in the face of misinformation and obstruction campaigns':

⁹ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 2.

¹⁰ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 2.

¹¹ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 17].

Such has been the influence of organizations, such as the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) and the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (AIGN), and the firms that they represent, that their self-proclaimed title as the Greenhouse Mafia, is not without exaggeration. Numerous studies have detailed their influence across decades of government decision-making from Australia's failed attempt to introduce a carbon tax in the 1990s, refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in the 2000s, to the abolition of the carbon price in the 2010s, to recent attempts to transition the electricity sector.¹²

3.11 This aligned with evidence presented to the inquiry about climate obstruction in Australia, which made allegations about the role of global networks, governments, big business, think tanks, consultancies, grassroots movements and advocacy groups. The involvement of Australian organisations in climate obstruction networks was described by Dr Adam Lucas:

Australian organisations are tightly connected to international think tanks, lobby groups and media that constitute the [climate change counter movement], sharing funding streams, staff, and messaging. This transnational infrastructure aligns domestic politics with global delay strategies.¹³

3.12 Similar to US climate obstruction structures shown in Figure 3.1, the QUT DMRC listed 'core actor types' involved in climate obstruction in Australia as:

- corporations and trade associations;
- free market/conservative think tanks;
- contrarian scientists;
- opposition coalitions and front groups;
- PR firms;
- astroturf organisations and campaigns;
- conservative philanthropists and foundations;
- conservative politicians;
- partisan right-wing media; and
- denial blogs and online influencers.¹⁴

3.13 In line with this, Professor Christian Downie noted that while an Australian version of Figure 3.1 may show some differences, there would likely be 'similarity ... with what we would see in Australia':

I think there would be some variations here if we were to do the same type of figure for Australia, but many of the same actors are in play. There are many of the same corporations. These are multinational corporations like Exxon. So it's the same corporations and similar trade associations, think tanks and others. I think the flows of money would look a little bit different. The role of media might look slightly different. But we'd be talking about

¹² Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 8 (citation omitted).

¹³ Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, p. 7.

¹⁴ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 12].

largely the same organisations engaged in the same activities. We know this because we know that the political playbooks of these organisations are often copied around the world.¹⁵

- 3.14 To this end, the CSSN provided specific examples of some of the corporations, trade associations, think tanks, and public relations firms responsible for climate obstruction efforts in Australia (see Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Australian players influencing climate obstruction

Corporations

Emissions intensive industries in the gas, coal, and utility sectors, among others, have worked to mislead policymakers and the public about climate change science and policy. For example:

- Woodside has a long history of lobbying against climate policies in Australia and supporting trade associations that have done the same; and
- utilities companies such as Origin, have consistently lobbied against Australian climate policy, such as recent reforms to the Safeguard Mechanism, and they have advocated for the continued use of fossil fuels.

Even firms not traditionally associated with climate obstruction, such as superannuation firms, have been found guilty of greenwashing. In 2024, ASIC successfully prosecuted Mercer Superannuation (Australia) Limited in the Federal Court. It was ordered to pay \$11.3 million for making misleading statements about the sustainable nature and characteristics of some of its superannuation investment options.¹⁶

Trade associations

Corporations have used trade associations in Australia as a key agent of their influence campaigns. Associations, such as the Minerals Council of Australia, have been engaged in climate obstruction since the 1990s and many continue to engage in political activities today, such as lobbying and public relations, to slow, delay and obstruct climate action. For example:

- trade associations representing the gas industry, coal industry, and utility industry, including Australian Energy Producers, Minerals Council of Australia, and the Australian Pipelines and Gas Association, have campaigned against climate policies;
- in 2022, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries ran a campaign to weaken fuel efficiency standards and delay Australia's

¹⁵ Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 46.

¹⁶ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 9–11 (citations omitted).

transition to electric vehicles. This included misleading statements about the costs of the proposed policy; and

- while not universally supported by their members, peak business associations, such as the Business Council of Australia (BCA), have frequently run campaigns to weaken climate policies in Australia. In 2023 the BCA, along with a raft of other trade associations, opposed the Victorian Government's plan to ban gas connections to new dwellings.¹⁷

Think tanks

Australian think tanks, including the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) and LibertyWorks, have been linked to international networks associated with climate obstruction, most notably the Atlas Network.¹⁸ For example, the IPA played a key role undermining the carbon pricing policy in Australia and more recently has influenced the Coalition in abandoning Net Zero as a policy.¹⁹ In addition, many of these think tanks, such as the Australian Institute for Progress, have also received significant funding from coal companies.²⁰

Public relations firms

PR and advertising firms have been key enablers of obstructionist climate campaigns in Australia. For example:

- WPP, which has a history of working for the American Petroleum Institute, and their Australian affiliates, such as Barton Deakin and the Brand Agency, regularly run campaigns on behalf of Australia's largest fossil fuel producers, such as Woodside and Santos;
- Lawrence Creative helped the coal industry campaign against emissions trading between 2008 and 2010; and
- PR firms are also often behind the creation of front groups designed to manufacture real or imagined community support for fossil fuels or opposition to climate policies. A recent example is the creation of a group called "Australians for Natural Gas," which appeared ahead of the 2025 Federal election, which seeks to "educate and inform" the public about the role of gas.²¹

¹⁷ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 9–11 (citations omitted).

¹⁸ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 9–11 (citations omitted).

¹⁹ See, for example Chair, and Mr Scott Hargreaves, Executive Director, Institute of Public Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp. 2–3.

²⁰ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 9–11 (citations omitted).

²¹ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 9–11 (citations omitted).

- 3.15 In addition, the QUT DMRC referred to extensive research on the 'origins and interconnections of these actors', which suggests that 'established and organised climate obstruction is linked to a global network of free market conservative think tanks via the Mont Pelerin Society and the Atlas Network', which are 'known for opposing climate policy progression'.²²
- 3.16 Evidence to the committee asserted at least some of Australia's climate perceptions are being influenced by messaging originating overseas, including through corporations, state and non-state actors, bots, trolls, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, and foreign donations to local political and campaign activities.²³
- 3.17 Several submitters also warned of the risks of foreign interference and highlighted the dangers to social cohesion, security and sovereign capability.²⁴ For example, Coronium argued that 'it is vital that Australia understands how foreign-influenced messaging is shaping domestic debate—not only in the climate and energy space but across critical areas of public policy'.²⁵

The Atlas Network

- 3.18 The role of the Atlas Network was mentioned in evidence from multiple contributors to the inquiry.²⁶ For example, the Climate Council of Australia (Climate Council) stated that the Atlas Network is 'a US-based organisation made up of more than 500 conservative think tanks, across more than 100 countries'. According to the Climate Council, the Atlas Network and affiliated organisations have flooded the public sphere 'with constantly repeated and co-

²² QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 13].

²³ See, for example, Coronium, *Submission 15*, p. [5]; Coal Australia, *Submission 64*, p. [2–4]; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 14–15; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 23, 25, 29 and 39–40; Page Research Centre, *Submission 140*, pp 14–15; Mr Bruce Murray, *Submission 84*, pp. 5–6; Institute of Public Affairs, *Submission 57*, p. 5; RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 3; Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University, *Submission 104*, p. 5; Mr Michael Copage and Mr Blake Johnson, *Submission 157*, pp. 1–2.

²⁴ Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 68; ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, pp. 2–3. See also: Mr Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 21; Mr Michael Copage and Mr Blake Johnson, *Submission 157*, p. 1; Coal Australia, *Submission 64*, p. [1].

²⁵ Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, p. [5]. See also, Coal Australia, *Submission 64*, p. [2].

²⁶ See, for example, Lucy Hamilton, *Submission 184*, [pp. 1–3]; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 7; Darebin Climate Action Now, *Submission 161*, [p. 3]; Jenny Cambers-Smith, *Submission 97*, p. 2; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 9]; Darebin Climate Action Now, *Submission 161*, [p. 3]; World Wide Fund for Nature – Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 8; Supermiljöbloggen, *Submission 203*, p. 1.

ordinated political messaging' that is 'intended to prevent governments from acting in the public interest to prevent the worst impacts of climate change'.²⁷

3.19 Coronium described the Atlas Network as:

... a decentralised global influence network that connects and trains think tanks, PR professionals, and political operatives on how to influence public opinion and policy by emphasising emotional messaging, anti-government rhetoric, and economic fear, all the while giving the appearance of grassroots or independent analysis.²⁸

3.20 Various submitters, including Dr Mel Fitzpatrick and the Climate Council, noted the following key Australian groups linked to the Atlas Network:

- the IPA – a conservative think tank that actively disputes climate science and promotes policies that benefit fossil fuel industries, often under the guise of independent research;
- the CIS – a think tank that promotes climate scepticism and supports fossil fuel interests in public debate; and
- Advance – which runs campaigns supporting fossil fuel projects and opposing climate action, often creating the impression of widespread public concern or opposition.²⁹

3.21 The QUT DMRC described the interwoven nature of these relationships:

In Australia, the [IPA], [CIS] and the Australian Taxpayers' Alliance are connected to Atlas. Representatives from the IPA and CIS are also members of the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS), with CIS founder Greg Lindsay AO a past MPS president. While refuting links to Atlas, partisan right-wing lobby group Advance—the so-called grassroots group bank-rolled by mill(bill)ionaires—was established and is funded by representatives of the IPA and CIS.³⁰

3.22 While the IPA acknowledged that it is part of the Atlas Network, along with 'multiple hundreds of organisations across the world', it described the meaning of its membership as 'fairly immaterial'. In response to questions about any funding or other support it received from the Atlas Network, the IPA stated that 'the only thing that there would ever be would be a grant fund. I'd have to go and look. It would not be material'.³¹

²⁷ Climate Council Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 13] (citation omitted).

²⁸ Coronium, *Submission 15*, [p. 3].

²⁹ Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 4 and Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 11]. See also, Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 3; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 1]; Lucy Hamilton, *Submission 184*, [p. 2]; Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*, pp. 34 and 37–38; Name Withheld, *Submission 172*, [p. 6].

³⁰ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 13].

³¹ Mr Scott Hargreaves, Executive Director, Institute of Public Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 5.

- 3.23 While the CIS declined the committee's invitation to participate in a public hearing, its submission to the inquiry refuted the claim that its 'policy work is being conducted under the direction and funding of the Atlas Network in America'.³²
- 3.24 Advance also denied that it is associated with, or influenced by, the Atlas Network³³ and rejected the allegation that it was established and funded by members of the IPA and CIS. It claimed this suggestion is 'completely false and based on a news article full of other similarly false information' about the organisation's history.³⁴
- 3.25 Further, Sandra Bourke pointed to correspondence from the Atlas Network itself, which described the allegations against it 'as "false statements and conspiracy theories"'.³⁵
- 3.26 Indeed, a number of inquiry participants, including the Climate Council, noted that the links between these groups, including the Atlas Network, are 'deliberately difficult to trace' and that organisations such as the IPA, CIS and Advance deny receiving funding from the Atlas Network.³⁶
- 3.27 Dr John Cook of the University of Melbourne noted the difficulty in mapping influence networks in Australia due to the lack of donations and funding transparency requirements, alongside increasing use of third parties or entities to obfuscate the original source:

The way that funding is funnelled increasingly over time has gone dark. It goes through these third-party organisations, like donors' trusts, which make it impossible to source the original source of the funding. We see a trend ... where, over time, they have become increasingly good at hiding the original sources of funding.³⁷

- 3.28 Professor Christian Downie of the Australian National University concurred and agreed that there was limited financial evidence in Australia of funding going to anti-climate change influence campaigns:

We don't have as good financial evidence of how this plays out in Australia ... In Australia, unfortunately, we don't have the same disclosure and transparency practices that we have in the United States. For example, as a researcher, if I wanted to know what the revenues were, and what the

³² Centre for Independent Studies, *Submission 68*, pp. 2 and 3.

³³ Advance, *Submission 22*, p. 10 and Adverse comment response from Advance (received 10 October 2025), p. 3.

³⁴ Adverse comment response from Advance (received 10 October 2025), p. 2.

³⁵ Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, p. 25.

³⁶ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 13].

³⁷ Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 28.

political expansion was, of the Minerals Council of Australia, the Business Council or others, I can't access that information. It's not available.³⁸

3.29 However, Professor Downie and other stakeholders pointed out that in-kind support is as important as funding:

There's financial support, but you can also provide communications support, legal advice and administrative support. There is a range of support that you can provide. Many of these networks share money but also share information and political strategies. They'll host workshops. They'll provide a platform for different speakers to come and question the science of climate change. We note in our submission groups like the [IPA], who, for many years, have provided a platform for speakers to come and question the integrity of climate scientists and the integrity of climate science despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. That's one way that they do these types of things.³⁹

3.30 Similarly, Dr Mel Fitzpatrick described how these networks, 'including the Atlas Network, provide financial support, strategic guidance, and templates, ensuring domestic actors align with transnational objectives'. In addition, Dr Fitzpatrick described how the Atlas Network 'invests heavily in training, awards, and events, with many Australian organisations appearing in its partner lists, event pages, or magazine features'.⁴⁰

3.31 This appeared to be supported in evidence from the IPA, which stated that the Atlas Network runs conferences and provides grant funding, awards, and training programs to organisations in its network and others—although the IPA also indicated that it was 'not reliant on the Atlas Network for anything we do'.⁴¹

3.32 The sharing of funding, information and strategies also seems to reflect the operation of such networks internationally. For example, the Brown University Climate and Development Lab (Brown University C&DL) described how climate obstruction networks in the United States 'operate in a political network where legal support, rhetorical strategies, fundraising capacity and digital content are exchanged to build collective power'.⁴²

3.33 Despite the difficulty in tracing network affiliations, the evidence received about the operation of the Atlas Network and its associated entities in Australia appeared to align with international experiences. For example, a submission by four Swedish journalists who uncovered ExxonMobil's donations to free-market

³⁸ Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 47.

³⁹ Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 48. See also, Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, pp. 4–5.

⁴¹ Mr Scott Hargreaves, Institute of Public Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 5.

⁴² Brown University Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, p. 3.

think tank, Timbro, via the Atlas Network, noted the similarities between the Swedish and Australian experiences:

Both countries have a history of organisations affiliated with the Atlas Network running coordinated disinformation campaigns with the intention of undermining, delaying, or overturning effective climate policies. In Sweden, Atlas-linked think tanks played a documented role in resisting carbon taxation and other regulatory measures, while similar tactics have been observed in Australia.

... The Swedish case demonstrates how such influence can operate through seemingly independent think tanks, supported by transnational funding and strategy, to reshape public debate and weaken political will for ambitious climate action.⁴³

How players of climate obstruction operate

3.34 According to Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, players of influence 'operate strategically, using the credibility of "grassroots" campaigns to influence both media narratives and policymakers'.⁴⁴

3.35 Similarly, the CSSN contended that climate obstruction networks are 'highly sophisticated', operate 'in multiple institutional arenas' and pursue 'a wide variety of coordinated strategies' across 'three distinct time frames: long term, intermediate term, and short term' (see Table 3.1).⁴⁵

Table 3.1 Operation of climate obstruction activities – an overview

Long term (5–20 years)	<p>Aim: to build and maintain a cultural and intellectual infrastructure of organisations that supports ideas and policies favourable to conservative or industry viewpoints.</p> <p>Actions: create and maintain academic programs at institutions of higher education; develop and implement corporate or industry-sector promotional campaigns to enhance cultural legitimacy and defuse potential regulations.</p> <p>Examples: of Australia's 37 public universities, 26 take money from fossil fuel companies; emissions intensive corporations, including Woodside, Santos, and Origin, have sponsored sports, arts and public events, including the AFL, the NRL, rugby, and netball.</p>
Medium term (1–5 years)	<p>Aim: translate and promulgate scholarly ideas into concrete policies.</p>

⁴³ Supermiljöbloggen, *Submission 203*, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁵ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 3.

Actions: campaigns to influence legislation across a range of channels including mass media, books, government hearings etc. The main actors operating in this time frame are think tanks, advocacy organisations, and public relations firms.

Examples: a 2017 proposal by Exxon, which would have introduced a small carbon tax while rolling back other regulation and indemnifying fossil fuel companies from civil suits related to climate change; in Australia, the IPA has a long history of financing and providing a speaking platform for climate denialists.

Short term
(0.5–1 year)

Aim: influencing political outcomes such as elections or pending legislation.

Actions: influencing public opinion via advertising campaigns that promote positive perceptions of fossil fuel corporations; citizen mobilisation and/or the creation of front groups to demonstrate popular support for a political position; lobbying activities, either directly (by corporations or trade associations), or indirectly (using public affairs firms to influence legislative outcomes).

Examples: In Australia, emissions intensive firms have been central to lobbying efforts to slow, delay and water down, and roll-back climate policies.

Source: CSSN, Submission 105, pp. 3–5 (citations omitted).

- 3.36 This was reflected in evidence from the QUT DMRC, which referred to the networks' strategic targeting of audiences and implementation of their 'multi-phased playbook to embed themselves into societal structures and gain legitimacy'. It also described the operation and impact of short term climate obstruction activities in Australia:

The shorter-term components of their strategy involve using think tanks, advocacy associations, PR firms and astroturfing (fake grassroots) to push policy arguments, supported by aligned media outlets and influencers. In the case of Australia, this has included campaigns against the carbon pricing scheme, Great Barrier Reef protection, renewable energy, and the nation's science-aligned and legislated Net Zero by 2050 commitment.⁴⁶

- 3.37 Various participants also noted the alignment between international networks and their Australian counterparts. For example, Coronium stated that these connections 'are increasingly visible and traceable' and described how 'talking points, campaign materials, and narrative strategies used in Australia mirror those used in the US and UK — often within days of one another'. As an example,

⁴⁶ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 15].

it noted that the IPA 'has consistently drawn upon the work of foreign organisations', including:

- The **Heartland Institute** (USA), which has been exposed for accepting funding from fossil fuel interests to downplay climate science.
- The **Global Warming Policy Foundation** (UK), known for promoting misleading statistics and false comparisons about renewable energy.⁴⁷

3.38 Indeed, the committee heard that the IPA had recently claimed in an email that it had 'broken the back of net zero and net zero is now a dead man walking' and that 'the developments this week would not have happened without the work of the IPA'.⁴⁸ The committee is also aware that in 2015, the IPA was one of six finalists for the Atlas Network's \$100 000 Templeton Freedom Award for its 'Repeal the Carbon Tax' campaign.⁴⁹

3.39 However, some participants recognised that the desire to shape policy and public opinion crosses the political spectrum and is not inherently problematic. For example, Professor Downie noted that there are 'lots of actors in society' who act deliberately to 'shape policies, to shape public opinion and to shape the media in ways that allow them to maintain their commercial interests'.⁵⁰

3.40 Despite this, Professor Downie stressed that the difference in the case of climate obstruction networks is that 'we know that some of the products that they're selling are warming our planet and are having devastating consequences around the globe, including here in Australia'.⁵¹

3.41 Similarly, the QUT DMRC made the point that people are 'entitled to have, and express, genuine concerns about emissions-reduction actions and policies' and noted that lessons could be learned in relation to better handling the energy transition in regional areas. However, the QUT DMRC also stated that 'the issue is when these genuine concerns are misrepresented, amplified, or stoked by well-funded and coordinated vested interests'.⁵²

Astroturfing

3.42 The committee heard that one of the ways that networks promulgate and amplify false and misleading information is via astroturfing, which is generally

⁴⁷ Coronium, *Submission 15*, [p. 4] (citations omitted).

⁴⁸ Senator Whish-Wilson, Chair, Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Atlas Network, [Institute of Public Affairs' repeal the carbon tax finalist for prestigious Templeton Freedom Award](#) (accessed 12 March 2026); Mr Scott Hargreaves, Institute of Public Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 46.

⁵¹ Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 46.

⁵² QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 14] (emphasis in original removed).

regarded as 'the practice of creating industry-backed organisations that mimic genuine grassroots groups'⁵³ to give the appearance of 'apparent grassroots support where none authentically exists'.⁵⁴

- 3.43 The ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society (ADM+S) provided a similar definition of astroturfing—'the practice of masking the sponsors of a message to make it appear as though it originates from grassroots citizens or community organisations'—and argued that it 'has become a defining feature of contemporary Australian election advertising' (see Box 3.2).⁵⁵

Box 3.2 Prevalence of astroturfing leading up to and during the 2025 federal election

According to ADM+S, the volume of ads and the size of advertising spend demonstrate the prevalence of astroturfing during the 2025 federal election. It argued that estimated spending on pages such as Australians for Prosperity (\$220 000 to \$290 000), the Australian Taxpayer's Alliance (\$206 000 to \$265 000), Mums for Nuclear (\$49 000 to \$62 000), and Australians for Natural Gas (\$37 000 to \$54 000) exceeded 'what would be expected of genuine small-scale community groups'.⁵⁶

ADM+S provided the following cases studies from the 2025 federal election, which it said highlighted the different astroturf tactics used during the campaign, including international franchising of campaigns into the Australian context, direct links to party pollsters, and mimicry of existing grassroots organisations.⁵⁷

Mums for Nuclear

Mums for Nuclear presented itself as grassroots organisation focused on the impact of energy prices on households and advocated for nuclear power as a solution to rising household bills and climate concerns. However, the group attracted controversy due to the accuracy of its claims regarding energy costs, its links to international networks advocating for nuclear energy, and not being listed on the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) Transparency Register despite significant expenditure on ads during the election campaign.⁵⁸

⁵³ Queensland Conservation Council, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 8.

⁵⁷ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 10–11.

Australians for Natural Gas

Australians for Natural Gas presented as a community-led campaign advocating for natural gas as an essential energy solution. The group attracted controversy by implying that gas was the key solution to rising electricity prices without acknowledging the role of renewables or the real cost comparisons and by not registering as a Significant Third Party with the AEC despite significant advertising expenditure.⁵⁹

Energy for Australians

Energy for Australians was a pro-nuclear organisation created shortly before the election campaign, which highlighted household energy costs and blamed the ALP government for price increases, while presenting cost claims without reference to global markets or the timeframe for nuclear implementation. Although registered as a Significant Third Party, its online presence was minimal prior to April 2025, suggesting a campaign created almost solely for the election period.⁶⁰

- 3.44 According to stakeholders, the funding sources for these organisations are generally obscure⁶¹ and, in the international context, much astroturfing is performed by public relations firms.⁶² For example, Mr Andrew Beaton Campaign Director of the Australian Democracy Network (ADN) argued that the 'production of misinformation begins with the manufacturing of intellectual cover by think tanks and astroturf fronts that are disguised as community concern':

In ADN's assessment, these are not grassroots voices but are industrial public relations campaigns. This intellectual cover is then funded, as we saw this week. It revealed the scale of the funder-to-proxy pipeline, when a major political advocacy group received substantial funding, most of it dark money and the rest from wealthy industry figures. Public disclosures suggest we are witnessing the financial capture of our political conversation.⁶³

- 3.45 The committee received multiple allegations from all sides of the debate that certain groups in Australia and elsewhere fit the definition of astroturfing. These allegations included that entrepreneurs and philanthropists are funding groups

⁵⁹ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 11.

⁶⁰ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 11–12.

⁶¹ See, for example, Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 19, 20, 22; International Panel on the Information Environment, *Submission 42*, p 5.

⁶² Dr Christian Downie, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 46.

⁶³ Mr Andrew Beaton, Campaign Director, Australian Democracy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 23.

advocating for action on climate change, or conversely, that conservative-aligned think tanks and pro-fossil fuels organisations are funding groups opposing action on climate change or renewable energy.⁶⁴

- 3.46 Various stakeholders, such as the Climate Council, asserted that 'fossil fuel interests and allies have seeded false narratives to protect their commercial positions and profits'.⁶⁵ It contended that these efforts to spread mis/disinformation are systematic, well-funded, supported by favourable media outlets and have deep reach into Australian politics.⁶⁶
- 3.47 As an example, some submitters alleged that Coal Australia had provided direct financial support to third-party groups that presented as grassroots organisations to build support for fossil fuel projects and opposed clean energy. This included Coal Australia's contribution of over \$3.68 million to Australians for Prosperity—which ran targeted advertisements against pro-climate action candidates during the 2025 federal election—and its donation of \$613 500 to conservative think tank the Australian Institute for Progress ahead of the Queensland state election in 2024.⁶⁷
- 3.48 However, Coal Australia disputed that it was engaged in astroturfing and noted it had complied with relevant electoral disclosure requirements. It argued that its goal was to provide a cross-section of information to counter what it

⁶⁴ For further discussion of astroturfing see, for example, Dr Michael Seebeck, *Submission 227*, p. 55; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 4; Brown University, Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, pp. 8–10; Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 25; WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 6; Amanda de Lore, *Submission 206*, p. 7; Name Withheld, *Submission 174*, p. 1; Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*, pp. 8–9; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 10; Property Rights Australia Inc., *Submission 59*, pp. 7, 17; ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 3, 6–9; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, p. 7; Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, pp. 3–4; Responsible Future Illawarra Chapter, *Submission 178*, p. 46; and Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 7–8, which argued that in Australia's renewable energy context, astroturfing has 'evolved into a troubling alliance between government agencies, publicly funded institutions, conservation bodies, and universities that are increasingly reluctant to voice environmental or ethical concerns regarding Net Zero initiatives due to their dependence on government or industry funding'.

⁶⁵ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 11].

⁶⁶ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [pp. 11-12]. See also Lighter Footprints, *Submission 108*, p. 3; Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*, p. 11; Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, pp. 3 and 13; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, pp. 1, 3, 4 and 6; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Queensland Conservation Council, *Submission 8*, pp. 2–6; UQ Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 6–7; Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*, pp. 47–48; ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 8; Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, [p. 7]; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 11.

perceived as an ideologically driven debate that ignores the economic benefits of the industry.⁶⁸ Coal Australia told the committee:

Generally speaking, I would say that, as a matter of course, any of those groups that we have been affiliated with, or donated funds to, have been in a situation where they were of a view, or they were pushing messages, that were very much in keeping with the general ideals and principles that Coal Australia abides by.⁶⁹

3.49 Additionally, the founder of Coal Australia, Mr Nick Jorss, pointed to The Sunrise Project, which he submitted was involved in funding and coordinating various activist groups to disrupt, delay, and stop fossil fuel projects, notably in coal and gas. Mr Jorss argued that:

The Sunrise Project, founded by John Hepburn and funded by a network of international climate philanthropies and billionaire renewable investors, has been extraordinarily successful in stifling the expansion of Australia's coal industry. Through lawfare, coordinated astroturfing, media campaigns, and political pressure, Sunrise and its affiliates have delayed or derailed multiple projects in Queensland and beyond.⁷⁰

3.50 According to Coronium, astroturfing may result in the undermining of trust in democratic consultation. As such, legitimate local concerns may be 'drowned out by orchestrated misinformation, reducing transparency and skewing decision-making'. However, Coronium noted it was important to 'distinguish between authentic community engagement and synthetic, coordinated campaigns that hijack the process'.⁷¹

3.51 Professor J. Timmons Roberts noted that astroturfing 'technically means stood up by outside forces, especially corporations or PR [public relations] firms'. However, he also informed the committee that in the US context, many groups are not 'entirely organic. They're receiving, as we say, an information subsidy ... The groups are receiving information about tactics, ideas about tactics and strategies. They are receiving talking points. They're often receiving help with fiscal agency'.⁷²

3.52 In addition, Professor Roberts noted that assistance may be provided for local groups as they are beginning to form. In particular, 'there will often be a group who would like to not see [an energy project] happen or would like to at least

⁶⁸ Mr Stuart Bocking, Chief Executive Officer, Coal Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, pp. 41–42, 44–45.

⁶⁹ Mr Stuart Bocking, Chief Executive Officer, Coal Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 37.

⁷⁰ Mr Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 20.

⁷¹ Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, pp. 3–4.

⁷² Professor J. Timmons Roberts, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 13.

have it happen in a responsible way ... [and] the external help can often drive the nature of that opposition'.⁷³

- 3.53 The Brown University C&DL, of which Professor Roberts is a member, made a similar point in its submission, encouraging the committee 'to consider how local-level anti-renewables sentiments are *synergistic* with other interests, not *supplanted* by them'. In particular:

Yes, be on the lookout for grassroots organizations that may be fake. They may be attempts by corporate interests to masquerade as concerned members of a community near a proposed renewable energy facility. But it is also true that genuine constituent concern is accelerated, amplified, and empowered by traditional anti-climate interests, rather than seeded by them. Their use of exaggerated claims of the downsides of renewable energy are often quite effective at stoking that local opposition.⁷⁴

- 3.54 The Brown University C&DL noted that imprecise 'assumptions of astroturfed opposition may have negative consequences'. In particular, Brown University C&DL flagged research suggesting that the assumption that one's opponent is funded by dark money can shape how individuals and organisations interact with their opponents.⁷⁵

⁷³ Professor J. Timmons Roberts, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 14.

⁷⁴ Brown University, Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, p. 10.

⁷⁵ Brown University, Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, p. 10.

Chapter 4

Impacts of climate obstruction campaigns in Australia

4.1 This chapter considers the impacts of climate obstruction campaigns, especially on regional and coastal communities. Several case studies are also presented to help illustrate the very real-life impacts on individuals and the communities in which they live.

Energy-related projects to address climate change

4.2 A significant number of submissions received during the inquiry were from individuals and advocacy groups, in relation to large, local development projects.¹ These projects are typically transmission lines, battery, on- or offshore wind turbine and hydro projects, and solar farms.

4.3 Submitters indicated that false or misleading information had been disseminated by:

- locals with legitimate concerns about development projects;²
- conservationists and environmentalists with concerns about impacts on biodiversity, local flora and fauna, and/or the natural environment;³
- locals in support of climate and energy-related projects;⁴
- campaigns originating from—or being co-opted by—media, industry, consultancy, political and/or climate change or fossil fuel interests;⁵ and

¹ See, for example, Friends of Chalumbin, *Submission 13*, pp. 1–2; Mr Col Poulter, *Submission 47*, pp. 1–2; Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, pp. 1–2; Responsible Renewables Committee Port Stephens Myall Coast, *Submission 103*, pp. 1–2; Name Withheld, *Submission 177*, pp. 1–3.

² See, for example, Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 5; Friends of the Earth Australia, *Submission 134*, p. 1; Ms Michelle Hunt, *Submission 220*, [pp. 1 and 9–10]; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 4; Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 48–49.

³ See, for example, BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, pp. 2–3; North Queensland Natural History Group, *Submission 26*, pp. 1 and 8; Name withheld, *Submission 168*, pp. 3–4.

⁴ See, for example, North Queensland Natural History Group, *Submission 26*, pp. 2–3; Mr David Forbes, *Submission 149*, [pp. 22–25]; Dr Michael Seebek, *Submission 227*, pp. 54–56; RE-Alliance Network Survey, received from Re-Alliance on 18 November 2025, [pp. 2–3].

⁵ See, for example, Mr Lindsay Marriott, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 58–59; Mr Colin Kemp, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 66; Mr Michael Marzengarb, Head, Corporate Accountability, Climate Integrity, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 89; Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 48–49; La Trobe Valley Sustainability Group, *Submission 218*, [pp. 2–3]; ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, Australian National University, *Submission 19*,

- campaigns or information greenwashing in support of climate and energy projects originating from or co-opted by political, and/or energy development businesses.⁶
- 4.4 Several groups objected to being labelled as astroturf organisations,⁷ and highlighted their authentically and legitimately held concerns. For example, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), who the committee notes made similar imputations or allegations of astroturfing against other groups, wrote:
- ... community opposition is authentic and rooted in legitimate concerns. Independent surveys and public consultations reveal that many locals are apprehensive about environmental impacts, visual intrusions, effects on tourism, property values, and local industries. These concerns are valid, multifaceted, and cannot be dismissed as the product of external manipulation.⁸
- 4.5 Evidence received by the committee points to—if not astroturfing—then objections to energy projects by people living outside of the area and not directly impacted by the development. For example, Coronium Pty Ltd and the University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre wrote of energy projects which had local support but objections from around Australia, and other projects which received significant push back from outside the local area.⁹

Objections to large development projects

- 4.6 Numerous submitters and witnesses objected to energy projects in their local regions, citing concerns about adverse impacts on natural ecosystems, noise,

pp. 9–10; Friends of the Earth Australia, *Submission 134*, pp. 3–5; Name withheld, *Submission 174*, [p. 2]; Mr Grant Piper, *Submission 212*, p. 1; Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, pp. 27–33; Ms Carly Lubicz-Zaorski, PhD Researcher, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 28; ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 6.

- ⁶ See, for example, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, p. 5; Ms Mikaela Humble, *Submission 186*, [pp. 1–2]; Dr Larry Cashion, *Submission 229*, p. 1; Consumer Policy Research Centre, *Submission 114*, [p. 1]; Dr Michael Seebek, *Submission 227*, pp. 23 and 33–34; Eastern Mount Lofty Rangers Landscape Guardians, *Submission 91*, [pp. 2 and 5].
- ⁷ See, for example, Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 2; Mr Grant Piper, National Rational Energy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 71; Mr Daniel Wild, Executive Director, Institute of Public Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 2; Mr William Shackel, Founder, Nuclear for Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 51; Name withheld, *Submission 174*, Adverse comment response from Wimmera Mallee Environmental and Agricultural Protection Association, received 6 October 2025, [p. 1].
- ⁸ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, p. 42. See also, Kerry Trapnell, *Submission 143*, [pp. 1–2]; Mr Robert Onfray, *Submission 50*, [p. 1].
- ⁹ Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, [p. 4]; University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 6. See also, WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 12; Ryan Cropp and Angela Macdonald-Smith, '[Anti-renewable campaigners delay projects with mass long-distance objections](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 25 November 2025 (accessed 1 December 2025).

increased road traffic, health and safety, property values, appearance, pollution, cost, and lack of benefit to the local community.

- 4.7 The concerns raised share much in common with other large-scale development projects and these concerns are not specific to renewables projects. Research has suggested that, on some occasions, those objecting to developments use certain arguments to 'conceal their prejudice and to make their objection more socially acceptable ... "people will use any argument they possibly can to stop something"'.¹⁰
- 4.8 As Property Rights Australia explained, 'what you see are people trying to protect their homes, their security, their businesses and the quiet enjoyment of their properties without interference. They are gleaning information from whatever sources are possible and social media is very accessible'.¹¹
- 4.9 This may signal that arguments about climate change and energy transition may stand as more palatable proxies for very real and understandable objections to large developments on people's doorsteps. Dr Brad Jessup wrote:
- ... community groups concerned about renewable energy infrastructure seek out discourses of opposition, which may very well be founded in disinformation, when the primary matters of their concern are overlooked, downplayed, or they have no agency to argue their opposition on those grounds. This is something I have seen in practice with respect to other land uses.¹²
- 4.10 Mr Ketan Joshi, a freelance climate analyst/writer, built on this idea, stating:
- When an anti-wind group finds purchase and widespread local support, it is usually because that group provided a framework and terminology to allow a community to express the deep hurt of injustice in language that sounds justifiable: being worried about your health, wanting to save birds, wanting to save whales, wanting to prevent bushfires. Every falsified meme offered up tends to have its own moral weight for this reason. They offer a pressure release valve to members of a community that feels they can't simply say that they're being treated unfairly, because the broader social system of capitalism deems that an unacceptable plea.¹³
- 4.11 In other cases, the committee heard that legitimate concerns about development projects 'get subsumed, get used, get weaponised into a wider ideological

¹⁰ Davison, G., Legacy, C., Liu, E., & Darcy, M., 'The Factors Driving the Escalation of Community Opposition to Affordable Housing Development', *Urban Policy and Research*, 2016, 34(4), 386–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2015.1118377>.

¹¹ Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 5. See also, Ms Karen Fox, *Submission 31*, [p. 1]; Loomberah Family & Farmland Incorporated, *Submission 7*, [pp. 1–2]; Ms Deborah Pergolotti, *Submission 83*, [p. 1].

¹² Dr Brad Jessup, *Submission 213*, [p. 1].

¹³ Ketan Joshi, *Submission 71*, [p. 6].

framework', driving division in communities.¹⁴ For example, the debate surrounding the Illawarra Wind Energy Project saw high-profile political interventions and claims of misinformation from both sides (see Box 4.1 below).

Box 4.1 Case Study: Illawarra Wind Energy Project

In June 2024, the Australian Government declared a new offshore wind energy zone off the Illawarra coast—stretching from Wombarra to Kiama—as the fourth such zone in the country. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) stated that the energy zone had the potential to generate up to 2.9 gigawatts of renewable energy, which is enough to power 1.8 million homes.¹⁵

In August 2024, renewable developer BlueFloat Energy applied for a seven-year feasibility licence to explore development in the zone.¹⁶

Local communities had genuine concerns at the lack of information, and details about how the project would impact them and their environment. These concerns escalated and remained unanswered.¹⁷ People sought their own information about the environmental and other impacts of wind turbines and community groups both for and against the project were established.¹⁸

There were claims and counter-claims of mis/disinformation circulated by parties both for and against the project, including about environmental and health impacts, longevity of the project, economic benefits for the community, fossil fuel funding, and conspiracy framing portraying the project as part of a "UN takeover" or tied it to "global elites".¹⁹

¹⁴ Mr Dave Sweeney, Antinuclear Campaigner, Australian Conservation Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 45.

¹⁵ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Pacific Ocean off the Illawarra, NSW declared for offshore wind](#), 15 June 2024 (accessed 18 August 2025).

¹⁶ Kelly Fuller, ['Illawarra wind zone uncertainty as US renewables company requests delay'](#), *ABC News*, 28 February 2025 (accessed 18 August 2025).

¹⁷ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 3 and Ms Amanda De Lore, *Submission 206*, [pp. 3–4].

¹⁸ See, for example, Ms Amanda De Lore, *Submission 206*, [pp. 3–4]; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 5; Adam Morton, Jordyn Beazley, and Ariel Bogle, ['How a false claim about wind turbines killing whales is spinning out of control in coastal Australia'](#), *The Guardian*, 12 November 2023 (accessed 18 August 2025).

¹⁹ See, for example, Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, pp. 1–2; Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, [pp. 12–17]; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 4; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 8; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 5; Mr Alex Murray, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 69; Good for the Gong, *Submission 181*, [pp. 2–3]; Nick O'Malley, ['Projects hijacked by "political actors like Peter Dutton](#)

There were also claims that DCCEEW itself had spread mis/disinformation, mispresenting and overstating the community benefits of the project, and downplaying and discrediting community opposition to the offshore wind farm.²⁰

This information became widespread through various channels including social media infiltration—particularly community-led Facebook groups—and trolls, fake research, local radio and press, local billboards and ephemera.²¹

Of particular concern to some inquiry participants was the promulgation of the false narrative that offshore wind farms kill whales. This included reference to a fabricated study that claimed offshore wind farms could kill up to 400 whales a year.²² According to ABC reporting, this claim 'took over in the Facebook group No Offshore Wind Farms for the Illawarra' and while 'it was eventually taken down ... the seed was sown'. ABC reports also describe Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) Facebook pages as being 'littered with AI-generated or photoshopped images of whales dead among wind turbines' and note that 'much of the anti-offshore wind farm rhetoric in the Australia around marine life mirrors arguments that have originated in the US'.²³

Similarly, the committee heard evidence that longtime anti-renewables, pro-nuclear advocate, Michael Shellenberger' funded a short film called 'Thrown to the Wind',²⁴ which falsely linked whale deaths to offshore wind farms.²⁵ In Australia, this film was 'first highlighted and amplified by

[suddenly pretending to care about whales](#)", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 2023 (accessed 18 August 2025).

²⁰ Name withheld, *Submission 176*, [pp. 1–5] and Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, pp. 3–4.

²¹ See, for example, Ms Satya Tanner, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 31; Ms Amanda De Lore, *Submission 206*, p. [9]; Good for the Gong, *Submission 181*, [pp. 2–3]; Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 4; Ms Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, p. 25; Mr Tony Harris, *Submission 86*, [p. 2]; Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 6; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 4; Nick O'Malley, '[Projects hijacked by "political actors like Peter Dutton suddenly pretending to care about whales"](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 2023 (accessed 18 August 2025).

²² See, for example, Good for the Gong, *Submission 181*, [p. 2]; Luke Gelder, *Submission 179*, [p. 1]; Nelli Stevenson, *Submission 89*, pp. 2–3.

²³ Jess Davis, '[Donald Trump's 'climate hoax' comments belong to a well-resourced playbook landing on Australia's shores](#)', *ABC News*, 29 September 2025 (accessed 13 March 2026); Steve Cannane, '[The offshore wind debate could influence this federal election and it's already an "absolute blood-fest"](#)', *ABC News*, 30 March 2025 (accessed 13 March 2026).

²⁴ Drilled Media, *Submission 200*, p. 11.

²⁵ Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Submission 107*, [pp. 3–4].

commentator Andrew Bolt on Sky News, and then widely embraced by various pundits and politicians opposed to renewables'.²⁶

When questioned at a public hearing about the platforming of disinformation by Sky News, News Corp Australia executives appeared unfamiliar with the segment but suggested that the airing of the piece was a 'good process' as it allowed for its debunking:

CHAIR: ... let me give you an example of disinformation, which is that offshore wind turbines kill whales. It started with a film in the US first platformed by Andrew Bolt on Sky News. That particular bit of misinformation has been thoroughly debunked. It's done an enormous amount of damage. As Mr Reid says, there's a process where you might raise that and people come out and debunk it. You say that's a democratic process, but don't you accept that kind of thing does a lot of damage along the way? Everyone's entitled to their opinion but not to their own facts, and there was no factual basis to that allegation aired on News Limited.

...

Mr Reid: It wasn't first platformed on News Corp, was it? It was a film—

CHAIR: It was on social media, but Andrew Bolt first platformed it in the mainstream media.

Mr Reid: But, Senator, isn't the surfacing of something like that—having a discussion and having a debunking of it—a good process?

CHAIR: I don't think Andrew Bolt debunked it. I'd like to have seen him do that.

Mr Miller: No, but what you're contending is that that assertion has now been debunked.²⁷

Following the hearing, News Corp Australia suggested that that Andrew Bolt's interview with Michael Shellenberger had 'enabled viewers to hear his opinions as part of the public debate'.²⁸

Pro-offshore wind groups—allegedly operating as 'paid activism'—working in the area claimed that anti-wind groups had links with the fossil fuel industry and conservative lobbying groups.²⁹ Opponents to the wind

²⁶ Drilled Media, *Submission 200*, p. 11.

²⁷ Senator Whish-Wilson, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 9; Mr Michael Miller, Executive Chairman, News Corp Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 9; Mr Campbell Reid, Group Executive, Corporate Affairs, Policy and Government Relations, News Corp Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 9.

²⁸ News Corporation Australia, answers to questions on notice, 13 November 2025 (received 5 December 2025).

²⁹ See, for example, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, pp. 28–29 and 32–34; Name withheld, *Submission 173*, [p. 2]; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 9];

project emphasised their community grassroots and that their objections were because of a poorly planned project that was not suitable for the Illawarra—'economically, environmentally and socially'.³⁰

As a result of the mis/disinformation, 'community members report[ed] heightened fear and anger, particularly among those working in industries tied to fishing and whale tourism'.³¹

In 2024, the Australian Government reduced the Illawarra offshore wind zone to two-thirds of its original size, and 10 kilometres further offshore.³² In July 2025, after previously requesting that the government delay its licence assessment until after the May federal election, Bluefloat announced it would be ceasing operations globally, likely marking the end of the Illawarra offshore wind project.³³

- 4.12 However, several submitters pointed out that renewable energy companies are profit-driven, funded by wealthy investors, and in many cases are multi-national and 'stand to profit handsomely from taxpayer-subsidised projects'.³⁴ BirdsSA warned that 'we must avoid the trap of "greenwashing"—assuming all renewable projects are inherently good'.³⁵
- 4.13 Some stakeholders considered there are opportunities for renewable energy companies to do better in making the case for renewable projects. Renewable energy companies were accused of engaging in 'concerning and unconscionable practices'³⁶ and conducting 'very systematic, planned campaigns of deliberate misinformation and disinformation in their efforts to gain political support and social licence for their projects in exactly the same way that proponents of fossil

Mr Simon McInnes, *Submission 38*, [p. 2]; Mr Burchell Wilson, *Submission 182*, [p. 4]; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 8.

³⁰ See for example, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, [pp. 2–3 and 33–34]; Ms Amanda De Lore, *Submission 206*, [p. 5]; Mr Col Poulter, *Submission 47*, p. 1; Mr Darryl Elliott, *Submission 53*, [p. 1]; Name withheld, *Submission 173*, [p. 2]; Name withheld, *Submission 171*, [p. 1]; Nick O'Malley, '[Projects hijacked by "political actors like Peter Dutton suddenly pretending to care about whales"](#)', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 2023 (accessed 18 August 2025).

³¹ Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 3.

³² University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 6.

³³ Kelly Fuller, '[Illawarra wind zone uncertainty as US renewables company requests delay](#)', *ABC News*, 28 February 2025 (accessed 18 August 2025); Ben Langford, '[Illawarra offshore wind sunk as BlueFloat's owner decides to axe the company](#)', *Illawarra Mercury*, 16 July 2025 (accessed 18 August 2025).

³⁴ Robert Onfray, *Submission 50*, [p. 2]. See also, Institute of Public Affairs, *Submission 57*, pp. 5–6; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 9; BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [p. 2].

³⁵ BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [p. 3].

³⁶ Institute of Public Affairs, *Submission 57*, p. 4.

fuel based energy projects do'.³⁷ Renewable energy projects were also called out for their hypocrisy, given exemptions from land clearing, Great Barrier Reef safeguarding, and species protection regulations.³⁸

- 4.14 The Developer Rating Scheme, still in its early stages of use, was developed in response to the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's (AEIC) Community Engagement Review 'to provide a greater level of accountability and transparency of the energy sector's performance, activity and behaviour'. However, at this time and for some developers and/or projects, the Commissioner thought 'there is clearly a gap between what the community expects to see and what they are currently seeing in some parts of the community'.³⁹
- 4.15 Submitters also claimed that renewable energy projects and companies are subject to less regulation and oversight than, for example, resources projects and companies, and differing taxation rules, disadvantaging host landowners and their neighbours.⁴⁰

Lack of relevant information

- 4.16 Several submitters and witnesses observed that lack of information is a particular contributor to climate change and energy mis/disinformation. This was borne out by the government's own report into community engagement on the energy transition (see Figure 4.1 below) and:

... an ACM Regional Attitudes survey (2024) which found an overwhelming majority of people (~80%) thought that "governments - local state and federal - and renewable energy developers had not given communities enough information about the [energy] transition and renewable energy".⁴¹

³⁷ Mr Steve Burgess, *Submission 154*, [p. 1]. See also, Name withheld, *Submission 168*, p. 6; Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 57.

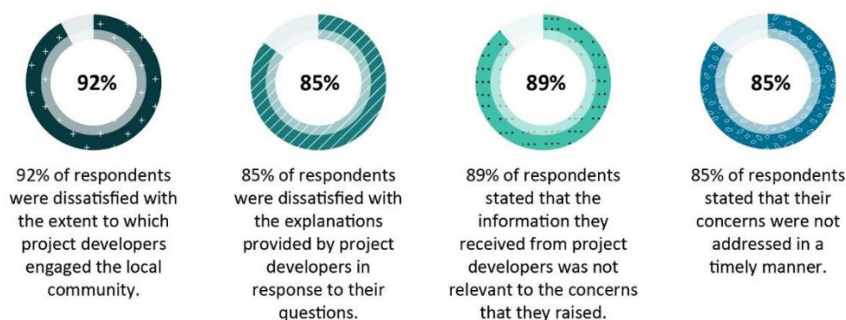
³⁸ See, for example, Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, pp. 6–8; Friends of Chalumbin, *Submission 13*, p. 7; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 50–54; North Queensland Natural History Group Inc, *Submission 26*, p. 2.

³⁹ Mr Tony Mahar, Commissioner, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, pp. 5–6; Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Landscape Guardians Inc, *Submission 91*, pp. [3–4]; Name withheld, *Submission 168*, pp. 3 and 6–8; BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [p. 2]; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 14.

⁴¹ Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 9.

Figure 4.1 Survey results indicate that landholders and community members were generally dissatisfied with the engagement and information that they received from project developers.



Source: Andrew Dyer, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, 2023, [Community Engagement Review Report](#), on behalf of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra, 2 February 2024, pp. 8 and 40.

4.17 Dr Rebecca Huntley of 89 Degrees East explained:

These information gaps create space for misinformation or disinformation to take hold. Paired with a tendency towards passive or incidental information consumption, rather than actively searching for accurate and reliable news or information, means that we lack the foundation for conversation and action that reflects the reality of the climate and energy landscape in Australia.⁴²

4.18 Friends of the Earth concurred, writing:

The spread of mis and dis information often takes place in an information vacuum. Where there is a lack of trusted voices providing reliable information and context, people either turn to finding their own sources, share information from people who they trust—like community leaders, and share what they hear from those closest to them—friends and family.⁴³

4.19 Stakeholders also noted that poor development processes, including insufficient consultation, opaque planning, inadequate communication, and inequitable compensation arrangements often disenfranchise locals and render people and communities vulnerable to mis/disinformation.⁴⁴

4.20 The AEIC agreed that complex processes and poor communication, as well as misinformation, were barriers and more could be done to improve community engagement and participation:

⁴² Dr Rebecca Huntley, 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, p. 2. See, also, Mr Steve Burgess, *Submission 154*, [p. 1]; Mr Benjamin Abbott, President, No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 26; Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 52; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, pp. 4–5; Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Submission 107*, [p. 8].

⁴³ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 7; Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, p. 3; Institute of Public Affairs, *Submission 57*, p. 3.

... our Office is increasingly hearing concerns voiced about safety across all life cycle stages of different renewable generation, storage and transmission infrastructures ...

Such concerns can be exacerbated by a lack of understanding of, or trust in, complex or opaque regulatory processes, and could be at least partially alleviated by prompt regulatory follow up and greater transparency and information sharing. Community members and landholders frequently relay to our Office that they have difficulty in navigating planning frameworks.⁴⁵

Impacts of false and misleading claims in communities

4.21 The committee heard there are direct and significant impacts on individuals and regional communities where climate and energy-related projects are proposed or developed. For example, Ms Fiona Lee from Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action explained the abuse that she and other bushfire survivors had been subject to and its impacts:

Unfortunately, the online abuse has become an unavoidable part of life for me and for people who speak up, and it feels pretty targeted and relentless. Sadly, I tolerate this, but I don't think I should have to. I'm really open to a healthy debate about the way forward, but I don't expect to be abused and met with untrue information, cruel comments, conspiracy theories and outright denial of the role that climate change played in the disaster that destroyed our home. These attacks compound our trauma, silence people and create a culture of fear, and that is the opposite of what we need, which is a democratic debate ...

...

I consider myself to be a pretty thick skinned person, which I think allows me to speak up in this way. But, of course, at times when I go on social media and I see a hundred comments ranging from calling me names to flat out denying climate change is happening it's obviously really hurtful, and I already harbour a trauma from that event. So I guess I do feel a moral responsibility to speak about those fires.⁴⁶

4.22 The committee also heard directly from landowners hosting renewables infrastructure that they, and their families, have faced ongoing verbal and physical abuse, intimidation, harassment, ostracization, and death threats.⁴⁷ For

⁴⁵ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 2]; Mr Tony Mahar, Commissioner, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Ms Fiona Lee, Volunteer Bushfire Survivor Advocate, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 66–67.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Mr Dayne Pratzky, *Submission 205*, [p. 3]; Ms Georgie Stewart, Farmer, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 62; Mr Brett Stewart, Farmer, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp. 62–63; Mr Justin Page, Coordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 48–49; Mr Lindsay Marriott, RE-Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 59; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2

example, 18 year old Georgie Stewart, the daughter of a farmer, described being intimidated and harassed by a man at the local pub because her father was considering hosting a wind farm on his land.⁴⁸ Likewise, Mr Colin Kemp, a community engagement representative for WestWind Energy, told the committee about threats made against him by a man at a local community Christmas event.⁴⁹

4.23 Similarly, Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter) wrote that its members had been subject to 'harassment and intimidation' including verbal and written abuse, especially via email and social media, damage to personal property, and exclusion.⁵⁰ In other cases, police have had to be called to community consultations.⁵¹

4.24 As explained by the Clean Energy Council, those tensions readily spill over into communities and impact renewable project workers:

The increasing mis/disinformation circulating freely online is creating conditions that intensify psychosocial risk factors leading to unsafe environments for hosts, workers and members of communities in which clean energy projects are planned and operate in.

Campaigns that polarise public opinion and split local groups often translate into strained relationships and social hostility, producing anxiety, feelings of isolation, and an ongoing sense of conflict.

Inflamed tensions in communities unnecessarily fuels conflict between hosts of renewable projects and neighbouring landholders and community members. This has real and concerning consequences including bullying, intimidation, harassment, fear and confusion in communities, and even threats to the lives of those working in the sector. This can translate to job strain, absenteeism, presenteeism, and mental health issues.⁵²

4.25 The Australian Conservation Foundation, and other stakeholders broadly concurred, advising that mis/disinformation about renewable energy projects can also exacerbate anxieties and emotional turmoil in communities.⁵³ Mr Andrew Bray from the Renewable Energy Alliance elaborated:

Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 8; RE-Alliance Network Survey, received from RE-Alliance on 18 November 2025, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ms Georgie Stewart, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 62.

⁴⁹ Ms Georgie Stewart, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 61.

⁵⁰ Responsible Future (Illawarra Chapter), *Submission 178*, pp. 33–34.

⁵¹ Ms Naomi Campbell, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 33–34.

⁵² Clean Energy Council, *Submission 185*, p. 4.

⁵³ See, for example, Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 5]; 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, [p. 1]; Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 3; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, pp. 7–8.

It's not necessarily the fact that the information is false. When you look at the impact it has on a community, it's much more than that. It's about creating the climate of fear and confusion that the people who spread the misinformation are trying to create. That has a real impact on community cohesion. A lot of the claims that are made will have a grain of truth in them, but they're often exaggerated. They're false and they're exaggerated. But the purpose of it is not necessarily just to question a fact. It's more to do with creating that climate of concern and confusion.⁵⁴

Delays to energy projects and action on climate change

4.26 Perhaps the most direct impact of false and misleading information is that it delays energy projects, Australia's clean energy transition, and action on climate change, confusing the public's understanding of climate change as well as reducing support for climate policy.⁵⁵

4.27 Ms Elisa Morgera, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, advised that climate change related mis/disinformation makes it hard to even discuss the impacts that fossil fuels have on the environment:

It is an effort to even get to discuss—be that in the climate negotiations at the national level or even in other international processes here at the Human Rights Council or in the plastics treaty negotiations, it's an effort to even put fossil fuels on the table. That just shows how much of an impact that climate disinformation and undue commercial interest have—that we are not able to talk about, or even put on the table for open conversation, the main cause of the planetary crisis we're facing.⁵⁶

4.28 In December 2025, the Australian Energy Market Operator scaled back its expectations for high voltage transmission lines and wind farms to meet green energy targets, noting the need for more reliance on big solar farms, batteries and households. While higher costs were the biggest factor in decisions not to

⁵⁴ Mr Andrew Bray, National Director, Renewable Energy Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 65.

⁵⁵ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 4]. See also, Dr Rebecca Huntley, Director of Research, 89 Degrees East, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 42; Southerly Ten, *Submission 192*, pp. 2 and 4; Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 1; WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 5; Ryan Cropp and Angela Macdonald-Smith, '[Anti-renewable campaigners delay projects with mass long-distance objections](#)', *Australian Financial Review*, 25 November 2025 (accessed 27 November 2025); The Climate Centre, *Submission 23*, [p. 2]; Brown University, Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, pp. 11 and 13; University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 5; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 4; Professor Matthew Hornsey et al, *Submission 126*, [p. 4]; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 54.

invest in windfarms, community opposition was also a contributing factor to these decisions.⁵⁷

4.29 Numerous submitters, such as Climate Integrity and Coronium Pty Ltd, suggested that delaying action and/or elevating fossil fuels, is the ultimate aim of such campaigns, with impacts flowing through to policy makers and action to address climate change.⁵⁸

4.30 The Tasmanian Climate Collective warned that this delay and 'failing on climate action exposes Australia to multiple escalating risks, including disasters and severe food and water shortages, in turn threatening economic prosperity, social stability and regional security'.⁵⁹

Industry and prosperity

4.31 Numerous submitters to the inquiry noted that climate and energy obstruction has stymied energy industry development, market investment and growth, with negative economic, job, energy security and prosperity impacts, particularly in regional areas.⁶⁰

4.32 The committee was told of several instances in which specific energy projects of various types had been delayed, obstructed and terminated because of false and misleading campaigns.⁶¹ For example, Re-Alliance noted the impact of

⁵⁷ Daniel Mercer, '[AEMO slashes forecasts for wind farms as falling costs fuel solar, batteries](#)', *ABC News*, 10 December 2025 (accessed 10 December 2025).

⁵⁸ Climate Integrity, *Submission 162*, pp. 8–9 and Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, [pp. 1–2]. See also, Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, [p. 5]; InfluenceMap, *Submission 69*, p. 4; Brown University, Climate and Development Lab, *Submission 165*, pp. 11 and 14; Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 20; Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 29; Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Tasmanian Climate Collective, *Submission 70*, [p. 4].

⁶⁰ See, for example, Mr Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 15; Mr Michael Copage and Mr Blake Johnson, *Submission 157*, p. 1; Mrs Sally Hunter, Re-Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 64; Mr Dayne Pratzky, *Submission 205*, [p. 3]; Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, pp. 1 and 3–5; Page Research Centre, *Submission 140*, p. 17; Comms Declare, *Submission 56*, p. 14; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 5; Mr Piers Verstegen, *Submission 87*, p. 1; FutureCoal, *Supplementary Submission 9.1*, p. 1; Ms Satya Tanner, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 31; Queensland Conservation Council, *Submission 8*, p. 3; Mr Simon Johnson, Board Member, One Gippsland, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 41; Farmers for Climate Action, *Submission 130*, p. 13.

⁶¹ See, for example, Mr Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, pp. 10–11; Mrs Sally Hunter, Re-Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 61; Page Research Centre, *Submission 140*, p. 14; Farmers for Climate Action, *Submission 130*, pp. 1 and 7; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 5; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 4].

misinformation on the failure of the community battery project in Narrabri, New South Wales (See Box 4.2 below). Mrs Sally Hunter told the committee:

Ultimately, this situation has set me back two years of development time and wasted probably hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' and ratepayers' dollars, and it's helped to slow the transition to renewables, because we all know the importance of storage in the grid right now. Most sadly for me, it dashed plans that we had for 100 per cent of the profits going to community benefits. We'd hoped that these would create legacy projects that would help community groups reduce costs and improve their resilience. I believe initiatives such as local energy hubs would have been very helpful in our situation.

...

All I know is that there was misinformation floating around the community, and it led to the death of the project.⁶²

4.33 Similarly, the Climate Capital Forum explained, that disinformation was:

... not only eroding public trust but also imposing a significant economic opportunity cost. If industry is delayed or derailed due to misinformation, communities stand to lose tens of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in investment, and long-term growth in regional incomes.⁶³

Box 4.2 Narrabri Community Battery Trial Project

The Narrabri Community Battery Trial Project was funded through the Community Battery for Household Solar program and involved the installation of a 500kWh battery in the Narrabri Town Hall carpark.

The battery was to be co-located with a solar covered car park and existing EV charging stations to store surplus solar electricity generated during the day and discharge the stored energy at night. The battery was owned and operated by a not-for-profit community group established to ensure local benefits from the renewable energy transition.⁶⁴

Despite initially endorsing the project, the Narrabri Shire Council subsequently moved to delay it while it reviewed safety information, fire risk management, disposal plans, financial benefits and site suitability, and receive expert briefings. In October 2025, the Council rescinded its licence agreement, which then forced the project to seek a private alternative.⁶⁵

According to the proponents, the project fell victim to the spread of misinformation in relation to fire safety and proximity to a primary school

⁶² Mrs Sally Hunter, RE-Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 58 and 61.

⁶³ Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Geni.Energy, [The Narrabri Community Battery Trial Project](#) (accessed 5 March 2026).

⁶⁵ Jess Davis, Nathan Morris and Alex Lim, ['How to kill a battery'](#), *ABC News*, 28 February 2026 (accessed 23 March 2026).

which influenced community perceptions and contributed to the loss of social licence and ultimately undermined the project.⁶⁶

- 4.34 By contrast, Mr Lindsay Marriott, a farmer from South Gippsland, told the committee of the benefits arising from his lived experience of hosting a wind farm, which highlighted the intersection of renewables with economic resilience for farmers:

I've increased productivity, probably by 20 per cent or more. It's allowed me to totally upgrade my facilities. There's the finance. The income has totally helped me get through some very hard, difficult weather events and commodity price crashes. We've got a self-replacing ewe flock and a self-replacing beef herd. That means a whole cycle of life happens under wind turbines. And I can guarantee, a hundred per cent, there is no negative impact from a wind farm. There is no negative impact on the neighbours. There's no negative impact on my farm⁶⁷

- 4.35 In addition, Mr Marriott described how the wind farm has benefited the region more broadly, with the developers setting up a community fund, with a local committee allocating seed funding to 'a whole lot of local communities'.⁶⁸

- 4.36 Ms Naomi Campbell from the Climate Capital Forum advised the committee of the longer-term effects of on Australia's renewables sector:

Without investment, and without that incoming financing that allows for costs to be reduced, you never will realise an industry that can deliver costs competitively. In terms of misinformation and being able to deal with that, it's really about making sure that you have that investor confidence so that you can realise a cost-competitive industry in Australia.⁶⁹

- 4.37 Mr Michael Copage and Mr Blake Johnson suggested that Australia's national and economic security has been undermined by limiting action and intensifying the impacts of climate change, increasing the costs of emissions reduction and climate adaptation, and limiting Australia's industry development, thereby passing the benefits to overseas trading partners.⁷⁰

- 4.38 Similarly, Mr Nick Jorss argued that misinformation is shaping public discourse and impacting our wider economic prosperity, stating that 'jobs, royalties and emissions have shifted offshore, while Australia's domestic energy security has weakened and electricity costs have surged'.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Jess Davis, Nathan Morris and Alex Lim, 'How to kill a battery', *ABC News*, 28 February 2026.

⁶⁷ Mr Lindsay Marriott, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 59.

⁶⁸ Mr Lindsay Marriott, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 64.

⁶⁹ Ms Naomi Campbell, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 37.

⁷⁰ Mr Michael Copage and Mr Blake Johnson, *Submission 157*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Mr Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 8.

Public debate and freedom of speech

4.39 As discussed in Chapter 2, mis/disinformation has a distorting and chilling effect on public debate about climate change and transition pathways.⁷² There may be several reasons for this, including the polarising nature of the debate, intolerance and name-calling and people's safety concerns, lack of trust within communities, the ability of the public to have an informed debate, and restrictions on free speech.

4.40 There was evidence that people may self-censor and disengage or may be censored by others—either directly or indirectly. For example, Mr Greg Mullins, Founder of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, recounted his experiences:

Disinformation is very active out there and it's aimed at discrediting anyone who is seen as an activist around climate action, it's very personal and they deliberately attack the messenger. I left Facebook and Twitter. I still get attacked on LinkedIn ...

Ultimately, they're trying hard to shut me down. In a way, they've partially succeeded. I'm reluctant to appear in the media, I get very apprehensive and anxious because you know you'll be attacked personally.⁷³

4.41 Ms Serena Joyner from Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action agreed and told the committee:

... misinformation and disinformation have created conflict in communities and people are just not believing or are distrusting members of their community talking about the role of climate change. It does silence people, and there are communities that will just avoid that whole subject because it's seen as political. It's still to this day political.⁷⁴

4.42 Submitters also explained that social media algorithms have also silenced and censored their views:

Platform algorithms determine not just what is removed, but what is seen. When dissenting views are "deboosted" or algorithmically shadow-banned, their visibility to the public is suppressed without any formal notice, creating a covert form of censorship.⁷⁵

4.43 When submitters felt their view was in the minority, they experienced a sense of withdrawal and disengagement:

⁷² See, for example, Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 3; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 5]; 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, [p. 1].

⁷³ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 6]. See also, CWO REZist Inc, *Submission 25*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Ms Serena Joyner, Chief Executive Officer, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 13. See also, Mr Bruce Murray, *Submission 84*, pp. 1 and 5; CWO REZist Inc, *Submission 25*, p. 3.

These individuals and communities felt isolated with no support and finding others experiencing the same thing was difficult, as the metrics on social media and web searches quell any voice that opposes the climate change and renewable narrative.

...

... those invested in the climate change and renewable narrative prefer discussion shut down early to suppress dissenting voices.⁷⁶

- 4.44 89 Degrees East wrote that individuals in favour of renewable projects may be unwilling to express their support, despite wider-than-imagined support. For example, in the Illawarra, 69 per cent of residents surveyed supported the transition to renewables but believed that only 43 per cent of their community agreed.⁷⁷ 89 Degrees East explained:

Misinformation and disinformation have left many Australians believing that their personal support for renewables is a less widely held opinion than it actually is. This means people are less willing to vocalise their support to others in their communities. Many Australians also underestimate the amount of renewable energy already powering our country, making the energy transition seem like a bigger disruption than in reality.⁷⁸

- 4.45 As well as having a chilling effect, mis/disinformation can sidetrack any debate, to refocus on the mis/disinformation rather than the proposal in question, explained Ms Sophia Walter:

... instead of debating truthful arguments for and against the proposed offshore wind area, we were fact checking lies, myths and exaggerations about turbines on fire, wildlife deaths, impacted surfing conditions and more. It was more than infuriating—it was debilitating. Along with other supporters of both evidence-based data and better climate action, we were driving ourselves to exhaustion and anxiety, trying to neutralise the flood of mis- and disinformation in our community.

...

... we expended all our energy mythbusting this lie, rather than debating the ways the government should improve the proposal.⁷⁹

Legitimate dissent

- 4.46 The environment we are operating in is fraught, as noted by Mr Murray Hogarth, who submitted that 'climate change, and energy and its future, are inherently complex, playing out over decades, with bitterly opposed

⁷⁶ CWO REZist Inc, *Submission 25*, [p. 1].

⁷⁷ Polling Summary, received from Re-Alliance on 18 November 2025, [pp. 1–2].

⁷⁸ 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, p. 2. See also, Dr Marc Hudson, *Submission 199*, [p. 8]; Farmers for Climate Action, *Submission 130*, p. 4; Good for the Gong, *Submission 181*, [p. 5].

⁷⁹ Ms Sophia Walter, *Submission 144*, [p. 1].

and politicised vested interests, and highly conflicted stakeholder positions'. Mr Hogarth argued that:

Solution options are hotly contested, financially, technologically, politically, socially and environmentally. Compounding the sheer wickedness of the problem, the climate change and energy-related mis/disinformation being generated overlaps with the many and wider challenges of an increasingly ungovernable digital communications world, including: protecting freedom of speech as a fundamental democratic right, although one that requires appropriate "guardrails"; and, navigating through a range of related challenges including the rise of artificial intelligence, secret algorithms, online radicalisation, social fragmentation, culture wars and inadequate levels of media literacy.⁸⁰

4.47 However, a range of submitters and witnesses thought that labelling differing views and dissent as mis/disinformation was unhelpful to the promotion of free speech and debate within society. For example, grassroots movement ADVANCE argued:

... people do not just agree or disagree with a policy or political stance because they absorb information, assess it, and make their decision accordingly. If a reasonable person disagrees with, for example, building wind-powered energy projects, it is not necessarily because they are a victim of "misinformation" or "disinformation", and their objections may not change if they only received a Greens-approved version of the truth. The fact is that people have different values, priorities, and policy preferences. A person could have all the 'correct' information and still disagree with a policy for any number of perfectly acceptable reasons.⁸¹

4.48 Ms Karen Fox observed that in a democracy citizens must be able to question information and question government:

... if Australians are not allowed to look outside of the Government narrative for information and question what we are being told—on any matter, we must ask why? If we are not allowed to discuss our questions on social media and share our real life experience we are no longer living under any illusion of democracy.⁸²

4.49 However, the QUT Digital Media Research Centre questioned whether legitimate concerns and questions are being manipulated for other purposes:

... people are, of course, entitled to have, and express, genuine concerns about emissions-reduction actions and policies (for example, there are some good lessons for how the renewable energy transition can be better handled

⁸⁰ Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 4.

⁸¹ ADVANCE, *Submission 22*, p. 6. See also, Ms Anne Osborne, *Submission 39*, pp. 5 and 7; Emeritus Professor Dr Ivan Kennedy, *Submission 223*, [pp. 1-2]; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 7; Mr William (Jim) Pinkerton, *Submission 95*, [p. 3]; Keith Bennett, *Submission 214*, [p. 1]; Dayne Pratzky, *Submission 205*, [p. 3]; Australian Environment Foundation, *Submission 5*, [p. 11].

⁸² Ms Karen Fox, *Submission 31*, [p. 1].

in regional areas in Australia ...) but the issue is when these genuine concerns are misrepresented, amplified, or stoked by well-funded and coordinated vested interests.⁸³

4.50 The committee heard that, regardless, debate and free speech should not be suppressed by parliamentary and regulatory processes under the guise of combating misinformation and disinformation, including online on social media platforms and messaging apps. For example, one submitter emphasised:

I respectfully urge the Committee to ensure that measures to address misinformation do not have the unintended consequence of silencing legitimate, grassroots community campaigns. It is vital that community members retain the right to organise, question and express views on major government projects without being unfairly smeared or discredited.⁸⁴

4.51 This view was supported by The Centre for Independent Studies, which warned against over regulation and suppression of free speech and debate, submitting 'more broadly, we caution that efforts to regulate so-called "misinformation" risk suppressing legitimate debate and free expression, and that in a democracy contested ideas should be resolved through open discussion rather than censorship'.⁸⁵

4.52 The best approach to combating misinformation and disinformation, wrote the Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, is to promote free and open debate:

What is truly needed is vigorous discussion and debate towards a better, more rational understanding of climate science and its uncertainties. A social atmosphere open to suggestions for alternative energy policies rather than dogmatic lecturing by senior leaders will move Australia towards a better energy policy. If costs and reliability were openly and accurately revealed, there would be far less misinformation clouding the debate.⁸⁶

4.53 The Australian Human Rights Commission advocated for a nuanced and balanced approach, argued that it was 'equally important to emphasise that

⁸³ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 14. See also, Ms Elise Morgera United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 58; WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 7; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, pp. 2–3.

⁸⁴ Name withheld, *Submission 171*, [p. 1].

⁸⁵ The Centre for Independent Studies, *Submission 68*, [p. 4]. See also, Mr Bruce Murray, *Submission 84*, p. 5; Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 25; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 11; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 4 and 9–10.

⁸⁶ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 26. See also, Ms Phoebe Morgan, *Submission 36*, [p. 2]; Dr Kesten Green, *Submission 187*, p. 5; Jo Nova, *Submission 155*, [p. 1]; Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 74; Dr Bill Johnston, *Submission 231*, [p. 2].

addressing misinformation and disinformation must not come at the expense of stifling legitimate public debate'.⁸⁷

Trust and democracy

4.54 As discussed above, the committee heard from a broad spectrum of submitters that debate about climate change and energy should not be silenced. Silencing debate has the effect of undermining the public's trust—in its own communities, in scientists and experts and in public institutions. This has crucial implications for the resilience and effectiveness of our democracy.⁸⁸

4.55 The News and Media Research Centre at University of Canberra emphasised the urgency of the challenge:

Our research on news, misinformation and media literacy clearly shows that the impact of misinformation driven by unregulated market dynamics, on our information ecosystem and democracy is an urgent societal issue. Climate change is a topic that is often tied to one's values and belief systems, which makes people particularly vulnerable to disinformation campaigns around the issue.⁸⁹

4.56 As well as cancelling out attempts to communicate factual information and causing people to disengage, Dr John Cook from the University of Melbourne, cautioned that mis/disinformation and exposure to conspiracy theories about climate change reduces trust in institutions, further compromising civic engagement.⁹⁰

4.57 Other submitters and witnesses, such as Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables and Professor Christian Downie from the Australian National University and Climate Social Science Network, emphasised the importance of having access to factual information to safeguard

⁸⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4

⁸⁸ See, for example, Nadler A, Crain M, Donovan J quoted in Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Submission 10*, p. 1; Ms Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, pp. 2 and 7; The Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 2; Australian Democracy Network, *Submission 117*, [p. 2]; Ms Caroline Gardam, PhD Candidate, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 23; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 7; Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 27–28; Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director, Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 23.

⁸⁹ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 20.

⁹⁰ Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 34.

social licence and the wider democratic basis of our society.⁹¹ Professor Downie argued:

Obviously, misinformation really can, I guess, undermine the links that underpin our democracy. What do I mean by that? Political leaders are only going to understand the intention of voters—their electoral behaviour—if there's a clear, robust public debate based on facts. When we have misinformation, it erodes that link between voters and their elected representatives. That doesn't just threaten our potential to solve problems like climate change but you name it—healthcare policy, defence policy, whatever it is. To the extent that misinformation undermines our public debates and our capacity for elected leaders to know what voters actually want is a real risk to our democracy and to the resilience of our democratic institutions.⁹²

Public safety and security

4.58 Concerns were also raised about the consequences of climate change and energy mis/disinformation on personal and public safety and security.⁹³ Ms Caroline Gardam reported on her research, telling the committee:

... there's a lot of aggressive rhetoric within those [extreme online movement] spheres. Some of that is, 'We will not consent'. That general conspiratorial milieu—it's described as that—poses a threat to society in the fact that that is where there are conversations around antigovernment, anti-authority and antiscience themes. Particularly, this is within a very small tail of what we see online.⁹⁴

4.59 In addition to personal safety threats experienced by people in communities, submitters such as the Municipal Association of Victoria, reported 'that climate misinformation threatened staff safety and perception of safety'.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, pp. 7–8; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 2; Dr Christian Downie, Professor, Australian National University; and Member, Climate Social Science Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 47 and 51–52.

⁹² Dr Christian Downie, Professor, Australian National University; and Member, Climate Social Science Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 47.

⁹³ See, for example, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 6]; Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 1*, [p. 1]; Lighter Footprints, *Submission 108*, p. 3; ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, pp. 1–2; Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 7; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 8; Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 2]; Senator Malcolm Roberts, *Submission 125 Attachment 1*, p. 11.

⁹⁴ Ms Caroline Gardam, PhD Candidate, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 28.

⁹⁵ Municipal Association of Australia, *Submission 6*, p. 10. See also, Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 7 and Name Withheld, *Submission 174*, [p. 5].

4.60 Similarly, concerns were raised in relation to the mis/disinformation that circulated during the Black Summer Bushfires in 2019–2020 (See Box 4.3 below).

Box 4.3 Black Summer Bushfires 2019–2020

In 2019–20, Australia experienced one of the most catastrophic bushfire seasons on record with more than 35 million hectares burnt, the destruction of over 10 000 buildings and 33 people losing their lives as a direct result of the fires. The estimated financial impact nationally was estimated at between \$10 and nearly \$100 billion.⁹⁶

Significant environmental destruction from the fires included an estimated three billion animals impacted by the fires, and 'hazardous' air quality in some areas, affecting the health of thousands.⁹⁷ Over 700 million tonnes of carbon was emitted into the atmosphere.⁹⁸

According to research by the CSIRO and others, the Black Summer Bushfires around Australia were primarily ignited by lightning strikes and exacerbated by fuel loads, record-breaking heat, drought and severe fire

⁹⁶ Bushfire smoke was estimated to have contributed to the deaths of 445 people. Georgia Hitch, '[Bushfire royal commission hears that Black Summer smoke killed nearly 450 people](#)', *ABC News*, 26 May 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025). QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. [32]; National Bushfire Recovery Agency, '[Journey to recovery](#)', October 2020, pp. 6 and [8]; Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, '[Report](#)', 28 October 2020, p. 5; Paul Read and Richard Denniss, '[With costs approaching \\$100 billion, the fires are Australia's costliest natural disaster](#)', *The Conversation*, 17 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025); Filkov, A., Ngo, T., Matthews, S. et al, 'Technical note: Impact of Australia's catastrophic 2019/20 bushfire season on communities and environment. Retrospective analysis and current trends', *Journal of Safety Science and Resilience*, September 2020, Vol. 1, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnlssr.2020.06.009>; Dr Daniel May, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia, '[2019–20 Australian bushfires—frequently asked questions \(updates\)](#)', *Research paper, 2021–22*, 2 July 2021.

⁹⁷ WWF Australia, '[Australia's 2019–20 bushfires: the wildlife toll: interim report](#)', 2020, pp. 2–3; Ward, M., Tulloch, A., Radford, J. et al, '[Impact of 2019–2020 mega-fires on Australian fauna habitat](#)', *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, October 2020, Vol. 4, no. 10, pp. 1322–1323; Dr Daniel May, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia, '[2019–20 Australian bushfires—frequently asked questions \(updates\)](#)', *Research paper, 2021–22*, 2 July 2021; Lisa Richards, Nigel Brew and Lizzie Smith, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia, '[2019–20 Australian bushfires—frequently asked questions](#)', *Quick guide, 2019–20*, 12 March 2020.

⁹⁸ Michael Mazengarb, '[Black Summer bushfires released more than a year's worth of Australian emissions](#)', 16 September 2021 (accessed 3 December 2025); Filkov, A., Ngo, T., Matthews, S. et al, 'Technical note: Impact of Australia's catastrophic 2019/20 bushfire season on communities and environment. Retrospective analysis and current trends', *Journal of Safety Science and Resilience*, September 2020, Vol. 1, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnlssr.2020.06.009>.

weather that are consistent with predictions of human-induced climate change scenarios.⁹⁹

However, during the bushfires, mis/disinformation started to circulate on social media, including by what appeared to be bots and trolls.¹⁰⁰ A study of 315 accounts using #ArsonEmergency revealed that a third were suspected to be bot or troll accounts. However, real users were primarily responsible for the continued spread of falsehoods, which were picked up by mainstream media.¹⁰¹

Mis/disinformation online included:

- out-of-date, doctored or AI-generated images and video
- inaccurate fire maps
- exaggerated reports that arsonists had started the fires
- articles claiming 'left-wing ecoterrorists', the government, or the Islamic State started the fires.¹⁰²

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action observed 'increasingly we are seeing comments that spout conspiracy theories, especially geo-engineering,

⁹⁹ Kevin Nguyen, Tim Brunero, Sarah Thomas, Daniel Keane and Nicole Mills, '[The truth about Australia's fires – arsonists aren't responsible for many this season](#)', *ABC News*, 11 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025); Cook, G., Dowdy, A., Knauer, J. et al, '[Australia's Black Summer of fire was not normal – and we can prove it](#)', *The Conversation*, 26 November 2021 (accessed 3 December 2025); Dave Owens and Mary O'Kane, *Final Report of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry*, 31 July 2020, pp. 24 and 28–29; Dianne Cook, '[Australia: Open data shows lightning was the likely cause of bushfires](#)', *PreventionWeb*, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 18 December 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025).

¹⁰⁰ Kevin Nguyen and Ariel Bogle, '[Fires misinformation being spread through social media](#)', *ABC News*, 9 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025); Christopher Knaus, '[Bots and trolls spread false arson claims in Australian fires "disinformation campaign"](#)', *The Guardian*, 8 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025); Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, p. 7; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 32–33]; Mr Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 2]; Climate Council, *Submission 198*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Kevin Nguyen and Ariel Bogle, '[Fires misinformation being spread through social media](#)', *ABC News*, 9 January 2020; UQ Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 5; Mr Andrew Gibson, *Submission 46*, [p. 1–2]; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 3. Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 68.

¹⁰² Kevin Nguyen and Ariel Bogle, '[Fires misinformation being spread through social media](#)', *ABC News*, 9 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025); Christopher Knaus, '[Bots and trolls spread false arson claims in Australian fires "disinformation campaign"](#)', *The Guardian*, 8 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025); Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, pp. 7–8; The Australian National University Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 6; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 6]; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 14.

weather manipulation and cloud seeding, with the overriding view that these disasters are being caused by our governments'.¹⁰³

Some of this information was shared over 100 000 times through platforms like Facebook and Twitter, potentially reached 2.8 million accounts—significantly more than general bushfire fact checks.¹⁰⁴

Not only did this disinformation divert 'attention from safety guidance and the role of climate change, putting lives at risk', by making it harder for people to distinguish authoritative advice.¹⁰⁵ In some cases, those fighting the fires had to stop to do media appearances to counteract misinformation.¹⁰⁶

However, Climate Action Against Disinformation 'found a disproportionately high volume of posts in Australia dedicated to debunking these false arson claims and to news coverage of the misinformation itself', suggesting that while the disinformation had some traction 'it was met with significant counter-narratives from law enforcement and media' and false claims were less prevalent compared with narratives about wildfires in the US and Canada.¹⁰⁷

People in communities impacted by the fires were also personally attacked, blamed and laughed at, causing upset and distress.¹⁰⁸ Greg Mullins, Founder of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, said 'I got aggressively trolled on social media. The hate mail was terrible. There were personal threats and I had to worry about my physical safety. I feared for my family's safety and was very protective of any information about them or where I lived'.¹⁰⁹

- 4.61 The ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century explained that climate change and energy mis/disinformation has contributed to declining trust in science and scientific institutions, impacting, disaster preparedness and climate monitoring, with impacts for public safety.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the Australian

¹⁰³ Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Kevin Nguyen and Ariel Bogle, '[Fires misinformation being spread through social media](#)', *ABC News*, 9 January 2020 (accessed 3 December 2025).

¹⁰⁵ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [pp. 3–4].

¹⁰⁶ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 6].

¹⁰⁷ Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, pp. 9–11.

¹⁰⁹ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 6].

¹¹⁰ ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, pp. 2–3. See also, Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 7.

Conservation Foundation observed that disinformation 'diverted attention from safety guidance and the role of climate change, putting lives at risk'.¹¹¹

- 4.62 In addition, several submitters raised concerns that politically extreme groups—both pro-environment and anti-renewables—may be aligned with conspiracy theorists and aim to spread panic, raising the risk of serious hurt and disintegration of social cohesion.¹¹²
- 4.63 Having considered the impacts of climate change and energy mis/disinformation on people and the communities they live in, as well as its broader impacts on society, Chapters 5 to 8 consider various options put forward by submitters and witnesses to bridge the information integrity gap in the climate change and energy debate.

¹¹¹ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [pp. 3].

¹¹² See, for example, Greenpeace Australia Pacific, *Submission 133*, [pp. 3–4]; Name Withheld, *Submission 174*, pp. 2 and 5; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 6]; Disinformation in the City, *Submission 211*, [p. 1]; RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 3.

Chapter 5

Addressing information integrity

5.1 In recent years, a rise in misinformation and disinformation (mis/disinformation) campaigns has led governments and international bodies to implement a range of measures aimed at strengthening information integrity and addressing the spread and impact of mis/disinformation.

5.2 In addition, there has been increasing recognition that this requires a systemic approach, with coordinated action both within and outside government.¹ For example, in relation to the integrity of climate and energy information, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Australia argued that:

... it is critical to focus on the intentional spread of falsehoods and develop coordinated, evidence-based strategies to safeguard public discourse and support a resilient energy transition. Greater efforts across government, industry, media, and civil society are required to promote transparency, build public resilience, and ensure informed participation in the transition to a cleaner energy future.²

5.3 Similarly, Australian Science Communicators contended that understanding and mitigating misinformation will require a 'coordinated, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach' that enables the sharing of knowledge 'across disciplines, stakeholders, society, industry, and government'.³

5.4 The need for coordinated action was also highlighted by the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, who referred to work by the University of Melbourne (UoM) pointing to the difficulties of addressing mis/disinformation in isolation and the need for 'a multi-actor and multi-sector response system'.⁴

5.5 Despite this recognition, Australia's efforts to address mis/disinformation remain fragmented and lack central oversight—an approach criticised by some commentators for leaving gaps that can be exploited to undermine confidence and create division:

This approach is inefficient and strategically ineffective. It creates gaps—such as inconsistent messaging to the public, slow responses to critical

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity](#), March 2024, p. 108.

² World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Australia, *Submission 113*, p 2.

³ Australian Science Communicators, *Submission 99*, [p. 2]. The submission highlighted the role science communication would play in relation to knowledge sharing.

⁴ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 3].

issues, and disparities in technology adoption—that could be exploited to undermine public confidence and social cohesion.⁵

5.6 A similar view was expressed by Ms Raphaela Raaber and colleagues who supported action to establish 'multi-level coordination mechanisms including national, state, and local coordination frameworks'. Further, they suggested that responding to disinformation be formally recognised as 'a core governance function ... acknowledging its local impacts on communities, governance structures and city administrations'.⁶

5.7 Further, it was argued that 'a more streamlined and integrated approach that coordinates these efforts and leverages collective strength' is required to address mis/disinformation, while 'working to balance the need for a strong coordinated response with the protection of individual rights and freedoms':

What we need is a unified national strategy that brings all the elements together, and an agency with clear responsibility working under strong ethical guidelines to prevent abuses.⁷

5.8 Likewise, the University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre urged a systematic approach to reform—rather than creating separate regulations for individual issues—but recommended careful consideration of regulation to 'avoid undermining freedom of speech, potential for government overreach and overcompliance from platforms and media organisations'.⁸

Taking a rights based approach to information integrity

5.9 The need to uphold freedom of expression and human rights was also recognised by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), which emphasised the importance of 'not stifling legitimate public debate' and drew a distinction between mis/disinformation and opinions that may be controversial or unpopular:

A healthy democracy depends on the ability to challenge dominant narratives and engage in robust debate. The challenge is to navigate this distinction carefully – ensuring that efforts to counter misinformation and disinformation do not inadvertently suppress diverse viewpoints or critical discourse.⁹

5.10 This balance of potentially competing objectives was expanded upon by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Centre for Media Transition, which

⁵ Meg Tapia, ['Defending democracy: The case for an integrated fight against disinformation'](#), *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 30 August 2024 (accessed 6 February 2026).

⁶ Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 20.

⁷ Meg Tapia, ['Defending democracy: The case for an integrated fight against disinformation'](#), *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 30 August 2024 (accessed 6 February 2026).

⁸ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 4.

described mis/disinformation as 'wicked policy problems involving many actors, complex causes and wide-ranging but somewhat nebulous effects that are difficult to pinpoint and quantify'. According to UTS Centre for Media Transition, this means that 'addressing these problems is therefore difficult, and requires the balancing of competing interests, principles and objectives'.¹⁰

5.11 A similar view was expressed by WePlanet Australia:

There are no easy solutions to the challenge and damage posted by mis/disinformation. We have raised clear examples of organisations, strategies, and mechanisms for how mis/disinformation is being spread and damages the climate and energy discussion in Australia. However, we have highlighted that the government must be careful how it manages competing needs to ensure free political expression and democracy, with the need to protect the public from the damage of mis/disinformation.¹¹

5.12 Against this backdrop, the remainder of this chapter:

- provides a broad overview of existing global, international and Australian efforts to strengthen information integrity;
- details support for a national information integrity strategy; and
- examines research into the effectiveness of commonly used measures to strengthen information integrity.

5.13 It also foreshadows discussion in later chapters of a range of specific actions proposed by inquiry participants.

Cooperative global efforts to strengthen information integrity

5.14 There are a number of permanent international entities with a mandate to address climate change related information integrity as their core function. The two key organisations are the International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE) and the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change (Global Initiative).

International Panel on the Information Environment

5.15 Based in Switzerland, IPIE is a global response to threats to information integrity comprising a consortium of scientists from 75 countries. It describes itself as 'an independent and global science organization providing scientific knowledge about the health of the world's information environment'. IPIE provides 'scientific assessments about threats to the information environment'. This includes assessments about disinformation, AI bias and algorithmic

¹⁰ University of Technology (UTS) Sydney Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 3. See also, RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 6.

¹¹ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 14.

manipulation, with hundreds of researchers around the world contributing to its reports.¹²

- 5.16 IPIE's work is divided across specialist scientific panels, one being the Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science. This panel 'summarizes the latest research about how media and communication impact public understanding of climate change and makes recommendations for public policy oversight and technology design that can promote public understanding of climate change'.¹³

Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change

- 5.17 The Global Initiative aims to strengthen research and measures to address disinformation which can delay or derail climate action. It was launched at the G20 Leaders' Summit in Brazil in November 2024 by the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Brazilian Government. It now includes a coalition of countries, along with other international organisations, civil society and academia.¹⁴
- 5.18 Signatory countries can contribute to a UNESCO-administered fund to be distributed as grants to non-governmental organisations to support their work in researching climate information integrity, developing communication strategies as well as public awareness campaigns.¹⁵
- 5.19 The Global Initiative draws on the five United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity, which 'offer a holistic framework to guide multi-stakeholder action for a healthier information ecosystem' (see Box 5.1).¹⁶

Box 5.1 United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity

Societal Trust and Resilience – key components of information integrity. Trust refers to the confidence people have in the reliability and accuracy of the information they access, and resilience to the ability of societies to handle disruption or manipulation of the information ecosystem.

¹² International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), [About IPIE](#) (accessed 3 December 2025). Recent relevant reports include the June 2025 report, [Information Integrity about Climate Science: A Systematic Review](#).

¹³ IPIE, [Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science](#) (accessed 9 September 2025).

¹⁴ United Nations, [Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) (accessed 7 August 2025) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), [Information Integrity is at the core of COP negotiations for the first time in 30 years](#) (accessed 27 November 2025).

¹⁵ United Nations, *New UN initiative aims to counter climate disinformation*.

¹⁶ United Nations, [Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) (accessed 4 February 2026) and United Nations [United Nations Global Principles For Information Integrity](#) (accessed 4 February 2026).

Healthy incentives – advertisers and technology companies can adopt business models that simultaneously uphold human rights and strengthen information integrity and make good business sense.

Public Empowerment – Shifts in tech company policies and increased media literacy can empower users with greater control over their online experience and the use of their own data.

Independent, Free and Pluralistic Media – information integrity is only achievable with an independent, free and pluralistic media. Robust and urgent responses are needed to support public interest journalism around the world.

Transparency and Research – greater transparency and data access is vital to improve understanding of information environments worldwide and provide evidence-based solutions to promote information integrity.¹⁷

- 5.20 Australia is not a member of the Global Initiative. As of 15 December 2025, member countries were Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Morocco, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.¹⁸ On 27 January 2026, the European Union endorsed the *Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change* following approval by the European Council (see below).¹⁹
- 5.21 Other key global initiatives include the Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change and the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online, which are outlined below.

Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change

- 5.22 The *Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change* (Declaration) was launched by the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change at COP 30 in November 2025. COP 30 was the first COP to include information integrity as a core agenda item. The Declaration calls on endorsing countries to promote the integrity of information on climate change at the international, national and local levels.²⁰
- 5.23 The Declaration affirms signatories' commitment to:

¹⁷ United Nations [United Nations Global Principles For Information Integrity](#) (accessed 4 February 2026).

¹⁸ United Nations, *Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change*.

¹⁹ European Commission, [EU endorses landmark Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) (accessed 17 March 2026).

²⁰ COP 30, [Information integrity gains unprecedented prominence in climate negotiations](#), 12 November 2025 (accessed 2 December 2025); UNESCO Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change, [Information Integrity is at the core of COP negotiations for the first time in 30 years](#) (accessed 2 December 2025).

- promote the integrity of information related to climate change including through international cooperation;
- advance access to accurate, consistent and evidence-based information on climate change including through a diverse and resilient media ecosystem; and
- foster cooperation and capacity-building to address threats to information integrity on climate change, in alignment with international freedom of expression standards.²¹

5.24 For governments, the Declaration calls on them to '[c]reate and implement policies and legal frameworks aligned with international human rights law that promote information integrity on climate change' and to, among other things, '[e]nsure transparency and facilitate access to public data and reliable information related to climate change and the environment'.²²

5.25 As of February 2026, there were 23 signatories to the Declaration—Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Uruguay.²³ Australia is not currently a signatory to the Declaration.

Declaration on Information Integrity Online

5.26 Although not a signatory to the *Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change*, Australia is one of 32 signatories to the 2023 *Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online* (Global Declaration), which deals with information integrity as a whole.²⁴

5.27 The Global Declaration draws on existing research and policies to establish a set of high-level international commitments to uphold information integrity online and help strengthen responses to the opportunities and challenges posed by generative artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to the information ecosystem.²⁵

²¹ UNESCO, [Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) (accessed 2 December 2025).

²² UNESCO, [Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) (accessed 5 February 2026).

²³ UNESCO, [Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change](#) (accessed 27 November 2025).

²⁴ Government of the Netherlands, [Canada and the Netherlands launch the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#) (accessed 3 March 2026). The 32 signatories are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and the United States.

²⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, [Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#), 20 September 2023 (accessed 5 February 2026) and Government of the Netherlands, [Canada and the Netherlands launch the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#) (accessed 5 February 2026).

- 5.28 The Global Declaration commits signatory states to, among other things, 'implement necessary and appropriate measures, including legislation, to address information integrity and platform governance, in a manner that complies with international human rights law, including but not limited to States' obligations to respect privacy rights ... [and] the rights of freedom of opinion and expression'. Importantly, the Global Declaration notes the importance of freedom of opinion and expression, and calls on states to refrain from restricting these rights 'under the guise of countering disinformation ... or criminalizing or otherwise punishing the exercise of the right to freedom of expression online.'²⁶
- 5.29 The Global Declaration invited online platforms and the industry to participate, including by enhancing the transparency of algorithms, developing indicators of trustworthiness of information sources by working with civil society organisations and academia, and by facilitating the incorporation of third-party applications that provide users with features, functions and tools to promote information integrity and address misinformation and disinformation.²⁷

International approaches to strengthen information integrity

- 5.30 In addition to the cooperative global efforts outlined above, various legislative, policy and programmatic approaches to addressing mis/disinformation have been implemented by individual countries. The regulatory regimes most commonly cited as potential models for Australia to consider were the European Union (EU) Digital Services Act (see Box 5.2) and the United Kingdom (UK) *Online Safety Act 2023* (see Box 5.3).

Box 5.2 EU Digital Services Act

The DSA introduced rules for online services, with an overarching goal to 'create a digital space that respects citizens and consumers' fundamental rights' by giving citizens 'greater control and more choices when they navigate online platforms and search engines'.²⁸

Of relevance to the issue of mis/disinformation, the DSA requires platforms to offer non-personalised feeds, so users can 'decide whether to see content

²⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, [Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#), 20 September 2023 (accessed 11 December 2025) and Government of the Netherlands, [Canada and the Netherlands launch the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#) (accessed 5 February 2026).

²⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, [Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online](#), 20 September 2023 (accessed 11 December 2025)

²⁸ European Commission, [The Digital Services Act](#) (accessed 19 February 2026).

based on the algorithm's suggestions' or choose other criteria, such as the chronological order.²⁹ Additionally, platforms must:

- perform risk assessments to determine how their services might be used to disseminate misleading content, and then implement risk mitigation measures;
- develop a crisis response mechanism including measures to take during an incident of the rapid spread of disinformation; and
- maintain a public advertisement repository to help researchers study emerging risks, such as disinformation campaigns.³⁰

In February 2025, the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation was endorsed by the EU Commission and the European Board for Digital Services for integration into the DSA.³¹

The EU code has three areas of focus: to help users identify misinformation via media literacy initiatives, to aid the research community by mandating access to data and to integrate fact-checking into platforms.³²

Box 5.3 UK *Online Safety Act 2023*

The *Online Safety Act 2023* (OSA) puts a range of duties on social media companies and search services, making them more responsible for user safety on their platforms. Providers are required to implement systems and processes to reduce risks their services are used for illegal activity, and to take down illegal content when it appears.

Ofcom is the independent regulator. It sets out steps providers can take to fulfil their safety duties in codes of practice. It has a broad range of powers to assess and enforce provider compliance with the framework.

Mis/disinformation

The OSA takes a proportionate approach to mis/disinformation by focusing on the greatest risks of harm to users, while protecting freedom of expression.

Services are required to take steps to remove illegal disinformation content if they become aware of it on their services. This includes the removal of illegal, state-sponsored disinformation through the Foreign Interference Offence, forcing companies to take action against a range of state-sponsored

²⁹ European Commission, [The Digital Services Act](#) (accessed 3 March 2026).

³⁰ European Commission, [Digital Services Act: Questions and answers](#) (accessed 19 February 2026).

³¹ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 13.

³² News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 13.

disinformation and state-linked interference online. Companies must also assess whether their service is likely to be accessed by children and, if so, deliver additional protections for them. This includes protections against in-scope mis/disinformation. Category 1 services need to remove certain types of mis/disinformation if they are prohibited in their terms of services.

The OSA also required Ofcom to establish an advisory committee on mis/disinformation to build cross-sector understanding of mis/disinformation.

Harmful algorithms

As part of providers' risk assessments, the OSA requires them to consider how algorithms could impact users' exposure to illegal content—and children's exposure to content harmful to children.

Providers need to take steps to mitigate and effectively manage any identified risks. This includes considering platform design, functionality, algorithms, and any other features likely to meet the illegal content and child safety duties.

The law makes it clear that harm can arise from the way content is disseminated, such as when an algorithm repeatedly pushes content to a child in large volumes over a short space of time.

Categorised services are required to publish annual transparency reports containing online safety related information, such as information about the algorithms they use and their effect on users' experience, including children.

Enforcement

Ofcom can act against companies that do not follow their duties under the OSA. Companies can be fined up to £18 million or 10 percent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater. Criminal action can be taken against senior managers who fail to ensure companies follow information requests from Ofcom. Ofcom can also hold companies and senior managers (where they are at fault) criminally liable if the provider fails to comply with Ofcom's enforcement notices in relation to specific child safety duties or to for child sexual abuse and exploitation on their service.

In the most extreme cases, with the agreement of the courts, Ofcom can require payment providers, advertisers and internet service providers to stop working with a site, preventing it from generating money or being accessed from the UK.

- 5.31 Further to the above, a range of individual country initiatives, aimed at addressing the dangers of disinformation, were highlighted in the March 2024 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, *Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity*. These initiatives included:

- **Canada's** Digital Citizen Initiative funds civil society organisations, educational institutions and research institutions to understand and strengthen resilience against online disinformation and other online harms.
- **Ireland's** National Counter Disinformation Strategy Working Group (including representatives from industry, academia, civil society and government) released a National Counter Disinformation Strategy in April 2025. The strategy contains five principles of media literacy, supporting independent journalism, increased cross-sector collaboration, evidence-based policy making and corporate accountability and regulatory enforcement.
- **Italy's** Department for Information and Publishing supports the design and implementation of policies to support media freedom and pluralism. The OECD report notes that countering 'disinformation has become one of the defining objectives of the Department', though improving media literacy and developing in-depth knowledge of relevant threats, in partnership with universities.
- **Italy** has also established the Italian Digital Media Observatory, a European Union funded project promoting scientific understanding of online disinformation, encouraging the development of fact-checking services and supporting media literacy programs.
- **Germany** has special working groups that bring together officials from different ministries and intelligence services.
- **Chile's** National Commission against Disinformation (comprising members from universities, non-government organisations and fact-checking bodies) advises the Minister of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation and the Minister Secretary General of Government on matters related to global disinformation and its manifestation in Chile.
- **Lithuania's** National Crisis Management Centre handles disinformation threats in relation to crises or emergencies and coordinates national responses to disinformation.
- **The Netherlands** has a government-wide strategy to tackle mis/disinformation that highlights that while categorising disinformation and conducting fact-checking are not primary duties for the government, where national security, public health or social and/or economic security are at stake, the government could act and debunk false and misleading information.

5.32 The OECD report also proposed various steps governments could take to strengthen information integrity. These included:

- promoting media and information literacy in school curricula to enhance skills to operate in, a free information space conducive to democratic engagement;
- better collaboration across civil society to monitor and evaluate changes to and policy impacts on the information space;

- building the capacity of public communications to raise awareness of threats within the information environment, such as through pre-bunking;
- supporting research into the tactics used by foreign actors spreading false and misleading information;
- implementing measures to protect the rights of individuals when they become targets of disinformation campaigns;
- establishing clearly defined lines of responsibility for coordinating government efforts to address mis/disinformation; and
- providing capacity-building training for public officials.³³

5.33 In addition, the report noted the need for 'upskilling and training at all levels of government' to handle the 'level of sophistication of disinformation campaigns'. It gave the example of Dutch Government's *Guidance on dealing with disinformation*, which provided public officials with an overview of how false and misleading information can be spread and recognised, the mechanics of polarisation in the information, and legal and practical advice on how to minimise the impact of disinformation and what to do if facing it.³⁴

5.34 Most recently, the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sanchez, announced sweeping changes to their regulation of social media platforms, stating social media 'has become a failed state, a place where laws are ignored, and crime is endured, where disinformation is worth more than truth, and half of users suffer hate speech ... A failed state in which algorithms distort the public conversation and our data and image are defied and sold'.³⁵

5.35 The proposed changes include:

- preventing teens under 16 years old from accessing social media platforms;
- criminalising the manipulation of algorithms to amplify illegal content; and
- introducing legal accountability for executives who fail to remove unregulated or hateful content.³⁶

5.36 The Spanish proposals still require parliamentary approval. Other recent changes from European nations includes a similar social media ban for under 16s in France—the bill was approved in the National Assembly but still needs to be approved by the Senate. In the UK, the House of Lords has similarly

³³ OECD, [Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity](#), March 2024, pp. 99–101 and 133.

³⁴ OECD, [Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity](#), p. 127.

³⁵ World Governments Summit, [Spain becomes first country in Europe to ban social media for under-16s](#) (accessed 26 February 2026).

³⁶ World Governments Summit, [Spain becomes first country in Europe to ban social media for under-16s](#).

backed a ban on social media for under 16s, but it must also be approved by the House of Commons.³⁷

Australian approaches to strengthen information integrity

5.37 As noted by the University of Melbourne (UoM), Australia lacks 'a bespoke regulatory framework to address the harms caused by climate and energy misinformation', instead relying 'on a range of non-climate specific regulatory instruments'.³⁸ At present, this involves a mix of voluntary industry self-regulation, government initiatives focusing on transparency and media literacy, as well as a recently abandoned legislative push to combat online misinformation and disinformation.

5.38 Key Australian initiatives mentioned by inquiry participants include:

- the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation (the Code – see Box 5.4);
- the Digital Platform Regulators Forum (DP-REG), which was established in early 2022 to facilitate better coordination across government on digital platform regulation:
 - DP-REG includes the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (e-Safety Commissioner), and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner; and
- development of Australia's first National Media Literacy Strategy to help citizens identify and critically assess online misinformation, including climate-related content.³⁹

5.39 Professor Matthew Hornsey and colleagues also referred to the *Online Safety Act 2021* but noted that while it 'establishes baseline safety standards, it does not currently address disinformation directly, leaving platforms' approaches largely discretionary'.⁴⁰

³⁷ World Governments Summit, [Spain becomes first country in Europe to ban social media for under-16s](#) and Tiffany Mertheimer, ['Spain announces plans to ban social media for under-16s'](#), BBC, 4 February 2026, (accessed 26 February 2026).

³⁸ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 7.

³⁹ See, for example, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Submission 1*, pp. 1–2; Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 38; Ms Margaret Lopez, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Broadcasting, Media and News Policy Division, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 46; Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 6; Queensland University of Technology Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 36].

⁴⁰ Professor Matthew Hornsey et al, *Submission 126*, [p. 5].

5.40 Other relevant regulation identified by the UoM and other stakeholders included:

- the self-regulatory Environmental Claims Code, which is managed by Ad Standards and sets rules for environmental claims in advertising; and
- the *Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001* and the *Australian Consumer Law and Corporations Act 2001*, which could play a role in protecting consumers from climate misinformation in certain circumstances.⁴¹

5.41 In relation to renewable energy projects more specifically, and following an expansion to its role in 2021, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner has 'worked to promote best practice community engagement, project-level and sector-wide transparency, and ongoing evidence-based information-sharing' in relation to resolving enquiries and complaints regarding proposed and operational renewable energy projects and new large-scale transmission projects.⁴²

Box 5.4 Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation

The voluntary Code was a key initiative to safeguard against harms from the spread of disinformation and misinformation on digital platforms. The Code is a self-regulatory model involving a 'commitment' from companies who have adopted it 'to implement safeguards that reduce the spread and visibility of mis- and disinformation online'. Adobe, Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Redbubble, TikTok and Twitch have adopted the Code.⁴³ X was removed from the Code after it did not respond to a complaint about removing channels for users to report misinformation during the Voice to Parliament referendum in 2023.⁴⁴

Signatories to the Code release annual transparency reports on their efforts to reduce the risk of online misinformation and disinformation causing harm to Australians. All signatories commit to Objective 1, which stipulates that they will 'provide safeguards against harms that may arise from

⁴¹ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 8 and Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler, Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 35 and 36. See also, Environmental Defenders Office, *Submission 61*, pp. 15–17; Mr Michael Tangonan, Officer, National Environmental Law Association, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 19 and 20; Mr Michael Mazengarb, Head, Corporate Accountability, Climate Integrity, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 88.

⁴² Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 2].

⁴³ DIGI, [Disinformation Code](#) (accessed 12 December 2025).

⁴⁴ Josh Taylor, "["Serious breach": Social media platform X booted from Australia's misinformation code](#)", *The Guardian Australia*, 27 November 2023 (accessed 19 December 2025).

disinformation and misinformation'. Signatories that have a user base of more than one million monthly active Australian end-users are also required to provide annual reports explaining their progress towards achieving the outcomes of the Code.⁴⁵

Further outcomes under Objective One of the Code include:

- users being informed about the types of behaviours and types of content that will be prohibited and/or managed by signatories (Outcome 1b); and
- users being able to report content or behaviours that violate signatories' policies on misinformation and disinformation (Outcome 1c).⁴⁶

Strengthening national information integrity

5.42 This section discusses how Australia could strengthen information integrity and address mis/disinformation, particularly in the areas of climate change and energy.

5.43 Within this context, it also explores potential guiding principles and measures, opportunities to align any future national strategy with global initiatives to address information integrity, as well as the need for an agreed definition of mis/disinformation.

5.44 As noted earlier in this chapter, the need for a systemic approach was raised by various inquiry participants. For example, the Queensland University of Technology Digital Media Research Centre advocated for a coordinated and best-practice national approach to addressing 'problematic information', as the challenge it poses 'is too great and too significant to leave to piecemeal or reflex efforts'.⁴⁷

5.45 Similarly, the UTS Centre for Media Transition argued that a 'broad, multifaceted approach' was required 'to address the varied causal and contributory factors' underpinning mis/disinformation. According to UTS Centre for Media Transition, such an approach would need to look 'not only at the media and information ecosystem as a whole, but beyond it to political, social and cultural factors'.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ DIGI, [Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation](#), 22 December 2022, pp. 10, 12 and 20.

⁴⁶ DIGI, [Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation](#), 22 December 2022, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Queensland University of Technology Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 9].

⁴⁸ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 3.

- 5.46 Les Daniel also highlighted the 'multifaceted nature of this problem' and urged the committee to recommend 'a multi-pronged strategy that hardens our defences against misinformation while empowering citizens'.⁴⁹
- 5.47 Further, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Australia (WWF Australia) argued that the increasingly blurred boundaries between misinformation and disinformation mean 'it is critical to focus on the intentional spread of falsehoods and develop coordinated, evidence-based strategies to safeguard public discourse and support a resilient energy transition'.⁵⁰
- 5.48 In relation to the energy transition more specifically, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner noted the challenge posed by 'knowledge fragmentation', which necessitates a multi-sector approach involving governments, the renewable energy industry and other stakeholders to address mis/disinformation 'across multiple sectors of the economy (e.g. transport, electricity, agriculture, emergency services)'.⁵¹

A multifaceted approach to strengthening information integrity

- 5.49 Some stakeholders who advocated for a coordinated approach highlighted some guiding principles. For example, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner drew from the *Disinformation in the City Response Playbook* to offer the following principles:
- build trust – with transparency and inclusivity being key parts of the trust building process (clarity, accountability, and ongoing relationships also enhance trust);
 - be non-partisan (where possible);
 - address mis/disinformation in an ongoing and adaptive way (given the constantly changing information landscape);
 - share knowledge and experiences to enhance outcomes;
 - implement a multi-actor and multi-sector response system; and
 - provide real-time, targeted guidance and share information.⁵²
- 5.50 Other stakeholders, such as the AHRC, advocated for a holistic approach but recommended that any response to mis/disinformation 'be grounded in human rights law—with sufficient protections for freedom of expression'. It stressed that while legislative controls should be pursued, this 'must be done with the

⁴⁹ Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 3].

⁵⁰ World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 5].

⁵² Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [pp. 3–4].

utmost regard for free expression, transparency and with measures in place to avoid misuse'.⁵³

- 5.51 Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Lorraine Finlay, expanded on this at a public hearing and put plainly that while tackling misinformation is essential, it 'must never come at the cost of the freedoms that sustain democracy'.⁵⁴ Ultimately, Dr Finlay argued, 'we safeguard truth not by narrowing the spaces for dialogue but by defending the freedom that allows it to thrive':

That means protecting the right to seek, receive and impart information, and ensuring that any regulatory response recommended is lawful, necessary and proportionate; that responses promote transparency and accountability; and that policy responses protect rather than constrain the democratic freedoms at the heart of our society, including the right to free expression. Stronger transparency obligations for digital platforms, improved access to data for researchers and decision-makers, and investment in digital literacy are essential components of an effective, multifaceted, rights based response.⁵⁵

- 5.52 Participants who favoured a systemic approach also recommended various actions to combat mis/disinformation that could form part of such a response. For example, WePlanet Australia proposed a combination of regulatory and educational measures:

We believe that the government should work to minimise harm to individuals, communities, and nations—through a combination of regulation, especially of tech companies; enforced transparency of groups engaged in political communication; and strong public education campaigns which improve people's ability to recognise mis/dis-information and be able to ignore it, report it, and inform others about it.⁵⁶

- 5.53 Similarly, the WWF Australia proposed that the Australian Government 'adopt a multi-pronged strategy that combines transparency, education, and collaboration' in order 'to counter disinformation networks targeting renewable energy', including:

- mandated disclosure by digital platforms of algorithmic processes and labelling of automated content;
- investment in media and climate literacy programs;

⁵³ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 5 and 9.

⁵⁴ Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 2.

⁵⁶ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 14. See also, Queensland University of Technology Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, pp. 30–31; Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, pp. 10–13; ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 4; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 20–21.

- support for independent journalism to rebuild public trust; and
 - cross-sector networks to detect and respond to emerging threats, and proactively countering false narratives using strategic, values-based communication.⁵⁷
- 5.54 UTS Centre for Media Transition likewise proposed a multifaceted strategy encompassing a range of measures such as:
- regulation around digital platform transparency and accountability for algorithm and other system design, data collection, political and other targeted advertising, and the impacts on human rights, including freedom of expression;
 - increased attention to the propagation or amplification of misinformation through traditional and online news sources (for example, through consistent industry codes);
 - a sustainable news industry, including adequately funded public service media and funding for publicly accessible, data-driven climate information;
 - improved scientific, media and information literacy, including in schools; and
 - improved transparency over funding relationships for media and political actors in the information space.⁵⁸
- 5.55 The interconnected nature of many of these recommended actions was underscored by Ms Raphaela Raaber and her colleagues, who reinforced the need for 'coordinated implementation across multiple institutional domains'.⁵⁹
- 5.56 Further discussion of specific actions recommended by contributors to the inquiry is covered in Chapters 6 to 8.

Alignment with global cooperation and international efforts

- 5.57 To better address climate change and energy mis/disinformation, Ms Kate Cell from the US-based Union of Concerned Scientists, told the committee that governments need to look more broadly to how mis/disinformation is working locally and 'to consider what the world of nations are doing and can do to address the problem of disinformation as it blocks and thwarts our progress on the existential issue of our time, climate change'.⁶⁰
- 5.58 To this end, various participants argued that Australia should align its actions to address information integrity and mis/disinformation with international efforts. According to Transparency International Australia (TIA), this recognises

⁵⁷ World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Australia, *Submission 113*, pp. 14–15.

⁵⁸ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, pp. 3 and 4.

⁵⁹ Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 21.

⁶⁰ Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 3.

that the global nature of the climate mis/disinformation challenge requires a 'coordinated global response'. In line with this, TIA recommended that:

Australia should align its rules with international best practice, such as the [European Union's] Digital Services Act and Code of Practice on Disinformation, while supporting multilateral initiatives like the Global Climate Information Integrity Initiative.⁶¹

5.59 In addition, TIA suggested that Australia 'work closely with allies to counter international threats that undermine effective climate action'.⁶²

5.60 Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD) also noted the trans-border nature of climate mis/disinformation and the need for a coordinated international response. To this end, it recommended that Australia formally join the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change:

Australia should take robust action to ensure effective multilateral intervention against climate disinformation by formally joining this initiative and contributing to its efforts, which include funding research, developing communication campaigns, and protecting journalists and researchers.⁶³

5.61 According to CAAD, this would enable Australia 'to share best practices, access valuable data, and work alongside international partners to curb the spread of misleading narratives that hinder climate progress'. In addition, it would 'strengthen global resilience against disinformation', reinforce scientific consensus, and empower implementation of evidence-based climate policies.⁶⁴

5.62 Mr Jack Herring from InfluenceMap concurred and made clear that 'if Australia is interested in establishing ourselves as a legitimate voice on climate action ... it's a really important step that we start taking some of these initiatives to sign commitments and principles that other leading agencies and other states around the world are committing to'.⁶⁵ Ms Cell agreed, highlighting that 'continuing that work in Australia and Australia joining the global initiative would be tremendous steps for Australia to take'.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, [p. 2].

⁶² Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, [p. 2].

⁶³ Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, pp. 12–13.

⁶⁴ Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, p. 13.

⁶⁵ Mr Jack Herring, Australia Program Manager, InfluenceMap, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 38.

⁶⁶ Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 9 and Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*, p. 13. See also, Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 66; UQ Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 3 and 11; InfluenceMap,

- 5.63 Coordinated international effort was also recommended by the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy at McGill University, which likewise proposed aligning Australian actions with the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change to ensure 'knowledge-sharing and cooperation across jurisdictions'.⁶⁷
- 5.64 Additional support for Australia's participation in the Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change was received from other participants, including the University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, the Tasmanian Climate Collective, and Dr Mel Fitzpatrick.⁶⁸ Further, InfluenceMap recommended that Australia implement the recommendations contained in the United Nations' Global Principles for Information Integrity.⁶⁹
- 5.65 To this end, the committee heard from the Department of Climate Change Policy Branch, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water that 'Australia's participation in the initiative is under active consideration'.⁷⁰
- 5.66 As part of alignment with global efforts, the committee also heard called for the adoption of a single definition of climate mis/disinformation. For example, CAAD argued that Australia should 'formally adopt a unified, working definition of climate mis- and disinformation' (see Box 5.5). It stated that this unified definition had been 'developed by a coalition of experts' and would act as 'a consistent benchmark for action' and 'remove the pressure on platforms to act as the sole arbiters of truth'.⁷¹
- 5.67 Adoption of the unified definition was also supported by InfluenceMap and The Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy at McGill University.⁷²

Submission 69, pp. 2 and 9; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 1; Tasmanian Climate Collective, *Submission 70*, [p. 7].

⁶⁷ Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University, *Submission 104*, p. 7.

⁶⁸ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 3; InfluenceMap, *Submission 69*, p. 9; Tasmanian Climate Collective, *Submission 70*, [p. 7]; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 1.

⁶⁹ InfluenceMap, *Submission 69*, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Ms Rachael de Hosson, Branch Head, Climate Change Policy Branch, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 44.

⁷¹ Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, p. 10.

⁷² InfluenceMap, *Submission 69*, pp. 8–9 and the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University, *Submission 104*, pp. 5–6.

Box 5.5 Unified Definition of Climate Misinformation and Disinformation

Climate disinformation and misinformation refers to deceptive or misleading content that:

- undermines the existence or impacts of climate change, the unequivocal human influence on climate change, and the need for corresponding urgent action according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change scientific consensus and in line with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement;
- misrepresents scientific data, including by omission or cherry-picking, in order to erode trust in climate science, climate-focused institutions, experts, and solutions; or
- falsely publicises efforts as supportive of climate goals that in fact contribute to climate warming or contravene the scientific consensus on mitigation or adaptation.⁷³

Effectiveness of measures to strengthen information integrity

5.68 The committee is aware that the evidence base around the effectiveness of measures to address mis/disinformation is still developing. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Carnegie Endowment) report, *Countering Disinformation Effectively – An Evidence-Based Policy Guide* considered the effectiveness of ten policy interventions and found 'there is no silver bullet or 'best' policy option', with the success of each measure dependent on a range of factors that are poorly understood (see Figure 5.1).











5.69 For this reason, the Carnegie Endowment report suggested that a 'portfolio approach' to policy interventions should be adopted, along with a commitment to ongoing monitoring and evaluation:




A healthy policy portfolio would include tactical actions that appear well-researched or effective (like fact-checking and labelling social media content). But it would also involve costlier, longer-term bets on promising structural reforms (like supporting local journalism and media literacy). Each policy should come with a concrete plan for ongoing reassessment.⁷⁴

⁷³ Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Submission 115*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide](#), 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 1 and 2.

Figure 5.1 Strengthening information integrity – overview of interventions

Type	Intervention	How much is known?	How effective does it seem?	How easily does it scale?
	1. Supporting local journalism	Modest	Significant	Difficult
	2. Media literacy education	Significant	Significant	Difficult
	3. Fact-checking	Significant	Modest	Modest
	4. Labeling social media content	Modest	Modest	Easy
	5. Counter-messaging strategies	Modest	Modest	Difficult
	6. Cybersecurity for elections and campaigns	Modest	Modest	Modest
	7. Statecraft, deterrence, and disruption	Modest	Limited	Modest
	8. Removing inauthentic asset networks	Limited	Modest	Modest
	9. Reducing data collection and targeted ads	Modest	Limited	Difficult
	10. Changing recommendation algorithms	Limited	Significant	Modest

 **Public information**
  **Government action**
  **Platform action**

Source: Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide*, 2024, Washington, DC, p. 5.

5.70 Other key findings of the Carnegie Endowment report included the need to:

- **set realistic expectations**, particularly given the complex social, political and economic roots of disinformation and the constraints imposed by available resources, knowledge, political will, legal authority, and civic trust;
- **pay attention to long-term, structural reforms**, such as reviving local journalism and improving media literacy, which show potential but are

slower to enact (as opposed to more immediate and visible actions that attract attention but may have narrower impacts—such as identifying or disrupting foreign and other inauthentic online networks); and

- **not focus on platforms and technology alone**, given that complementary actions across multiple spheres are needed to effectively address the interplay of online and offline influences.⁷⁵

5.71 The Carnegie Endowment report also found that while there is relatively robust research in relation to fact checking, other measures will require a sustained research effort to fill existing knowledge gaps. It also cautioned against working from an assumption that all measures to counter disinformation are apolitical, noting the potential for this to lead to overreach or blowback, which both deepen distrust.⁷⁶

5.72 Against this backdrop, the following chapters consider a range of possible measures to address the integrity of climate change and energy information, as put forward by submitters and witnesses to the inquiry. These measures coalesce broadly around the following themes:

- building trust, resilience and transparency;
- monitoring and regulating digital platforms; and
- improving renewable energy project planning and implementation processes.

5.73 The committee's own views and recommendations for action are outlined in Chapter 9.

⁷⁵ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide](#), 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 2 and 3.

⁷⁶ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide](#), 2024, Washington, DC, p. 3.

Chapter 6

Trust, resilience and transparency

- 6.1 As discussed in the previous chapter, there was broad support for a range of reforms to strengthen information integrity around climate change and energy.
- 6.2 Many of the measures put forward by stakeholders were aimed at improving the availability and accessibility of accurate, trusted and reliable information about climate change and renewable energy. For many, this involved:
- developing trusted, reliable sources of information;
 - increasing resilience through media, digital and science literacy; and
 - improving information transparency and accountability.

Developing trusted, reliable information sources

- 6.3 The need for trusted and reliable sources of information to combat mis/disinformation was noted by various inquiry participants. For example, a range of submitters argued that providing current and accurate climate, energy and science information that is easily understood would help address current information vacuums and deficits, making it less likely that misinformation and/or disinformation (mis/disinformation) will spread and take hold.¹
- 6.4 Similarly, other contributors to the inquiry thought the creation or funding of authoritative, reliable and data-driven information about climate change and energy would help address unverified claims, conspiracies and mis/disinformation.²
- 6.5 A number of participants pointed to the role individual agencies and organisations could play as trusted sources of information. For example, the Centre for Public Integrity (CPI) referred to the provision of information by 'trusted knowledge institutions'—including government bodies, the free press, universities, and research/information-based organisations—as 'one fundamental part of the answer to the fight against dis and misinformation'.³
- 6.6 However, there was also acknowledgement that levels of distrust in government institutions and scientists mean that finding sources of information that are

¹ See, for example, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 3]; Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Submission 107*, [p. 8]; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 4; Ms Courtney (Coco) Venaglia, National Organiser, Friends of the Earth Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 1; Ms Sarah Altmann, Head, Public Affairs, Southerly Ten, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 15.

² See, for example, Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 5–6 and 8; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 9; CHRRUP Ltd, *Submission 33*, [p. 2].

³ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 4.

considered unbiased and authoritative can be difficult, meaning people may place greater trust in their personal contacts.⁴

- 6.7 The critical role of trust was also recognised by the RMIT Information Integrity Hub (RMIT Hub), which described current challenges to climate information integrity as part of 'a broader crisis of trust in information, media and democracy'. Accordingly, it suggested that a whole-of-system approach—including fact-based journalism, academic research, community outreach, and media literacy—was needed to ensure access to 'freely available high-quality information about climate change'.⁵
- 6.8 This was reflected in evidence from multiple contributors who urged action to:
- improve trust in reliable information sources;
 - ensure a strong media ecosystem (backed by fact checking initiatives); and
 - support research into mis/disinformation related to climate change and renewable energy.
- 6.9 Significant evidence was also received in relation to improving the monitoring and regulation of mis/disinformation on digital platforms. This is discussed in Chapter 7.

Improving trust: supporting public institutions and researchers

- 6.10 The importance of trust to countering disinformation was recognised by Ms Raaber and her colleagues, who noted that building trust 'requires processes that are transparent and inclusive, while maintaining non-partisan approaches to be effective in increasingly polarised political environments'.⁶
- 6.11 A similar view was expressed by Disinformation in the City (DITC), which noted that 'trust is paramount in countering disinformation' and highlighted the importance of non-partisan responses that do not impinge on democratic rights:
- Disinformation drives and thrives on division. Disinformation response must therefore be non-partisan to be effective. Our work does not intend to change beliefs or diminish the rightful and essential democratic expression of dissent.⁷

⁴ Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, *Submission 106*, pp. 3–4 and 7; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 11–12; Climate for Change, *Submission 123*, [pp. 2–3]; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 2; Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide](#), 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 47–48.

⁵ RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 6.

⁶ Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, pp. 20–21.

⁷ Disinformation in the City, *Submission 211*, p. 2.

- 6.12 Indeed, a range of participants highlighted the detrimental impact that silencing dissenting opinions or narrowing the scope of legitimate debate has on public trust in institutions.⁸
- 6.13 To this end, participants made a number of suggestions aimed at improving trust in authoritative sources of information such as government institutions, universities and research and information-based non-government organisations.⁹
- 6.14 In relation to governments generally, DITC argued that the best way to promote trust is 'by displaying competence, consistency, and transparency':
- Cities should base their decision-making on reliable and legitimate evidence, be consistent with their intentions in alignment with stated goals, and communicate their actions and the rationale behind them in ways that communities can engage with.¹⁰
- 6.15 As well as good governance practices, DITC contended that creating trusted information pathways will involve building trust in institutions, people, information and places.¹¹
- 6.16 In relation to building trust in government institutions, Mr Andrew Hallam suggested these institutions:
- publish easily understood and easily shareable information;
 - be transparent about the environmental impacts;
 - be open about the unknowns; and
 - be a source for artificial intelligence (AI) searches.¹²
- 6.17 Similar views were shared by other submitters. For example, the CPI recommended that the Australian Government provide and promote 'easily accessible statements in areas of contestation in public policy, such as climate change and energy' via its own knowledge institutions. These could include 'the CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation], the Bureau of Meteorology, or the Bureau of Statistics, as part of their public-facing educational functions, or from a panel or group of government appointed "experts" specifically for this purpose'.¹³

⁸ See, for example, Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*; p. 5, Name withheld, *Submission 172*, pp. 2 and 6; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 3; Climate Capital Forum, *Submission 52*, p. 3.

⁹ See, for example, Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 21; Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 5-6; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*; p. 5; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Disinformation in the City, Submission 211*, p. 2.

¹¹ *Disinformation in the City, Submission 211*, p. 2.

¹² Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, pp. 6-7.

¹³ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 12.

- 6.18 Further, the CPI argued that in order for government institutions to be seen as authoritative sources of information, there must be a commitment to supporting their independence and integrity, including:
- independent and merit-based appointments;
 - prohibitions on inappropriate executive direction;
 - adequate and secure funding;
 - an ability to speak and report publicly; and
 - a respect for their independence and authority, and protection from inappropriate political attacks.¹⁴
- 6.19 A similar view was expressed by the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century (ARC 21C), which noted that while public trust in institutions such as universities, the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology is 'generally moderate to high', it 'needs to be maintained via apolitical bipartisan support and apolitical funding'.¹⁵
- 6.20 Accordingly, the ARC 21C recommended 'safeguards against political interference in the resources, operations and outputs of Australian scientific (Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO) and independent operational agencies, such as the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)'.¹⁶
- 6.21 The CPI also highlighted the importance of the 'platforming of trustworthy and compelling voices that are not ordinarily heard by government and the public'. It submitted this could be done by creating 'an independent office ... responsible for overseeing and championing public engagement in government'.¹⁷
- 6.22 To this end, the CPI and others also suggested that the Australian Government 'provide opportunities for Australians to debate controversial policy issues through processes that are transparent, informed and have high public trust and legitimacy'. It provided the example of Citizens Review Panels, where randomly selected citizens are brought together to study and deliberate on issues in a structured way, with the results made available to the public.¹⁸
- 6.23 Further, the CPI recommended that the Australian Government commit to 'the proper resourcing and independence of universities' and supporting 'the

¹⁴ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 6.

¹⁵ ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, p. 3.

¹⁶ ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

¹⁷ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 8.

¹⁸ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 7. See also, Darebin Climate Action Now, *Submission 161*, p. 6 and Jenny Cambers-Smith, *Submission 97*, p. 3.

independence and sustainability of the [non-government organisation] NGO sector'.¹⁹

- 6.24 More broadly, the ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions (ANU ICEDS) stressed the need for trusted institutions, such as universities, to communicate with transparency and integrity, including being open about the limits of current knowledge and expertise.²⁰ ANU ICEDS expanded on the importance of 'intellectual humility' to engendering trust:

Enough evidence now shows the importance of 'intellectual humility' or acknowledging limitations to knowledge as being a trait that underpins credibility of and trust in science communicators. People who view scientists as intellectually humble tend to have more faith in science and scientists across a variety of disciplines, including climate change.²¹

Ensuring a strong media ecosystem

- 6.25 Various contributors stressed the importance of a strong media ecosystem to the health of Australia's democratic system. For example, the CPI described how the media 'facilitates democratic accountability' and balances out 'the control the government could otherwise exercise over the dissemination of information and opinions'. It also provides access to 'authoritative information' via reporting on political and policy issues and 'helps to ascertain the underlying facts that ground public debate'.²²
- 6.26 More particularly, submitters and witnesses suggested that ensuring a strong, independent media—especially public media—was a protective mechanism against mis/disinformation.²³
- 6.27 The Australian Associated Press (AAP) described the importance of primary source journalism to safeguarding information integrity:

Any effective strategy for safeguarding information integrity must include original, verifiable reporting. Technology cannot replace 'shoe-leather

¹⁹ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 11.

²⁰ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 6.

²¹ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 8 (citation omitted).

²² Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 8 and 9. See also, Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 4; Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 6; Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University, *Submission 104*, p. 5; Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, pp. 3–4.

²³ See, for example, Australian Associated Press, *Submission 98*, pp. 2 and 4; Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 39; Professor Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Chair, Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science, International Panel on the Information Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 61; Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 3; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, pp. 3–4.

journalism'—the practice of journalists directly gathering information from primary sources. Attending, for example, parliamentary sittings, court cases and press conferences, or picking up the phone to interview subjects identified as relevant and qualified to comment, is essential journalistic rigour, and cannot be replicated by AI.²⁴

6.28 In addition, AAP contended that the continued reduction in 'news gathering resources', particularly in regional and rural areas, 'creates an information vacuum that can be easily filled by misinformation'.²⁵

6.29 A similar point was raised by Dr Sora Park, Director of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra, who described the information gap in regional communities as 'so bad that some people are stepping up to fill the space':

They see their community. They know people are in need of information, so they will curate news themselves and deliver it to the community, which is great, but that's not high quality journalism. They're not trained, and they do it in their own time. We can't rely on those measures anymore, so we really need to support the local news, especially in regional areas.²⁶

6.30 This point was underscored by the Local & Independent News Association (LINA), which noted that local news publishers are highly trusted by their communities, with audiences five times more likely to visit a local news website than Google or Facebook for local news, and almost 10 times more likely to visit a local newspaper website than a local council website for news and information.²⁷ LINA pointed to the *Illawarra Flame* as an example of the critical role played by local and independent news organisations in providing accurate information and countering mis/disinformation within local communities (see Box 6.1).

²⁴ Australian Associated Press, *Submission 98*, p. 2.

²⁵ Australian Associated Press, *Submission 98*, p. 1.

²⁶ Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 40.

²⁷ Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

Box 6.1 The Illawarra Flame

Background: The *Illawarra Flame* began as a printed business directory. It expanded into an online news service in 2022, focusing on sharing voices and issues relevant to the Illawarra region on the New South Wales coast.

The mis/disinformation incident: In October 2023, there was heated community discussion about proposed offshore wind farms. A Facebook post started circulating, claiming that a University of Tasmania study had found wind turbines to be dangerous to whales. This claim was also circulated in national media and parliament.

The Illawarra Flame's role: Concerned about the divisive impact of the story, the *Illawarra Flame* investigated the claims. It discovered the entire report was fabricated, with no scientific evidence supporting the notion that wind farms harm whales.

Outcome: The *Illawarra Flame* successfully combatted the misinformation being distributed through the community and was featured on Media Watch for its role in uncovering the truth.²⁸

- 6.31 Accordingly, the committee heard multiple calls for action to support and strengthen public interest journalism, particularly at local levels 'where media diversity has been eroded'.²⁹ For example, the CPI proposed establishment of an independent trust to support emerging news ventures, particularly in regional areas.³⁰
- 6.32 Similarly, LINA suggested introducing a 'minimum government advertising spend specifically directed to locally produced and distributed news publications'. LINA also proposed that the Australian Government support development of a not-for-profit news sector by enabling news organisations that produce public interest journalism to be eligible for deductible gift recipient status.³¹
- 6.33 Ms Margaret Lopez of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts told the committee about a range of initiatives under the Australian Government's News Media Assistance Program, which aim to strengthen media diversity and support regional and independent news publishers:

²⁸ Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

²⁹ Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, p. [4]. See also, Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, [p. 2]; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 9; World Wildlife Fund, *Submission 113*, pp. 14–15; Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 3; Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University, *Submission 104*, pp. 6–7.

³⁰ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 11.

³¹ Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 8.

The government has established the News Media Assistance Program, which recognises local media as critical to the health of democracy, social cohesion and informing communities. As part of that program, the government is providing \$99.1 million over three years from 2025–26 in grants for the news sector. It's also providing \$33 million over three years from 2025–26 to support the sustainability of the Australian Associated Press, who provide a newswire service. The government also provided \$15 million in 2024–25 for the News Media Relief Program, which provided grants to regional, independent and suburban multicultural and First Nations news publishers creating online news content.

The government has also committed \$10.5 million over four years from 2024–25 for the Australian Communications and Media Authority to implement the Media Diversity Measurement Framework. There's also a mandated minimum commitment for two years from 2025–26 for regional newspaper advertising to support regional news publishers. In terms of additional measures, the government is also developing Australia's first national media literacy strategy, and that will be co-designed in partnership with media literacy research and education sectors and communities.³²

- 6.34 The need for more support for the news industry more broadly was also raised by the News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, which discussed the protective impacts of a diverse and 'flourishing news and information ecosystem' with a range of trusted sources that people can go to.³³
- 6.35 To this end, there was also support for more funding for trusted public broadcasters such as the ABC and SBS,³⁴ including more coverage of climate science, energy solutions and policy debates, although some submitters called for greater transparency from the broadcasters to address potential partiality.³⁵
- 6.36 Funding and support to provide training on climate change for journalists and media organisations, as well as grant and other funding to support local, public-interest journalism and factual climate change coverage were also proposed as possible solutions,³⁶ although as explained in a report by the Carnegie

³² Ms Margaret Lopez, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Broadcasting, Media and News Policy Division, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2060, p. 45.

³³ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 15–16.

³⁴ See, for example, Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12; Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 9; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 9; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 10]; Comms Declare, *Submission 56*, [p. 8].

³⁵ Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 8 and 18 and 20.

³⁶ See, for example, Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 10]; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 9; Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 10–11; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, pp. 14–15; Environmental Defenders Office, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 4]; Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, pp. 7–8.

Endowment for International Peace, supporting local journalism is a longer term structural change:

... outsized attention goes to the most tangible, immediate, and visible actions [like the disruption of inauthentic networks] ... Yet such actions, while helpful, usually have narrow impacts. In comparison, more ambitious but slower-moving efforts to revive local journalism and improve media literacy (among other possibilities) receive less notice despite encouraging research on their prospects.³⁷

6.37 In addition to greater support for public interest journalism, the committee also heard calls for structural and regulatory changes to ensure the robustness of the sector. These included the establishment of an independent media regulator³⁸ and asking the Australian Media and Communications Authority to review its regulation of campaign journalism from a public interest point of view:

Just as news outlets clearly distinguish between commentary and factual or hard news, they should declare cases of campaign journalism, so that audiences can evaluate whether such campaigns are in the public interest.³⁹

6.38 Climate Communications Australia additionally thought that the Press Council of Australia should be 'co-funded' to ensure 'independent expert representatives from academia and public interest organisations, rather than being self-regulated'.⁴⁰

6.39 Further, in recognition of the role of traditional media in amplifying mis/disinformation appearing on social media, submitters such as the UTS Centre for Media Transition thought that applying a cross-platform media standards scheme that applies across print, broadcast and online news would help build integrity and accuracy into news reporting.⁴¹

6.40 Currently, there are a range of voluntary and other media standards, with some news sources not regulated at all.⁴² In line with this, the QUT Digital Media Research Centre (QUT DMRC) considered existing regulations 'need to be re-examined to determine if they are effective and proportionate'.⁴³

³⁷ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide*, 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 2 and 4.

³⁸ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 12.

³⁹ Climate Communications Australia, *Submission 197* [pp. 3 and 12].

⁴⁰ Climate Communications Australia, *Submission 197*, [p. 3]. See also, Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 20.

⁴¹ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, pp. 8–9.

⁴² UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 9.

⁴³ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 31].

Fact checking

- 6.41 Various approaches to fact checking by tech and online platforms are covered in more detail in Appendix 3.
- 6.42 Alongside action to promote a strong media ecosystem, various inquiry participants also advocated for greater support for fact checking services. While not seen as a sufficient stand-alone solution, they were seen by numerous submitters as a useful tool in the arsenal to counter mis/disinformation.⁴⁴
- 6.43 The RMIT Hub explained the efficacy and benefits of fact checking services:
- A significant body of academic research suggests that fact checking can be effective in countering false information by correcting beliefs, although it has its limitations. More broadly, as a form of public interest journalism, fact checking can hold individuals who spread false information accountable and help the public understand complex ideas.⁴⁵
- 6.44 This appeared to be reflected in a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which observed that 'policymakers can have some confidence that fact checking is worthy of investment' but that its efficacy 'can vary a lot depending on a host of highly contextual, poorly understood factors'.⁴⁶
- 6.45 Dr Sora Park, Director of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra, highlighted the importance of fact-checking websites for both individual news consumers and social media platforms:
- ... fact checking plays an important role in people's information environment. Not everyone will notice it. Not everyone will go to a fact-checking website. We do know that people's awareness of fact checked material on social media is very low. But, having said that, it's still very important for whenever I find something that's dubious that I do know where to go to. I think that's really important for Australians—if there is a post of which I don't know the veracity, then I know I can go to this fact-checking website. So, in that sense, I think fact checking is very important, and it's important for social media companies to incorporate that on their platform so people can easily find ways to verify information when they need it. Not everyone will, but it's an option.⁴⁷
- 6.46 However, the RMIT Hub pointed out that resources to support information integrity are declining, with only one of Australia's three previous fact checkers still operating, and digital platform fact checking services which identify and

⁴⁴ See, for example, UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 6; RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 2; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 13–14; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 37].

⁴⁵ RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide*, 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 3 and 6.

⁴⁷ Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 42.

rate misleading content being axed or facing significant cuts. There have also been reports of fact checkers facing increasing threats, abuse, and political and legal attacks.⁴⁸

- 6.47 Dr Rys Farthing of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra also warned that small, underfunded fact-checking services were being relied on as a 'smokescreen' by digital platforms:

Making me even more angry is that these platforms are reliant on these tiny third-party fact checkers. They turn up at committees like this and talk about this, saying, 'This is our process,' but they don't fund them to meet the scale of the problem. Indeed, we're seeing a global trend where third-party fact checkers are losing financial support from platforms. We've got these tiny little organisations under financial stress being asked to function as the smokescreen for these billion-dollar organisations. The whole system seems a little bit upside down to me.⁴⁹

- 6.48 Unsurprisingly, various submitters, including the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society (ADM+S), called for more financial support for independent fact checking organisations.⁵⁰
- 6.49 However, there was not universal support for fact checkers. Mr Murray Hogarth suggested they are reactive and of limited effectiveness,⁵¹ and the Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals contended that mainstream media fact checkers are arrogant.⁵²
- 6.50 In addition to dedicated fact-checking services, the committee is aware of initiatives such as the Trusted News Initiative (TNI), which may provide a model for collaborative media efforts to tackle mis/disinformation (see Box 6.2). Of particular relevance to fact-checking efforts, the TNI includes 'targeted, expert training workshops on a variety of digital tools to help journalists as they seek to continue day-to-day verification and fact checking'.⁵³

⁴⁸ RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, pp. 4–6. See also, Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, p. [17]; Ms Rochelle Zurnamer, Executive Manager, Gambling and Mis/Disinformation, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 12; Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁹ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 81.

⁵⁰ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 14. See also, Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 13.

⁵¹ Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 5.

⁵² Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 26.

⁵³ BBC, '[The Trusted News Initiative creates Asia-Pacific network](#)', *Media release* (accessed 22 February 2026).

Box 6.2 Trusted News Initiative

The TNI was founded by the BBC, and includes media organisations from around the world, including AP, AFP, CBC, the *Financial Times*, Google/YouTube, Meta, Microsoft, Thomson Reuters, Twitter, the *Washington Post*, and, in Australia, SBS and the ABC. TNI 'members work together to build audience trust and to find solutions to tackle challenges of disinformation'. According to the TNI website, by 'including media organisations and social media platforms, it is the only forum in the world of its kind designed to take on disinformation in real time'.⁵⁴

The TNI works collectively in four main areas:

- **Fast Alert:** creating a system so organisations can alert each other rapidly when they discover disinformation which threatens human life or disrupts democracy.
- **Intelligence sharing:** real-time conversation of equals between news organisations and tech platforms about the evolving nature of harmful disinformation.
- **Media education:** sharing insights and research on how audiences and users react to disinformation, thus informing best practice and supporting better digital literacy.
- **Engineering solutions:** sharing information on engineering solutions for authentication of trusted news sources and improving the information environment.

Importantly, the TNI partnership is separate from, and does not in any way affect, the editorial stance of any partner organisation.

Key blog topics on the TNI's website, as of December 2025, included articles about climate change mis/disinformation.⁵⁵

Supporting research into threats to climate information integrity

6.51 Support for independent and reliable research and access to data were viewed by many submitters as another key tool in combatting climate change and energy mis/disinformation.

6.52 Submitters, including the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), argued that more independent research into the prevalence and impacts of climate change and energy mis/disinformation needs to be supported.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ BBC, [Trusted News Initiative](#) (accessed 3 December 2025).

⁵⁵ BBC, [Trusted News Initiative](#) (accessed 3 December 2025).

⁵⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 5. See also, Dr Christian Downie, Professor, Australian National University; and Member, Climate Social Science Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 49; Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of

- 6.53 The Climate Social Science Network suggested that 'a public misinformation monitoring program' to monitor trends across platforms would make it harder for misinformation to spread and thrive.⁵⁷
- 6.54 The ADM+S highlighted 'the critical role of independent, researcher-led monitoring in ensuring observability' of activity on digital platforms. To this end, the ADM+S and other stakeholders recommended greater investment in research infrastructure, such as the Australian Internet Observatory, to track hidden digital influence, ensure that academia and regulatory agencies can build their capabilities and deliver meaningful research, safeguard monitoring activities and appropriately scrutinise digital platforms.⁵⁸
- 6.55 However, the ADM+S also pointed to the need for public agencies to 'be resourced to develop digital monitoring capacities, working in durable partnership with academia'. It suggested this could be funded via a cost-sharing arrangement with large online platforms, given the revenue they derive from digital advertising.⁵⁹
- 6.56 At the same time, several submitters, such as News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra and 89 Degrees East, argued for research into the effectiveness of counter mis/disinformation strategies—such as pre-bunking, labelling of mis/disinformation, and debunking—to better understand how well these approaches are working and to inform public institutions how best to 'counter ... [mis/disinformation] impacts in their engagement and communication with the public'.⁶⁰
- 6.57 To this end, the committee is aware that in 2022, member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) established a Hub on Information Integrity 'to facilitate the analysis of public governance measures aimed at preserving and strengthening the integrity of a rapidly

Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 35; Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 21.

⁵⁷ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 12. See also, Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 19.

⁵⁸ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 14–15. See also, Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 19; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 35–36]; Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 21; Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director, Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 26.

⁵⁹ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 14.

⁶⁰ 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, p. 3 and News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 14. See also, The Australian National University Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, pp. 4 and 9.

evolving information space'. The Hub is a peer-learning platform, which countries can use to exchange data and best practices.⁶¹

- 6.58 There were also arguments for better funding for, and access to, environment, climate change and weather research and data, as matters of national security and resilience.⁶²
- 6.59 Environmental groups advocated for better access to reliable data about biodiversity, ecosystems, developments, land clearing and related matters, explaining that the true extent of impacts of energy projects is 'routinely downplayed or omitted'.⁶³
- 6.60 The need for greater access to digital platform data was also raised by various participants and is addressed in Chapter 7.

Increasing resilience through media, digital and science literacy

- 6.61 The importance of media literacy in addressing mis/disinformation, was highlighted by numerous contributors to the inquiry.⁶⁴ For example, AAP stated that media literacy—which encourages 'care and critical thinking in relation to online content, as well as practical tips for verifying information'—is critical to 'supporting Australian people to independently identify misinformation and avoid it'. To this end, AAP argued that 'ensuring free, practical media literacy education is available for audiences on their preferred platforms is a crucial protective step against misinformation of all varieties'.⁶⁵
- 6.62 In addition, participants such as the News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra pointed to the positive relationship between media literacy and civic engagement and noted that those with high confidence in their media abilities are more likely to engage in more civic activities.⁶⁶

⁶¹ OECD, *OECD Hub on Information Integrity* (accessed 9 December 2025).

⁶² ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, pp. 3–4; Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director, Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 23; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, pp. 3–4.

⁶³ North Queensland Natural History Group Inc, *Submission 26*, pp. 2 and 5–6; Mr Andrew Bray, National Director, Renewable Energy Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 65.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 6–7; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 20; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 36–37]; Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Australian Associated Press, *Submission 98*, p. 3.

⁶⁶ News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 17. See also, Dr Eve Mayes, Senior Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer, Pedagogy and Curriculum, Deakin University, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 47.

- 6.63 Alongside media literacy, submitters like the CPI also referred to the need to develop digital literacy skills, that is, skills that allow people to navigate technical and online platforms to access information, as well as 'evaluate the effect of algorithms and targeted disinformation on these platforms'.⁶⁷
- 6.64 In relation to climate science more specifically, stakeholders such as the ARC 21C, Mr Murray Hogarth, and the UTS Centre for Media Transition wanted to see more emphasis on climate science literacy—including energy and energy transition literacy⁶⁸—with the latter explaining:
- Importantly, the required focus of education efforts goes well beyond what is commonly meant by 'media literacy' (education on critically navigating and understanding the media) towards increasing public understanding of climate science, and of science more generally.⁶⁹
- 6.65 Contributors largely agreed that mandatory science, media and digital literacy education, as well as development of critical thinking skills across the population, would help empower individuals to identify and respond to mis/disinformation and build democratic resilience.⁷⁰ According to the International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), education is 'one of the most important enablers of information integrity about climate science'.⁷¹
- 6.66 The importance of media and science literacy has also been recognised internationally, with a range of countries and organisations implementing media literacy projects to address mis/disinformation (see Box 6.3).

⁶⁷ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 6–7.

⁶⁸ ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, pp. 5–6; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 5; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 10. See also, Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director, Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 23; Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [pp. 4–5]; WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, pp. 10 and 12.

⁶⁹ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 10.

⁷⁰ See, for example, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 16–17; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 36–37]; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 22; WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 10; RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 6; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 5; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 8; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 10; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 5 and 12–13; Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 35; Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director, Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 26; Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, p. 16.

⁷¹ IPIE, [Information Integrity about Climate Science: a systematic review: Synthesis report 2025.1](#), 2025, p. 76; Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide*, 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 23–24 and 26.

Box 6.3 International media literacy projects

- France has a centre in charge of media and information literacy throughout the French education system.
- Estonia has a compulsory course in high school on media and manipulation, with the goal of students being able to critically evaluate media manipulation, recognise propaganda, fake news and myth making.
- The Netherlands Media Literacy Network includes public libraries, cultural institutions, education publishers and welfare organisations. The network's partners deliver media literacy programs, provide independent advice on developments in media literacy and conduct research.
- The United Kingdom (UK) piloted new ways of boosting media literacy skills, with a Media Literacy Taskforce Fund established to reach vulnerable groups to improve their media literacy skills and learn the skills to protect themselves from online disinformation.⁷²
- The UK also developed the RESIST framework, 'a step-by-step approach to countering disinformation'. This was turned into a public toolkit to give professional communicators and citizens confidence when assessing the veracity of information.⁷³
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) Media and Information Literacy Alliance, which includes organisations and individuals from more than a hundred countries and aims to 'promote international cooperation to ensure that all citizens have access to media and information literacy competencies'.⁷⁴
- UNESCO's *Media and Information Literacy Multimedia Toolkit for Media*, which helps address disinformation and information hate speech by drawing on the principles of media information literacy. It includes templates and suggestions for how those who use the

⁷² OECD, [Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity](#), March 2024, pp. 77–79 and 81; UK Government, ['Help for vulnerable people to spot disinformation and boost online safety'](#), Press release, 28 October 2022; UK Government, [Media Literacy Taskforce Fund](#), 18 July 2022 (accessed 9 December 2025).

⁷³ OECD, [Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity](#), March 2024, p. 127; UK Government Communication Service, [Resist: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#), 2019 (accessed 11 December 2025); UK Government Communication Service, [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#), 2021 (accessed 11 December 2025); UK Government Communications, [Resist 3: A framework for building resilience to information threats](#), 2025 (accessed 11 December 2025).

⁷⁴ UNESCO, [UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance](#) (accessed 3 December 2025).

Toolkit can engage with their audience through media information literacy activities.⁷⁵

- Finland treats media and information literacy as a civic competency with the aim of creating a 'society more resistant to disinformation'. Finland's Media Literacy policy includes curriculum focused on early childhood education, formal schooling, and youth and adult learning.⁷⁶

6.67 In relation to climate mis/disinformation specifically, the UK Met Office has developed a misinformation toolkit (see Box 6.4), while UNESCO has launched a free online course to address climate disinformation through media and information literacy. The course aims to:

- enhance understanding of climate change and the importance of identifying and trusting evidence-based data and scientific facts;
- build critical thinking and fact checking skills to evaluate climate information across diverse information providers; and
- encourage citizens to become media and information literate and to advocate for informed, positive climate action.⁷⁷

Box 6.4 UK Met Office misinformation toolkit

The UK's national meteorological service—the UK Met Office—developed a toolkit on *Tackling climate misinformation*, based on the latest climate science from its own research 'as well as the latest internationally agreed science collated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change'. The Met Office updates content as it spots themes of climate misinformation.⁷⁸

Topics covered include how to spot misinformation, climate change questions, observations critical for weather and climate, natural climate variability, historical climate change, and atmospheric modification and geoengineering. For example, under 'How to spot misinformation', the toolkit suggests pausing before seeing or hearing information that 'seems sensationalist, alarmist or highly emotive', and considering:

- **Who** shared this information and what might be their reasons for doing so? Are they an expert in the relevant field such as a climate scientist?
- Can you tell the source of the information?

⁷⁵ UNESCO, [Introduction: A Media and Information Literacy Multimedia Toolkit for media](#) (accessed 3 December 2025).

⁷⁶ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 7.

⁷⁷ UNESCO, [UNESCO launches free online course to tackle climate disinformation through media and information literacy](#) (accessed 3 December 2025).

⁷⁸ Met Office, [Tackling climate misinformation](#) (accessed 2 December 2025).

- **When** was the information published? Is it, for example, from a number of weeks, months or years ago and possibly not current?
- **Why** might you want to share this information? What is the benefit of sharing it especially if it may not be factual?⁷⁹

The toolkit also proposes vetting the original source, evaluating potential bias in media stories, and verifying online content by checking if any information has been left out that could lead to false assumptions. It then suggests resisting 'the pull of repetition', using 'reliable fact checkers', escaping 'the echo chamber', and advises thinking 'carefully before responding or sharing', because:

- commenting will increase the visibility of a post on social media, so respond with caution even to correct misinformation;
- if you do respond, be empathetic and focus on facts rather than attacking views—link to clear, reputable sources of correct information; and
- if you inadvertently spread misinformation yourself, set the record straight and link to correct information.⁸⁰

6.68 Unsurprisingly, many actions recommended by participants to address climate change and energy mis/disinformation revolved around measures to build resilience via media, digital and science literacy education—particularly for potentially vulnerable groups.⁸¹

6.69 To this end, the committee is aware that the Australian Government has committed to developing a National Media Literacy Strategy (Strategy), with a tender released in February 2026 to find a co-design partner. The Strategy will provide 'a clear and coordinated national approach to help Australians build the skills needed to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the digital world', including:

... the ability to spot false or misleading content being spread on social media, understand the intent behind media messages and think critically about the information they see every day.⁸²

⁷⁹ Met Office, *Tackling climate misinformation*. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁰ Met Office, *Tackling climate misinformation*.

⁸¹ See, for example, Professor Julia Steinberger, *Submission 135*, p. 5; Parents for Climate, *Submission 102*, p. 4; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 21; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, p. [3].

⁸² The Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Communications, '[Australia's first National Media Literacy Strategy a step closer](#)', *Media release*, 12 February 2026; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts, '[News Media Assistance Program](#)' (accessed 18 February 2026).

- 6.70 The Strategy was welcomed by groups such as the CPI, the Australia Media Literacy Alliance and the QUT DMRC.⁸³ It is expected to be completed in 2028 and will be developed in consultation with academic, industry and community stakeholders. It will also consider the impacts of emerging technologies such as AI, as well as identify vulnerable groups most in need of targeted media literacy initiatives.⁸⁴
- 6.71 In addition, the CPI suggested that the government augment media and digital literacy education with online tools, such as the AI 'Claim Buster', to help people judge the accuracy of information and legitimacy of sources.⁸⁵
- 6.72 While not as widely discussed, a number of submissions also suggested that better civics education and community-building initiatives—including in schools—could improve engagement and build trust and resilience in communities, especially in the face of mis/disinformation.⁸⁶ The importance of addressing mis/disinformation to improve social cohesion and inform civic engagement in democratic processes was also noted.⁸⁷
- 6.73 A multi-pronged education approach was suggested, with a particular emphasis on policy makers and young people in schools. Better informed policy makers, it was argued by Doctors for the Environment Australia, 'helps ensure that those responsible for legislation and civic leadership are better equipped to respond effectively'.⁸⁸
- 6.74 For this reason, many of the suggested approaches to improving media, digital and scientific literacy involved education initiatives in schools and the broader community, as well as a range of pre-bunking and debunking interventions. These are discussed below.

⁸³ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 6; Australia Media Literacy Alliance, '[AMLA Media release—Media Literacy](#)', *Media release*, 16 December 2025 (accessed 12 March 2026); QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 36].

⁸⁴ The Hon Anika Wells MP, Minister for Communications, '[Australia's first National Media Literacy Strategy a step closer](#)', *Media release*, 12 February 2026.

⁸⁵ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 7.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, pp. 17 and 20–21; Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, p. 16; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 5; Kalapa Wycarbah Local Action Committee, *Submission 90*, [p. 2].

⁸⁷ See, for example, Local & Independent News Association, *Submission 18*, p. 3; Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, pp. 2 and 16; Jewish Climate Network, *Submission 120*, p. 2; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 6]; Tasmanian Climate Collective, *Submission 70*, [pp. 6–7].

⁸⁸ Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 6. See also, Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, pp. 12 and 25; Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, pp. 15–16; Australian Resources Development Pty Ltd, *Submission 65*, pp. 4 and 14.

Education initiatives

6.75 Multiple participants proposed an increased focus on media, digital and science literacy in schools.⁸⁹ For example, the ANU ICEDS described current shortcomings in school-based climate education and media literacy and recommended:

Funding digital and media literacy education training initiatives and climate change education that specifically teach students and youth how to evaluate the credibility of information they encounter and how people's biases may affect their judgements.⁹⁰

6.76 Shortcomings in climate and media literacy education were also identified by Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, who argued that curriculum reform was needed to prevent young Australians from entering adulthood 'ill-prepared to navigate contested information landscapes, leaving both public debate and policy outcomes more vulnerable to manipulation by well-resourced disinformation campaigns'.⁹¹

6.77 To this end, the ARC 21C noted that some elements are already embedded in the curriculum and could be 'adapted or expanded upon to address improved science media literacy and critical thinking'.⁹²

6.78 Mr Andrew Beaton, of the Australian Democracy Network (ADN), went further and advocated for 'a national media literacy curriculum'. In doing so, Mr Beaton suggested Australia could emulate the Finnish approach to media literacy, which 'treats information evaluation as essential to national security and democracy' and embeds it across the curriculum from an early age.⁹³

6.79 In addition to general media literacy, several participants singled out AI as a particular area of focus for education efforts. For example, Dr Sora Park, Director of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra, warned that the conversational style of AI makes it seem 'trustworthy when it's actually not, so there's a real danger there that people are not really equipped to use these tools without education'.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ See, for example, Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, pp. 5 and 19; Lighter Footprints, *Submission 108*, pp. 5–6; Professor Julia Steinberger, *Submission 135*, [p. 5]; Amanda De Lore, *Submission 206*, [p. 10].

⁹⁰ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

⁹¹ Dr Mel Fitzpatrick, *Submission 180*, p. 6.

⁹² ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, p. 6.

⁹³ Mr Andrew Beaton, Campaign Director, Australian Democracy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, pp. 23 and 26.

⁹⁴ Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 36. See also, ANU Law Reform and Social Justice Research Hub, *Submission 66*, p. 4; Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, pp. 10–11.

6.80 Mr Beaton told the committee that AI was a recent focus of Finnish education efforts and one that could be introduced easily in Australia:

... I was looking at what the Finns are up to. Just this year they're kicking off a similar program around AI. They're looking at AI literacy as well. They're looking at 'slopaganda', as it was referred to in this committee. They're looking at AI deepfakes and they're rolling that out across their education curriculum, which is something that our government could do from a regulatory perspective and it could be quite an easy first step.⁹⁵

6.81 Dr John Cook, of the University of Melbourne, described the educative effect of tackling misinformation head-on:

... one of the most powerful ways of teaching science is an approach called misconception based learning, which is to teach science by examining the misconceptions about science. So, rather than trying to censor, you can actually tackle misinformation and the arguments that try to cast doubt on the facts as a way to teach the facts. That's actually one of the most powerful ways of teaching science. So I think that, if you want to take a glass-half-full approach, misinformation can be an educational opportunity.⁹⁶

6.82 The UTS Centre for Media Transition and other submitters suggested that young people supported this emphasis:

Young people view social media and online information environments as a key arena for climate action but stress the need for stronger support from schools, scientific institutions, health organisations, and youth-led initiatives to navigate misleading information.⁹⁷

6.83 While supporting the expansion of media literacy and critical thinking in the school curriculum, Mr Andrew Hallam described education on media literacy for adults as 'more urgent'.⁹⁸

6.84 Dr Sora Park expressed a similar view, telling the committee that while there was 'room for improvement' in education for young people, schools were already 'slowly adopting media literacy education'. Instead, Dr Park argued that the 'big gap' was in adult education. As with the ADN, Dr Park described Finland as an example of a country providing 'media literacy education across the board':

They start media literacy education from early childhood, and they have a lifelong learning framework that adults can always come back to

⁹⁵ Mr Andrew Beaton, Campaign Director, Australian Democracy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 27.

⁹⁶ Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 35.

⁹⁷ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 10. See also, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 37]; 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, p. 3; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 19; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 8; Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, [p. 6].

⁹⁸ Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 8.

community organisations or cultural institutions to learn about and update. The important thing about media literacy is that you need to keep updating it. It's not a one-off thing. You can't get educated and get a degree and have that be it. Because technology is changing all the time, everyone needs to update their skills. So they have this really good structure, from early childhood to older adulthood, to get access to media literacy education. Even in schools, it's embedded in all the subjects. It's not a separate subject. It's included in science, maths and English, which I think is a really good framework.⁹⁹

6.85 The need for lifelong learning was also recognised by the ADN, as well as the QUT DMRC, which recommended:

- investing in high quality media literacy education and developing world class programs and resources and awareness-raising campaigns for lifelong learning; and
- developing evidence-based resources for media literacy education in schools that are aligned to the Australian Curriculum and able to be adapted easily to different classroom contexts.¹⁰⁰

6.86 The QUT DMRC also pointed to the findings of an ARC Linkage Project Addressing Misinformation with Media Literacy Through Cultural Institutions, which found that a broad-based approach should be taken to media literacy education:

Rather than narrowly focussed skills-based interventions or training in out-of-context fact-checking, media literacy education needs to connect with people's everyday lives, their interests, their cultural backgrounds and their day-to-day needs.¹⁰¹

Pre-bunking interventions

6.87 As noted by Mr Andrew Hallam, 'the spread of disinformation and misinformation can be likened to the spread of a virus. By taking early steps to reduce the impact of false information (inoculation) its spread can be reduced'.¹⁰²

6.88 In line with this, there was some agreement about the need to inoculate individuals and communities from mis/disinformation through early education or pre-emptively educating ('pre-bunking') people about climate change and energy and related mis/disinformation.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 42.

¹⁰⁰ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 37].

¹⁰¹ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 36–37].

¹⁰² Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 7 (citations omitted).

¹⁰³ See, for example, Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 12; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 31]; Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner,

- 6.89 The IPIE explained that this should include 'fact-based inoculation', such as scientific information which helps people identify and reject false claims, as well as 'technique-based inoculation' which helps people identify rhetorical strategies and manipulative arguments often used in misinformation.¹⁰⁴ The AHRC and others thought that this education should also include helping people to understand how their personal data is used in algorithmic content curation, and can make it difficult to escape echo chambers of mis/disinformation, as well as how AI is being integrated into people's lives.¹⁰⁵
- 6.90 According to the University of Melbourne, pre-bunking (combined with debunking) is one of two steps that 'are considered essential to counter climate misinformation', with 'technique-based inoculation' proving effective in building resilience and able to be delivered in multiple formats:
- Technique-based inoculation—the explicit teaching of common fallacies, manipulation tactics, and rhetorical red flags—has been proven by research to be one of the most versatile and generalisable interventions to counter climate misinformation, as it builds durable, transferable resistance across topics and platforms. It can be delivered through curricula, public-communication campaigns, short prebunking videos, and interactive games (e.g., the Cranky Uncle critical thinking game), and it scales beyond the "whack-a-mole" of individual fact-checks. Pairing inoculation with social-norm cues ("most people avoid sharing falsehoods") and light friction (brief prompts to consider accuracy before posting) measurably reduces sharing of false content.¹⁰⁶
- 6.91 A similar view was expressed by the Tasmanian Climate Collective, which described pre-bunking as being 'about training critical thinking to immunise us against how information can be manipulated'.¹⁰⁷
- 6.92 Teaching people to recognise manipulation techniques prior to exposure was also supported by Ms Raaber and colleagues, Friends of the Earth, the ANU Climate Social Science Network.¹⁰⁸

Submission 2, [p. 4]; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, pp. 7–8; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 12; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 5; Mr Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 8].

¹⁰⁴ IPIE, *Submission 42*, p. 6. See also, 89 Degrees East, *Submission 12*, p. 3; Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 12–13. See also, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 36–37] and ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century, *Submission 58*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, pp. 10–11 (citations omitted).

¹⁰⁷ Tasmanian Climate Collective, *Submission 70*, [p. 8].

¹⁰⁸ Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, pp. 17; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 10; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 12.

- 6.93 In addition, Coronium Pty Ltd thought that the government should 'fund public-facing, independent science communication bodies to proactively debunk misinformation'.¹⁰⁹
- 6.94 The IPIE discussed pre-bunking in its review of *Information Integrity about Climate Science*, highlighting that a range of studies have found this to be a durable and 'effective approach to countering misleading information', although it may be less effective in relation to partisan or polarising issues such as climate change.¹¹⁰
- 6.95 To this end, Mr Alex Murray of Climate Action Against Disinformation highlighted the potential to learn from global experiences in relation to the effectiveness of actions such as pre-bunking.¹¹¹

Debunking interventions

- 6.96 In addition to supporting pre-bunking activities, submitters such as the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner argued there is a need 'to provide fact-based counter-information and counter-narratives as part of efforts to retroactively debunk existing disinformation'.¹¹²
- 6.97 As noted in the previous section, debunking was also supported by the University of Melbourne, which saw it as one of two essential steps to countering misinformation (along with pre-bunking).¹¹³
- 6.98 Those who supported debunking efforts proposed a range of possible actions. For example, Climate Action Burwood/Canada Bay proposed that the Climate Change Authority or another independent body be tasked with 'creating a website that debunks the full range of misinformation surrounding global warming, renewable energy and electric vehicles'. The group suggested that the independent body could also have a role in investigating mis/disinformation reported by the public, as well as providing media outlets with accurate information.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, [p. 6]. See also, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 13–14.

¹¹⁰ IPIE, [Information Integrity about Climate Science: a systematic review: Synthesis report 2025.1](#), 2025, pp. 74–76. See also: Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*, p. 11.

¹¹¹ Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 70–71.

¹¹² Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 4]. See also, Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 8; Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 17; University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, pp. 10–11.

¹¹³ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Climate Action Burwood/Canada Bay, *Submission 78*, [p. 2].

- 6.99 Future Smart Strategies advocated for a "truth over noise" filter in all government climate and energy communications', which would involve 'stringent fact-checking, transparent source auditing, and proactive efforts to debunk zombie data'. It defined zombie data as 'misinformation that has been repeatedly debunked but continues to circulate' and which 'poses a critical barrier to public trust and informed policy debate'.¹¹⁵
- 6.100 The committee is also aware of international efforts to debunk mis/disinformation (see Box 6.5).

Box 6.5 International debunking initiatives

Verified for Climate

Verified for Climate is a joint initiative of the United Nations and the social impact agency Purpose that has adapted the *Verified* program that addressed challenges of mis/disinformation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Verified for Climate* promotes 'solutions-focused, science-based information to debunk myths and put an end to the narratives of denialism, doomism, and delay':

'Verified for Climate' is based on a three-pillar approach: trusted messenger and community engagement to engage and persuade audiences at a ground level; global creative campaigns to reach target audiences en masse and make visible the issue; and convenings that focus on insights from climate communications experts, leveraging solutions to encourage global cooperation.¹¹⁶

Verified employ a team of communicators, creatives and researchers who produce content 'based on the latest information and guidance from the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other UN agencies'. *Verified* have reached over 1 billion people around the world with reliable information since it was launched in May 2020 in response to the COVID crisis.¹¹⁷

EUvsDisinfo

Following Russia's actions against Ukraine, in March 2015, the leaders of EU countries gathered to call out Russia as a source of disinformation. The Strategic Communication and Information Analysis Division of the EU's diplomatic service then formed a team of experts, leading to the creation of the website EUvsDisinfo and a publicly available database of pro-Kremlin disinformation. EUvsDisinfo also provides a weekly newsletter on the latest trends in pro-Kremlin disinformation, with the website producing

¹¹⁵ Future Smart Strategies, *Submission 112*, pp. 1 and 2.

¹¹⁶ UNESCO, *Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change*.

¹¹⁷ Verified, [About](#) (accessed 2 December 2025).

thousands of pieces of content on understanding the key definitions and mechanics of disinformation and how to respond to it.¹¹⁸ One article, for example, suggested that:

For the Kremlin's disinformation spreaders, climate change is not a threat or an opportunity. It's a wedge... Often, commentators posit a sometimes implied, sometimes explicit linkage between sanctions, green energy measures meant to reduce hydrocarbon use, the failure to import Russian oil and gas, and European industrial decline. The obvious goal is to use climate change as a means of injecting scepticism about sanctions on Russia into a country's online debate.¹¹⁹

6.101 That said, some submitters who supported debunking activities underscored the need for an evidence-based approach to efforts. For example, to be effective, the UoM argued that debunking efforts needed research-based 'Australian culturally aligned messaging that resonates with local audiences and values'. It suggested that key strategies might include:

... climate science and misinformation workshops with journalists and media producers, including influencers, content creators, and advocacy groups, to mobilise key actors in digital communication for educational purposes.¹²⁰

6.102 Further, Nelli Stevenson cautioned that 'in persuasive communications theory it is widely understood that repeating a myth reinforces it'. This means that efforts to debunk mis/disinformation that lead to its increased repetition—often by the media without the clarifying context—'can actually increase the likelihood that it will be later believed'.¹²¹

Improving information transparency and accountability

6.103 Improving information transparency and accountability were key themes of the inquiry. Much as sunlight disinfects what it shines on, substantial evidence received during the inquiry recommended improving information transparency and integrity to counteract mis/disinformation about climate change and energy.

6.104 At the same time, many submitters and witnesses thought that the government could do more to improve governance and regulation—through enforcement, more accountable regulators, and reforms to legislation, regulations, standards and guidance.

¹¹⁸ EUvsDisinfo, ['To challenge Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns': Eight years of EUvsDisinfo](#), 5 July 2023.

¹¹⁹ EUvsDisinfo, [Sneaky heat: The Kremlin uses climate change to push its favourite FIMI narratives](#), 7 November 2025.

¹²⁰ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 11.

¹²¹ Nelli Stevenson, *Submission 89*, p. 3.

6.105 The remainder of this section explores participants views and recommendations in relation to:

- improving information transparency; and
- enhancing regulator accountability, support and reform.

Improving information transparency

6.106 Participants made a number of recommendations aimed at improving information transparency. Many of these involved potential reforms to regulation around donations and lobbyists, grant eligibility and charity status, and advertising and sponsorship.

Donations and lobbyists

6.107 Given the role of politics and politicians in the spread of climate change and energy mis/disinformation, there were widespread calls from across the spectrum of opinion for more transparent political donations, and information about lobbyists and vested interests.

6.108 ADM+S highlighted the problems:

While electoral law requires disclosure and authorisation of political advertising, these provisions are narrow, inconsistently enforced, and poorly adapted to the realities of digital campaigning. The result is an ecosystem in which well-financed third-party organisations can appear to be grassroots groups, spread misleading or decontextualised claims, and mask their true funding sources.¹²²

6.109 Dr Lacy-Nichols of the University of Melbourne elaborated during a hearing, telling the committee:

There are some jurisdictions—Ireland and Scotland—where one of the requirements is that, if you are a third-party organisation, an industry association or a peak body, you to have disclose who all your members and funders are as part of that ... you need to have full transparency of where the money is coming from.¹²³

6.110 Along with other participants, the Climate Council of Australia supported reforms including 'lower disclosure thresholds, caps on expenditure and real-time disclosure, so Australians can clearly see who is funding campaigns'.¹²⁴ There were also calls for the removal of certain exemptions from reporting for

¹²² ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 12.

¹²³ Dr Jennifer Lacy-Nichols, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 29.

¹²⁴ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 16]. See also, Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 18; ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 13; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, pp. 8 and 60; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 11]; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 3]; Dr Christian Downie, Professor, Australian National University and Member, Climate Social Science Network, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 50.

politically engaged organisations, where political expenditure is funded by foreign donors.¹²⁵

6.111 Broader demands for financial transparency (including for donations) across industries—including think tanks and advocacy groups and submitters to government on project approvals—were also made. The IPIE highlighted that 'climate misinformation is often financed through concealed networks that distort public debate by masking the economic interests behind climate communications' and that better transparency would bring those connections to light.¹²⁶

6.112 The ADM+S noted the disproportionate impact of certain lobby groups on media narratives and policy debates, noting 'these groups blur the line between legitimate community advocacy and covert lobbying, while injecting highly polarising, misleading claims about renewables, nuclear, and fossil gas into the national debate'.¹²⁷

6.113 However, the Climate Council of Australia warned of unintended consequences, explaining recent amendments which 'prevent untied or general donations for use on electoral advocacy' will 'severely limit the ability of not-for-profits ... to advocate and counter the spread of mis- and disinformation during election periods'.¹²⁸

6.114 Some submitters, including Martin O'Dea and Rainforest Reserves Australia, recommended the creation of a lobbyist register, including information about who funds them, the publication and filing of disclosure reports, and the transparency of ministerial and senior officials' diaries so that the public can see who they are meeting with and being influenced by.¹²⁹ Mr Jack Herring from InfluenceMap told the committee:

There's a clear opportunity for Australia to seize the opportunity and mandate this [advocacy, lobbying positions and engagements with government] under Australia's climate related financial disclosure regimes.

¹²⁵ Coal Australia, *Submission 64*, [pp. 3–4].

¹²⁶ International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE), *Submission 42*, p. 5. See also, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 8; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 9]; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 12; Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, [p. 5]; CoalAustralia, *Submission 64*, [p. 6]; Professor Matthew Hornsey et al, *Submission 126*, [p. 6]; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 3].

¹²⁷ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 16].

¹²⁹ See, for example, Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 61; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 9]; InfluenceMap, *Submission 69*, pp. 9–10.

Doing so would position Australia as a global leader in climate information disclosure, restoring trust, transparency and effectiveness ...¹³⁰

- 6.115 Other participants pointed to the need for greater transparency around foreign donations. For example, Mr Gerard Holland of the Page Research Centre spoke about the lack of a register 'for the foreign money coming into the debate'.¹³¹
- 6.116 To better counter foreign influence, CoalAustralia also recommended greater transparency of foreign donations to advocacy and activist organisations. This measure extended to an initial audit then annual reporting to Parliament by electoral, intelligence, security and defence agencies on Australia's energy security and sovereignty and related mis/disinformation, especially where funding is not transparent. CoalAustralia argued that this would also help build community awareness and vigilance against 'manipulative and deceptive campaign tactics'.¹³²
- 6.117 To this end, Dr Lacy-Nichols recommended changes to funding declarations to 'improve political transparency to provide greater insights into some of those flows of money, whether or not they're from international or domestic companies'.¹³³

Reforms to grant eligibility and charity status

- 6.118 In addition to greater transparency around sources of funding, the committee heard evidence from some submitters about the need to review eligibility for government grants and the appropriateness of charity status for organisations that may be involved in the promulgation of disinformation and/or that are not transparent about their funding sources.
- 6.119 To guard against the influence of foreign donations and deceptive campaigning in environmental debates and activism CoalAustralia, recommended grant eligibility and conditions be tightened go allow for the denial or termination of grants where the receiver has engaged in deceptive campaigning, failed to disclose foreign donations or 'deliberately misled a Commonwealth approval agency or Court'.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Mr Jack Herring, Australia Program Manager, InfluenceMap, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 41.

¹³¹ Mr Gerard Holland, Chief Executive Officer, Page Research Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 55.

¹³² CoalAustralia, *Submission 64*, pp. 2–3. See also, Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 21; The Page Research Centre, *Submission 140*, p. 15; Stephen Johnston, *Submission 45*, [p. 4].

¹³³ Dr Jennifer Lacy-Nichols, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 29.

¹³⁴ CoalAustralia, *Submission 64*, [p. 4].

- 6.120 Likewise, Coal Australia suggested that charity status be refused or terminated for organisations which have engaged in deceptive campaigning, failed to disclose foreign donations, or 'made representations to Commonwealth approval agencies or the courts' that have been dishonest or relied on evidence that is fabricated, distorted or manipulated. CoalAustralia thought that this approach would help restore confidence in the charity sector, rather than it being used to perpetrate partisan political activism.¹³⁵
- 6.121 More specifically, Dr Jeremy Walker urged the Australian Government to review whether 'the present tax-exempt, tax-deductible status of the Institute of Public Affairs and the Centre of Independent Studies and other Atlas member organisations in Australia as is in conformity with the law'.¹³⁶

Advertising and sponsorship

- 6.122 Participants' recommendations around reforms to advertising covered bans on certain types of advertising and sponsorship as well as the introduction of truth in political advertising laws.

Banning fossil fuel advertising and sponsorship

- 6.123 Various stakeholders, including the Climate Social Science Network described how corporates or industry sectors use educational programs and 'promotional campaigns to enhance their cultural legitimacy and thus defuse potential regulations'. It cited corporations including Woodside, Santos and Origin as sponsors of academic programs, sports, arts and public events.¹³⁷
- 6.124 According to some submitters, including the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, Ms Elisa Morgera, banning fossil fuel advertising and sponsorship would help to address climate mis/disinformation.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ CoalAustralia, *Submission 64*, [p. 5–6]. See also, Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 20 and Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 33.

¹³⁶ Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*, p. 74.

¹³⁷ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 3–4. See also, Dr Lucy Hopkins, Academic, Centre for People, Place and Planet, Edith Cowan University, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 48–49; Dr Eve Mayes, Senior Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer, Pedagogy and Curriculum, Deakin University, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 48–49; Professor Matthew Hornsey et al, *Submission 126*, [p. 6].

¹³⁸ Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 55 and United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, p. 6. See also, Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, pp. 12–13; Ms Raphaela Raaber, Academic Staff Member, Centre for People, Place and Planet, Edith Cowan University, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 49; Environmental Defenders Office, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Ms Penny Tangey, *Submission 188*, pp. 4–5.

6.125 Dr Jeremy Walker made a similar recommendation and proposed that fossil fuel corporations and investors be prohibited from 'advertising owning media corporations and assets, sponsoring sporting teams, museums, schools and universities, and from funding any government scientific or research institution'.¹³⁹

6.126 Comms Declare described bans on advertising and sponsorship as 'a logical and inevitable step to change the climate narrative and stop the main source of funding and dissemination of dangerous climate dis- and misinformation'. It also noted that, so far, 'more than 40 jurisdictions globally have supported fossil fuel marketing restrictions, including 18 Australian councils and the Australian Capital Territory'.¹⁴⁰

Truth in political advertising laws

6.127 While Australia has Australian Consumer Law to regulate truth in product and services advertising, there is no similar requirement for truth in political advertising at the national level, especially around election time.¹⁴¹ Indeed, Mr Andrew Beaton of the Australian Democracy Network put plainly that it is currently 'legal to lie in a political ad' at the federal level.¹⁴²

6.128 In order to combat mis/disinformation, submitters recommended truth in political advertising and election material, most especially during election periods.¹⁴³ Friends of the Earth was one supporter of this measure, writing:

... over the years political footbaling and false or misleading information being shared by politicians this trust has been eroded. The evidence shared in this submission illustrates how weak political advertising laws have enabled disinformation to spread through political advertising, particularly within election periods.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*, p. 74.

¹⁴⁰ Comms Declare, *Submission 56*, [p. 17].

¹⁴¹ Mr Jack Herring, Australia Program Manager, InfluenceMap, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 40; Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12. See also, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 12 and 15; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, pp. 18–19; Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 3.

¹⁴² Mr Andrew Beaton, Campaign Director, Australian Democracy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 25.

¹⁴³ See, for example, Australian Democracy Network, *Submission 117*, [p. 6]; CoalAustralia, *Submission 64*, [p. 3]; Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 12; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁴ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 9.

6.129 'A national regime of truth in political advertising laws' was also supported by ADM+S, which noted that only South Australia (SA) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) currently have truth in political advertising provisions.¹⁴⁵

6.130 Mr Beaton cited the SA and ACT laws as possible models to for a national truth in political advertising laws but emphasised that this would target paid advertisements only, not 'expressions of opinion':

It would be our opinion to copy and paste, almost, from the South Australian legislation. It should be an offence to authorise or cause to be published electoral advertisements that are materially inaccurate or misleading. I want to be clear, there, around the word 'advertisement'. We're not talking about expressions of opinion; we're not talking about people having a yarn on Facebook. We're talking about paid ads in reference to verifiable statements of fact. ... These ads that we saw with AI slop dead whales on wind farms would be covered by truth-in-political-advertising legislation because these are paid ads targeting political discourse. That would be a key first step, from our perspective.¹⁴⁶

6.131 While the ADM+S argued that a national regime was needed to 'provide consistency and credibility', it also suggested that the regime extend beyond political parties and election periods:

... consideration should be given to whether such a regime could operate and be enforced year-round, not just during elections. Scope for such laws should be examined to ensure these capture advertising not only of registered political parties, but also of significant third parties (e.g. unions, associations, resident and business groups).¹⁴⁷

6.132 There appeared to be wide support for such measures, given recent polling from the Australia Institute showed that 89 per cent of Australians supported the introduction of truth in political advertising laws.¹⁴⁸

6.133 It also reflects reforms by the European Commission, which has introduced a new regulation on transparency in political advertising, which requires political advertisements to be labelled as such and include information on who paid for them, how much was paid, which elections, referendums or regulatory processes they are linked to, and whether any targeting techniques were used.¹⁴⁹

6.134 In addition to truth in political advertising laws, the University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre also recommended expanding the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* to target astroturfing 'without overly restraining other public dialogue on

¹⁴⁵ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Mr Andrew Beaton, Campaign Director, Australian Democracy Network, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 25.

¹⁴⁷ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁹ European Commission, [New EU rules on political advertising come into effect](#) (accessed 17 March 2026).

an issue'. It suggested this could be done by adopting the ACT's definition of 'electoral matter', along with 'stronger requirements for who is a disclosure entity'. According to the UQ Pro Bono Centre, this would mean:

... more media produced by astroturfing campaigns will be required to indicate the location and identity of its authorising entity. This would highlight the advertisement's political intentions and provide important information to the media and policymakers.¹⁵⁰

6.135 Some submitters called for truth in advertising more broadly—not just for political advertising. These submitters thought that think tanks and lobby groups should be subject to similar truthfulness requirements, given the highly political nature of advocacy work and the significant influence these groups have over environmental and climate policy.¹⁵¹

6.136 Dr Adam Lucas explained in more detail that this should include requirements to disclose data sources and assumptions on advertisement funding labels (to prevent corporate-funded campaigns masquerading as grassroots movements), prompt correction/removal powers for regulators, and civil penalties for repeated breaches of advertising laws.¹⁵²

6.137 Of course, such a measure would require independent arbitration of what is and is not mis/disinformation. Dr Lucas recommended the establishment of a 'Parliamentary Commissioner for Climate Information Integrity with powers to investigate systemic disinformation, issue findings and corrections, support public agencies in risk-communication, and coordinate across regulators'.¹⁵³

6.138 However, some submitters felt that 'much misinformation and disinformation is being generated by government bodies and leadership itself'.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, identifying government as a universally independent and unbiased source of information on matters such as climate and energy integrity could be problematic. When asked about whether government should play a role in determining climate misinformation or disinformation, the Australian Communications and Media Authority admitted:

There is a good argument that governments should stand back from these processes in relation to freedom of expression and information. I think that the platforms are probably in the best position to make those assessments

¹⁵⁰ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 7 and 8.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 31]; WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 10; Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 21.

¹⁵² Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [pp. 8–9].

¹⁵³ Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 10]. See also, Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 25 and Nelli Stevenson, *Submission 89*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 2.

themselves, whether they have good processes and procedures to make those assessments.¹⁵⁵

6.139 WePlanet Australia also expressed its concerns, stating:

... we are deeply concerned about the ability of governments to be the arbiter of truth. There is clear current and historical evidence of how this allows authoritarian governments to shut down political debate and distort democracy, leading to worse outcomes than the legislation was aiming to prevent.¹⁵⁶

Regulator accountability, support and reform

6.140 As noted by the UoM, Australia's regulatory response to climate and energy mis/disinformation relies on non-climate specific regulation, as well as voluntary codes and self-regulatory approaches. It also explained that there are 'extensive prohibitions on misleading and deceptive conduct via the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 and the Australian Consumer Law and Corporations Act 2001', which have been used to take action on greenwashing.¹⁵⁷

6.141 According to some submitters, agencies such as the Australian Electoral Commission, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) and Australian Energy Market Operator, need to better investigate and enforce existing regulations relating to corporate reporting, astroturfing and greenwashing constituting climate change and energy mis/disinformation.¹⁵⁸

6.142 The QUT DMRC explained how the ACCC has already prosecuted false environmental claims under Australian Consumer Law. It was suggested that this is 'a framework that could be examined to determine its ability to cover covertly orchestrated "astroturf" campaigns', to protect genuine community groups and avoid misleading claims.¹⁵⁹

6.143 Likewise, the Climate Social Science Network (CSSN) noted that ASIC had successfully prosecuted Mercer Superannuation (Australia) Ltd for 'making

¹⁵⁵ Ms Rochelle Zurmaner, Executive Manager, Gambling and Mis/Disinformation, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 14.

¹⁵⁶ WePlanet Australia, *Submission 204*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁷ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, pp. 7 and 8.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 14; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 11]; National Environmental Law Association, *Submission 24*, [pp. 1–2]; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [pp. 8–9]; Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 3; Coronium Pty Ltd, *Submission 15*, [p. 6]; Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, p. 12; Climate Communications Australia, *Submission 197*, [p. 3]; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁹ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 11].

misleading statements about the sustainable nature and characteristics of some of its superannuation investment options'. CSSN suggested that increasing the powers and resources of ASIC and the ACCC to 'regulate corporate miscommunication and fraud in relation to investors and consumers' was an important and urgent task:

These tasks are especially urgent given that emissions intensive corporations in particular, often engage in actions promoting individual pro-environmental behaviours even as they resist more systemic forms of change in, for example, the law or financial regulations.¹⁶⁰

- 6.144 Stronger enforcement powers for ASIC and the ACCC were also supported by the Geelong Sustainability Group in order to 'stop misleading climate/energy claims in advertising, corporate reports and lobbying'.¹⁶¹
- 6.145 Further, the National Environmental Law Association proposed that ASIC and the ACCC should have a stronger role in 'providing robust guidance in relation to environmental- or sustainability-related claims made in relation to products and services'.¹⁶²
- 6.146 Dr Matthew Rimmer suggested corporations law could be 'deployed to address the problem of astroturfing' but also argued that better corporate disclosure rules would provide greater transparency for investors.¹⁶³
- 6.147 Similar views were shared by other submitters, who thought that transparent and consistent advertising, labelling and reporting standards, guidance and verification procedures for climate- and energy-related initiatives like carbon and emissions reporting and offsets, sustainability ratings or labelling, environmental disclosure and information about energy transition projects from regulators would contribute to investigative journalism and help improve public access to reliable information.¹⁶⁴
- 6.148 To this end, the committee is aware that the European Commission has adopted a proposal for a Green Claims Directive, intended to prevent companies from

¹⁶⁰ Climate Social Science Network, *Submission 105*, pp. 9 and 12.

¹⁶¹ Geelong Sustainability Group, *Submission 79*, p. 2.

¹⁶² National Environmental Law Association, *Submission 24*, [p. 2].

¹⁶³ Dr Matthew Rimmer, *Submission 28*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Professor Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Chair, Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science, IPIE, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 61; Mrs Michelle Brooks, Director, and Mr Michael Tangonan, Officer, National Environmental Law Association, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 20–22; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, pp. 2–3 and 5–6; National Environmental Law Association, *Submission 24*, [p. 2]; Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 21; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 6; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 21; IPIE, *Submission 42*, pp. 3–4; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 9]; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 30.

'greenwashing', or making misleading claims about the environmental merits of their services and products (see Box 6.6). The directive is expected to come into force in 2027.

Box 6.6 European Commission Green Claims Directive proposal

The proposal on green claims aims to:

- make green claims reliable, comparable and verifiable across the European Union (EU);
- protect consumers from greenwashing;
- contribute to creating a circular and green EU economy by enabling consumers to make informed purchasing decisions; and
- help establish a level playing field when it comes to environmental performance of products.

To ensure consumers receive reliable, comparable and verifiable environmental information on products, the proposal includes:

- clear criteria on how companies should prove their environmental claims and labels;
- requirements for these claims and labels to be checked by an independent and accredited verifier; and
- new rules on governance of environmental labelling schemes to ensure they are solid, transparent and reliable.

The proposal targets explicit claims that:

- are made on a voluntary basis by businesses towards consumers;
- cover the environmental impacts, aspects or performance of a product or the trader itself; and
- are not currently covered by other European Union rules.¹⁶⁵

6.149 There were also calls for more funding so that agencies can prevent greenwashing, develop their digital monitoring capabilities, and partner with other research organisations, with large platforms potentially contributing to costs.¹⁶⁶

6.150 As well as helping to address corporate greenwashing and astroturfing—forms of mis/disinformation—submitters reaffirmed these measures would build resilience and better enable communities to adapt and mitigate risks, and aid transparent and fair benefits sharing.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ European Commission, [Green claims](#) (accessed 17 March 2026).

¹⁶⁶ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 14 and National Environmental Law Association, *Submission 24*, [p. 2].

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, IPIE, *Submission 42*, pp. 3–4; Professor Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Chair, Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science, IPIE, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 61; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, pp. 2–3

6.151 However, Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler from the University of Melbourne relayed some of the limitations of existing legislation, advising that it does not cover people or platforms perpetrating mis/disinformation and there is room for improvement:

The problem with the protections we have, which are really very strong, is that they really only protect people who are actively involved in producing the misinformation itself. So you have to be the person who has engaged in misleading or deceptive conduct in order to be successful in using those provisions.¹⁶⁸

6.152 The UoM expressed a similar view and noted that misleading and deceptive conduct provisions 'may not adequately deal with the harms caused because 'much of the information spreads through online service providers, who do not create it but allow it to circulate'.¹⁶⁹

6.153 The shortcomings of Australian Consumer Law in dealing specifically with astroturfing were also raised by Dr Matthew Rimmer, who pointed to 'other remedies ... under other legal doctrines', including intellectual property law and defamation law:

To the extent that an astroturfing campaign involves impersonation or false endorsements, there could be intellectual property issues in respect of passing off and personality rights. If an astroturfing campaign engages in attacks upon individual reputations, there could be issues in respect of defamation law.¹⁷⁰

6.154 The following chapter explores participants' views about better monitoring and regulation of digital platforms.

and 5–6; National Environmental Law Association, *Submission 24*, [p. 2]; Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 21; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 6; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 21; Dr Adam Lucas, *Submission 16*, [p. 9]; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler, Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 35–36. See also, UQ Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 4 and 11–12; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁰ Dr Matthew Rimmer, *Submission 28*, p. 26.

Chapter 7

Improving digital platform transparency and accountability

- 7.1 As discussed in Chapter 2, the committee heard significant concerns about the role of digital platforms in amplifying climate and energy related mis/disinformation. For example, the Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables described how digital platforms 'accelerate polarisation' via the ease and speed with which they can spread false or misleading claims. These narratives can then be 'reinforced by algorithms that prioritise emotive and sensational content over balanced, evidence-based information, shaping public debate and media coverage alike'.¹
- 7.2 Similarly, the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society (ADM+S) explained the current information environment and how it has changed, including the power of digital platforms:
- What has changed from the astroturfing of the tobacco and fossil fuel lobbies to now is the digital advertising ecosystem in which these campaigns now operate. Social media platforms provide the ability to target specific audiences, classify pages under misleading categories, and run thousands of variants of a message, often at relatively low cost per impression. Unlike in the mass media era, where it was possible to observe what was being broadcast and keep it more-or-less in check, today's digital platforms are far more personalised, and we lack adequate tools to independently monitor these campaigns. This has enabled astroturf campaigns to grow in sophistication and reach, while remaining opaque to the public and to regulators.²
- 7.3 The committee also heard concerns about a lack of action by digital platforms to 'prevent the weaponisation of their platforms, despite repeated warnings and opportunities to act'.³
- 7.4 The remainder of this chapter examines the effectiveness of existing digital platform regulation in Australia, as well as participants views on actions that could be taken to better monitor and regulate mis/disinformation on digital platforms.

¹ Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 6.

² ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 7 and 5.

³ Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, [p. 4]. See also, Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*, pp. 9–10; University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, pp. 6–7; Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, [p. 7–8].

Effectiveness of existing digital platform regulation in Australia

7.5 As noted in previous chapters, Australia relies largely on voluntary industry self-regulation, as well as information sharing forums, to address mis/disinformation on digital platforms. This includes:

- the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation (the Code), developed by the Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI); and
- the Digital Platform Regulators Forum (DP-REG), which aims to facilitate coordination across government on digital platform regulation.

7.6 As well as having responsibilities in Australia arising from the Code, a range of digital platforms have established initiatives in response to concerns about online mis/disinformation.⁴ A summary of these initiatives is available at Appendix 3.

7.7 In terms of enforcement powers, various participants, including Professor Daniel Angus of the ADM+S, pointed out that Australia does not have any legislation similar to the European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA), which enforces transparency:

That is a real missing piece of legislation. It would go a long way to be able to see what is happening within the platforms and for regulators, civil society actors, journalists, academics and researchers alike to be able to know, firstly, what is happening. Once we know what is happening, then we can devise regulations to curb the bad activities as we find them.⁵

7.8 The ADM+S argued that while the DSA has flaws, it is 'a critical step in aligning democratic safeguards with platform accountability' and further, that 'Australia's regulatory approach remains well behind this trajectory'.⁶ Similarly, the QUT Digital Media Research Centre stated the DSA approach moved 'beyond content-level interventions toward systemic transparency and accountability obligations' and recommended Australia follow suit.⁷

7.9 This was reinforced in evidence from the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), which told the committee that while it has an oversight role in relation to the Code, it lacks a legislated enforcement role.⁸

⁴ Australian Communications and Media Authority, [Online disinformation and misinformation](#), 24 September 2025 (accessed 4 December 2025).

⁵ Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 21.

⁶ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 13.

⁷ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 35.

⁸ Ms Rochelle Zurnamer, Executive Manager, Gambling and Mis/Disinformation, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 13.

7.10 This point was underscored by multiple contributors who raised serious concerns about the voluntary nature of the Code.⁹ For example, the University of Queensland (UQ) Pro Bono Centre stated that the 'Code lacks enforcement power and comprehensive coverage', which 'allows significant misinformation campaigns to continue being virtually unchallenged'.¹⁰

7.11 Similarly, Dr Rys Farthing of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra, described the Code as inadequate and not fit for purpose. Dr Farthing expanded:

... it's industry drafted and it's voluntary, so it does very little for meaningful accountability. It doesn't affect the way platforms behave in Australia that I can see. It's voluntary to sign on. There are very few mandatory requirements. I think there are only three mandatory requirements. And even then we've seen signatories move away from one of those mandatory requirements and not even say so. I think it's really the definition of what we would call transparency theatre. What we need to do is implement something that tells us what the rules for platforms are, what they're doing and what the outcomes of those rules are. That would be the more meaningful approach.¹¹

7.12 Les Daniel put plainly that in a system where 'platforms are allowed to "mark their own homework"', 'commercial interests (maximising user engagement and advertising revenue) will always override the public interest in a healthy information environment'.¹²

7.13 The committee heard that while there had been 'iterative improvements' in platform transparency under the Code, the ACMA was also trying to better align reporting under the Code with requirements in the EU:

One thing I'd add is that we are looking, in terms of our role with the voluntary code, to try and—there are reporting requirements in the EU around some mis- and disinformation—get platforms to align what is provided under those EU arrangements, if they can, under the voluntary code, given the platforms are building systems and processes to provide that information to other authorities. Our being able to have that information will allow us to have better oversight of what's going on here in Australia.¹³

⁹ See, for example, Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [pp. 2–3]; University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, pp. 2 and 7–8; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 10.

¹⁰ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 9.

¹¹ Dr Rys Farthing, Professorial Research Fellow, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 81.

¹² Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 3].

¹³ Ms Kelly Mudford, Manager, Disinformation and Platforms, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 17.

- 7.14 The ACMA also told the committee that it would be possible to ask platforms to report specifically on climate mis/disinformation.¹⁴
- 7.15 However, evidence provided to the committee suggested that concerns about platforms' responses persist, even in the EU under the DSA. To this end, Dr Farthing indicated that the recent measures proposed by the Spanish Government represent a reaction to a lack of genuine action by digital platforms:

So we're starting to see around the world that governments are just saying, 'Actually, this is an industry that doesn't seem to want to play ball, so we might have to look to criminal legislation to ensure compliance'.¹⁵

Better monitoring and regulation of societal harms on digital platforms

- 7.16 Participants made a range of recommendations to improve accountability and transparency, as well as specific actions in relation to bots and inauthentic accounts, artificial intelligence (AI), and access to digital platform data for research purposes.
- 7.17 There was also significant discussion about the approach that should be taken to any new regulation to ensure compliance with human rights and protect freedom of expression.

Broad regulatory reforms to improve accountability and transparency

- 7.18 Multiple submitters suggested improving digital platform accountability and transparency through mandatory regulation, with some of these proposing a stronger role for the ACMA.¹⁶
- 7.19 For example, Dr Hornsey and colleagues suggested that extending the *Online Safety Act 2021* to cover disinformation and granting the ACMA similar powers to Ofcom in the United Kingdom would 'provide a clearer, enforceable framework to hold platforms accountable and strengthen Australia's resilience to harmful online misinformation'.¹⁷
- 7.20 Les Daniel, proposed a binding framework of co regulation for digital platforms, 'overseen by a strengthened ACMA' and 'drawing on international best practices like the EU's Digital Services Act', and including:

¹⁴ Ms Rochelle Zurnamer, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 18.

¹⁵ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 82.

¹⁶ See, for example, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 7–8]; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, *Submission 41*, p. 6; World Wildlife Fund—Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Professor Matthew Hornsey et al, *Submission 126*, [p. 5].

- algorithmic transparency—requiring platforms to be transparent about how their algorithms amplify content;
 - meaningful penalties—giving the regulator power to levy significant fines for systemic breaches of the code; and
 - data access for researchers—requiring platforms to provide vetted researchers with data to study the spread of misinformation.¹⁸
- 7.21 The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) made the following recommendations, which also proposed an expanded role for the ACMA, with a focus on complaints and dispute resolution processes:
- expand and modernise the powers of the ACMA to allow the regulator to establish minimum internal complaints and dispute resolution processes;
 - require an external dispute resolution process in conjunction with mandatory internal dispute resolution processes for digital platforms; and
 - require the ACMA to publish information on measures taken by digital communications platforms in response to misinformation codes.¹⁹
- 7.22 The Australian Democracy Network (ADN) proposed that the Australian Government empower the ACMA as a 'proactive and transparent regulator with the power to set and enforce mandatory industry standards for digital platforms to mitigate systemic disinformation risks'. The ADN also argued that the ACMA should 'make all reports and data publicly available in a reasonable timeframe' to enable monitoring and evaluation of the regulatory framework and ensure public trust and accountability.²⁰
- 7.23 To this end, Dr Jennifer Duxbury of DIGI told the committee that DIGI was supportive of regulation that would provide the ACMA with a level of oversight of the Code.²¹
- 7.24 In addition to recommendations around strengthening the broad regulatory framework around online mis/disinformation, participants also focused on specific reforms dealing with:
- AI generated content;
 - bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts;
 - advertising and monetisation of mis/disinformation; and
 - researcher access to digital platform data.

¹⁸ Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 3].

¹⁹ Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Submission 10*, [pp. 1–2]. See also, Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 17].

²⁰ Australian Democracy Network, *Submission 117*, [p. 6].

²¹ Dr Jennifer Duxbury, Director, Policy, Regulatory Affairs and Research, Digital Industry Group Inc., *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 20.

AI generated content

7.25 As discussed in Chapter 2, AI generated content has exacerbated the challenges and risks posed by mis/disinformation.

7.26 For the ADN, the capabilities of generative AI renders Australia's 'voluntary, industry-led approach to regulation dangerously inadequate'. Indeed, the ADN stressed that:

Absent a robust, enforceable legislative framework that mandates accountability, generative AI platforms' inherent design and prevailing business models are likely to continue inadvertently, or even actively, to amplify disinformation, thereby posing significant risks to public discourse and democratic processes.²²

7.27 For example, the development framework of Anthropic's AI model Claude, is ostensibly constrained by a constitution that requires the model to, among other things, be factually accurate, to represent consensus where it exists, and to be honest about the limits of its knowledge. Further, Anthropic itself is 'incorporated as a public benefit corporation with the stated purpose of the responsible development and maintenance of AI for the long-term benefit of humanity'.²³

7.28 The ANU Law Reform and Social Justice Research Hub made the following recommendations focused on combatting the impact of AI generated climate mis/disinformation on Australian voters during federal election periods:

- supporting the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to increase its focus on helping voters identify multiple forms of AI-generated mis/disinformation as part of its 'Stop and Consider' campaign;
- giving greater prominence to the 'Stop and Consider' campaign by distinguishing it from other AEC election based advertising via its own social media presence, advertising budget, and style; and
- establishing an AI safety institute, similar to that established by South Korea (which, along with Australia, is a signatory to the Bletchley Declaration by Countries Attending the AI Safety Summit in 2023). It proposed the newly created institute would play a role in advising the AEC on how best to educate voters to identify AI-generated content.²⁴

7.29 To this end, the committee is aware that the Australian Government has announced the establishment of an Australian AI Safety Institute, which will:

... monitor, test and share information on emerging AI capabilities, risks and harms. Its insights will support ministers, portfolio agencies and regulators

²² Australian Democracy Network, *Submission 117*, [p. 4].

²³ Mr Evan Frondorf, Head, External Policy and Partnerships, Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, p. 1.

²⁴ ANU Law Reform and Social Justice Research Hub, *Submission 66*, pp. 4, 5 and 7.

to maintain safety measures, laws and regulatory frameworks that keep pace with rapid technological change. The Institute will support existing regulators with independent advice to ensure AI companies are compliant with Australian law and uphold legal standards around fairness and transparency.²⁵

7.30 In 2025, the Australian Government also released a National AI Plan, which has the three goals:

- (1) capture the opportunity by building smart infrastructure, backing domestic AI capability and attracting global investment;
- (2) spread the benefits through widespread AI adoption, supporting and training Australian workers, and improved public services; and
- (3) keep Australians safe with legislative and regulatory frameworks that mitigate AI harms, while promoting widespread responsible practices and international engagement that upholds Australia's values.²⁶

7.31 An overview of key actions underway in relation to goal three of the National AI Plan is provided in Box 7.1.

7.32 However, the Australian Human Rights Commission noted that the Australian Government had previously proposed 'a risk-based AI Act where AI systems classified as 'high-risk' would need to comply with mandatory guardrails'. It argued that under such legislation, 'deepfakes aimed at distorting democratic debate on topics like climate change could potentially be classified as high-risk and subject to regulation'.²⁷

7.33 In relation to the use of AI on platforms, Professor Daniel Angus from the ADM+S, indicated responsibility should be put back onto platforms to fix the issue at the root, through truth in advertising laws and next to real time disclosures, rather than dealing with the issue downstream.²⁸

7.34 Similarly, Ms Raphaela Raaber and colleagues underscored the need for greater transparency around AI-generated content and recommended mandatory labelling of such content 'with standardised disclosure formats and regulatory

²⁵ Department of Industry, Science and Resources, [National AI Plan](#), 2025, p. 28.

²⁶ Department of Industry, Science and Resources, [National AI Plan](#), 2 December 2025 (accessed 25 February 2026).

²⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, pp. 15–16.

²⁸ Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 21.

approaches addressing both political and climate communication based on accountability principles'.²⁹

7.35 Mandatory labelling was also supported by Mr Martin O'Dea, who recommended mandating AI watermarks on AI-generated videos and photos, as well as mandating requirements that video/image metadata contain the fact that the video/image was generated using AI, including identifying the specific program and prompts used in its creation.³⁰

7.36 In response to questions about platforms' responses to concerns about generative AI, Dr Jennifer Duxbury of industry group DIGI stated that signatories to the Code 'are taking that extremely seriously and they are implementing multiple different types of measures to tackle that threat':

One important initiative is the content provenance initiative, and a number of the signatories have signed up to that. That helps label the provenance of material. It helps you identify whether it is material that has either been created by AI or artificially manipulated by AI. I think they've also detailed changes that they've made around their policies regarding the use of AI and how they use AI to remove problematic content as well. That's just one example but I would refer you to the transparency reports, because there's a great deal more information there.³¹

7.37 The ACMA's August 2025 report to Government on digital platforms' efforts to combat mis/disinformation recognised that Code signatories have provided 'a substantial amount of information on their policies, systems and measures for AI'. This included labelling a range of AI-generated content, and a requirement for advertisers to disclose the use of AI or other digital techniques in the production of political or social issue advertisements.³²

7.38 However, the ACMA's report also suggested that platforms' reporting could be strengthened by including more data about the uptake of AI tools, and more information about the impact of platforms' AI policies on user behaviours. According to the ACMA, 'this would support better assessment of whether policies, systems and processes deployed by signatories are working'.³³

7.39 Beyond greater transparency around the use of AI-generated content, Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action suggested that agencies 'involved in climate

²⁹ Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 18.

³⁰ Mr Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, pp. 10–11.

³¹ Dr Jennifer Duxbury, Digital Industry Group Inc., *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 18.

³² Australian Communications and Media Authority, [Digital platforms' efforts under voluntary arrangements to combat disinformation and misinformation. Fourth report to government](#), August 2025, pp. 12–13.

³³ Australian Communications and Media Authority, [Digital platforms' efforts under voluntary arrangements to combat disinformation and misinformation. Fourth report to government](#), August 2025, p. 13.

communications, disaster preparedness and response, and climate and weather modelling' should avoid the use of AI-generated content completely, given the potential for AI to lower public trust in emergency services and 'increase disbelief in real climate disasters'.³⁴

Box 7.1 National AI Plan: Goal 3 – Keep Australians Safe

Goal 3 of the National AI Plan is to 'keep Australia safe'. It includes three actions (7, 8 and 9) with a range of associated initiatives.

Action 7 – mitigate harms through:

- advancing the science of AI safety (research);
- consumer protections for AI-enabled goods and services;
- reducing online harms through reforms, codes and standards:
 - the government addresses AI-related risks through enforceable industry codes under the *Online Safety Act 2021* and by criminalising non-consensual deepfake material. Further restrictions on 'nudify' apps and reforms to tackle algorithmic bias are also being considered;
- reviewing application of copyright law in AI contexts;
- reviewing AI regulation in healthcare and medical device software;
- AI security:
 - the Department of Home Affairs, the National Intelligence Community and law enforcement agencies will continue efforts to proactively mitigate the most serious risks posed by AI; and
- updating Australia's privacy laws.

Action 8 – promote responsible practices through:

- encouraging responsible AI adoption by organisations;
- promoting transparency measures for AI-generated content;
- clear governance for government AI use;
- guidance for AI in schools;
- alignment with international AI standards; and
- supporting responsible AI use by regulators.

Action 9 – partner on global norms through:

- aligning international frameworks with domestic approaches, reduce regulatory friction and support innovation. This will position Australia as a trusted partner in global supply chains and a leader in secure, responsible adoption of trusted AI technologies across the region.³⁵

³⁴ Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, *Submission 191*, pp. 14–15.

³⁵ Department of Industry, Science and Resources, *National AI Plan*, 2025, pp. 28–36.

Bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts

- 7.40 Various contributors, such as the UQ Pro Bono Centre, pointed to the role of 'automated bots and troll like accounts' in amplifying 'denialist and conspiratorial narratives to undermine climate action', with platforms struggling to 'keep pace with the sophistication and scale of automated campaigns, leaving climate disinformation a persistent challenge for both technical and policy solutions'.³⁶
- 7.41 Indeed, the committee heard that in the third quarter of 2025, Meta had blocked 692 million fake accounts worldwide, not including 'millions of blocked attempts to create such accounts every day'.³⁷
- 7.42 However, other participants suggested that platforms do not remove as many bot accounts as they could due to the revenue they generate for the platforms. According to Dr Rys Farthing, 'a leaked report from Meta outlined that in 2024 ... an estimated 10 per cent of their revenue, \$16 billion US dollars, came from these scam advertisers. It's big'.³⁸
- 7.43 Dr Farthing also pointed to research from Reset Tech in the United Kingdom, which highlighted issues with a lack of action against both bot accounts and bot networks. The researchers found that a month after they reported 50 scam ads, only half of the ads and nine per cent of the accounts had been removed. Further, all the ads reported had originated from two bot networks, neither of which were taken down.³⁹
- 7.44 A recent *ABC News Verify* report illustrated for the committee the failure of the current regulatory approach to stop coordinated inauthentic behaviour on digital platforms (see Box 7.2).

Box 7.2 *ABC News Verify* – 'Foreign Facebook accounts using AI Pauline Hanson to manipulate Australians'⁴⁰

³⁶ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 2. See also, Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 4]; Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 2; Steven Leuver, *Submission 163*, p. 1; Dr Naomi Fitzpatrick, *Submission 172*, pp. 6–7.

³⁷ Mr Simon Milner, Vice-President, Public Policy, Asia-Pacific, Meta, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 1.

³⁸ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 79.

³⁹ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Michael Workman, Matt Martino and Lucy Carter, '[Foreign Facebook accounts using AI Pauline Hanson to manipulate Australians](#)', *ABC News Verify*, 11 March 2026 (accessed 17 March 2026).

ABC News Verify examined 20 overseas Facebook pages, mostly administered from Vietnam, which used fake news posts to 'enrage and engage Australian Facebook users' for financial gain—either via Meta's revenue sharing program, which pays content creators for engagement, or by driving people to fake websites where users are served advertisements.

Two of these accounts, *Down Under Daily* and *Strength in Principle*, were established in January 2026 and immediately began posting Australian fake news. Some of the other accounts had been around for years and had previously created fake news targeting other countries.

In the space of just one week, 14 of the accounts examined by *ABC News Verify* posted 370 images. The posts used a mix of real and AI-generated images combined with compelling but fake stories. Senator Pauline Hanson, the leader of One Nation, was reported to be the main focus of these accounts, appearing in just over half of the posts, and often engaging in altruistic acts.

These fake posts attracted hundreds of thousands of likes, comments and shares. Many of these were from real Australian voters who appeared to believe the fake posts.

Experts quoted by *ABC News Verify* noted that social media algorithms were 'geared toward anger' and suggested that the accounts examined by the ABC were likely to be 'the tip of the iceberg'.

One expert told the ABC that the recycled content used in the fake posts was a 'giveaway' of 'coordinated, inauthentic behaviour'.

After being contacted by *ABC News Verify*, Meta took down most (but not all) of the highlighted pages for violating its inauthentic behaviour policies.

Meta told the ABC it used both manual and automated processes to act against inauthentic behaviour and that it was 'still "investigating the content" for any violations of Meta policy'. Since alerting Meta to its story, *ABC News Verify* stated it had identified even more fake political news accounts.

Politicians who have been the subject of fake news posts, such as Senator Pauline Hanson and Senator Fatima Payman, have argued that digital platforms should be doing more to address coordinated inauthentic behaviour.

- 7.45 In response, participants urged action to address the reach and impact of bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts, with some recommending regulation to require

all digital platforms to remove such accounts, as well as labelling of legitimate bot accounts.⁴¹

7.46 The UQ Pro Bono Centre advocated for 'mandatory detection and removal of non-human users communicating misinformation or disinformation by large platforms'. To avoid impacting on human freedom of expression, the UQ Pro Bono Centre suggested allowing human social media users to flag non-human accounts engaged in mis/disinformation, with mandatory removal once verified.⁴²

7.47 In addition to requiring platforms to remove bot and troll like accounts, Parents for Climate proposed imposing penalties for platform non-compliance.⁴³

7.48 However, given the difficulty involved in reducing the number of inauthentic accounts, and the interaction between inauthentic accounts and the algorithms employed by digital platforms, Mr Tom Sulston of Digital Rights Watch (DRW) proposed reducing bot activity by giving users more control over the content they see on their social media feeds:

... I think a more pressing problem is the algorithm that generates a user's feed and what they see being influenced both by the social media company and the bots. One way to reduce the amount of bot activity is to legislate against it and regulate to make it more attractive for companies to hunt out and remove bots. A much easier way is just to say: 'You have to have an option that, when a user goes to look at their feed and see the content that you're providing for them, it should be an unmanipulated feed. It should not go through an algorithm. It should just be: "Here's the news in time order from your friends and accounts you've chosen to follow." Maybe we'll let you put an ad in here or there that you mark as an advert, but you can't manipulate the entire feed to show what the company wants to show rather than what the user wants to see'.⁴⁴

7.49 While it recommended action on inauthentic accounts, the Climate Council of Australia also noted the challenges inherent in identifying bot accounts. To ensure that any measures are 'practical and achievable', the Council proposed they 'be informed by consultation with social media platforms and other

⁴¹ See, for example, Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [p. 17]; Ms Jane Gardner, Director of Engagement, Australian Conservation Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, p. 43.

⁴² University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 10. The submission also noted that extra-territoriality could be avoided by limiting the measure to those bot accounts that post mis/disinformation and originate in Australia, or directly influence Australian political discussions or elections.

⁴³ Parents for Climate, *Submission 102*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Mr Tom Sulston, Head, Policy, Digital Rights Watch, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 33.

relevant stakeholders, and learnings from existing approaches in Australia and other jurisdictions around the world'.⁴⁵

- 7.50 In a similar vein, the ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions recommended funding research 'into how digital research methods could be enhanced to detect networks of fake opinion and bots as they emerge in response to public debate about climate and energy'.⁴⁶

Astroturfing, advertising and monetisation of mis/disinformation

- 7.51 In addition to the link between bot accounts and platform revenue described above, submitters such as DRW explained how platforms' business models incentivise the sharing of mis/disinformation more broadly via their focus on engagement and advertising:

Social media platforms use micro-targeted advertising, automated search, active curation, and algorithmic recommendation systems to amplify the most engaging content regardless of its truthfulness or users' motivations for engaging with it ... Such engagement feeds the advertisement-driven business models of social media platforms. Furthermore, the ability of content creators to profit from engagement creates financial incentives towards the creation and sharing of engaging content including misinformation.⁴⁷

- 7.52 At the same time, DRW also highlighted how technology companies have pushed responsibility for the content on their platforms onto users. While this was viewed as reasonable for most 'truly user generated content', DRW contended that platforms should be responsible for monetised content:

... with paid or promoted posts, the platform is directly monetising the content, is monitoring its popularity for billing purposes, and is using systems to target the content at specific users. This gives the platforms plenty of information to determine if advertisements or promoted posts are accurate.⁴⁸

- 7.53 In line with the above, the committee heard a number of calls for action to increase the accountability of platforms in relation to advertising—particularly in response to claims of astroturfing—as well as the way in which mis/disinformation is currently monetised online. For example, DRW recommended that technology companies be required to 'have publishing

⁴⁵ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, [pp. 14 and 17].

⁴⁶ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Digital Rights Watch, *Submission 119*, [pp. 3 and 6]. See also, Bruce Murray, *Submission 84*, p. 4; Ms Charlotte Scaddan, Senior Adviser on Information Integrity, United Nations, *Committee Hansard*, 6 February 2026, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Digital Rights Watch, *Submission 119*, [p. 7].

responsibility, and be subject to advertising standards and regulations, for both advertised and promoted content on their platforms'.⁴⁹

7.54 DRW also recommended action to 'prevent the algorithmic promotion of disinformation', including:

- stronger privacy protections for end-users, to prevent micro-targeting of advertisements; and
- regulation of user-interface patterns that manipulate users into staying on platforms longer (e.g. infinite scrolling, algorithmic feed creation, or promoted content that is not identified as an advertisement).⁵⁰

7.55 Mr Alex Murray of Climate Action Against Disinformation, also told the committee about specific action being considered by Japan to combat the spread of mis/disinformation in the wake of extreme weather events, by removing the associated financial incentives:

One of the interesting areas to look at, in terms of some of the solutions at play, is in the case of Japan. They're currently looking at the monetisation of content in the immediate aftermath of extreme weather events. So, rather than trying to take down content, which can be very difficult to do, they're actually looking to the monetisation, the advertising featuring next to content and whether or not that is an alternative solution at play.⁵¹

7.56 In addition, reforms aimed directly at astroturfing were supported by various participants, including the ADM+S, which described how social media had allowed 'astroturf' campaigns to grow in sophistication and reach, while remaining opaque to the public and to regulators'. To counter this, the ADM+S recommended that platforms be required to accurately classify and disclose advertisers in order to 'stop the deliberate mislabelling of lobby groups as "community organisations" or "non-profits"'.⁵²

7.57 The ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions described how digital research methods may be 'a viable approach for detecting astroturfing' and recommended funding further research into how they 'could be enhanced to detect networks of fake opinion and bots as they emerge in response to public debate about climate and energy'.⁵³

⁴⁹ Digital Rights Watch, *Submission 119*, [p. 7]. See also, University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, p. 10; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 4; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 100*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ Digital Rights Watch, *Submission 119*, [p. 7].

⁵¹ Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2026, p. 67.

⁵² ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp. 7 and 17.

⁵³ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy & Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 10.

- 7.58 Other participants, such as Dr Matthew Rimmer suggested that there may be some scope for Australian Consumer Law to address astroturfing by corporations. However, Dr Rimmer also noted that there would be limitations to this approach, with political advertising generally falling outside the bounds of trade and commerce.⁵⁴
- 7.59 This limitation was also noted by the UQ Pro Bono Centre, which recommended introducing 'mandatory internal review and removal of advertisements containing climate misinformation or disinformation by social media platforms', with 'significant penalties for breaches'. It also supported the proposal by Climate Action Against Disinformation that social media platforms 'produce public, up-to-date ad libraries, especially for groups associated with climate change misinformation or disinformation'.⁵⁵
- 7.60 Further, the UQ Pro Bono Centre urged concurrent reform of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* to broaden the definition of electoral advertisement to 'capture all astroturfing advertisements'. It suggested adopting the definition of 'electoral matter' used in ACT legislation, which reasonably expands the definition 'without unfairly limiting political discourse'.⁵⁶ This, and other proposed reforms relating to truth in political advertising more broadly are addressed in Chapter 6.

Researcher access to digital platform data

- 7.61 The need for better access to digital platform data for researchers was a clear theme emerging from evidence provided to the inquiry. For example, media research organisations, such as the QUT Digital Media Research Centre, argued that data—including digital platform data—and data tools need to be more readily accessible to enable quality research. Such research, it argued can help us better understand and mitigate mis/disinformation and its impacts. It wrote:

To truly monitor and understand the key entities, information flows and tactics online of Australian organisations and international think tank and influence networks, researchers must be afforded timely and useful access to data across various online spaces.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Dr Matthew Rimmer, *Submission 28*, p. 26.

⁵⁵ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 2 and 9.

⁵⁶ University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 7–8.

⁵⁷ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 30]. See also, Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 21; Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler, Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 36–37; Dr Michelle Riedlinger, Associate Professor, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 23–24 and 29–30.

7.62 Dr Sora Park of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra made a similar point:

... I think the first thing we need to do quite urgently is make the platforms that have huge market power be more transparent. We don't know their algorithms. We don't know how much predatory pricing they are doing with their advertising. There's so little information we know. They don't give researchers access to data. It's a very difficult situation because they're global tech companies. They're not even Australian companies. It's a very challenging issue, but I think the first thing that could happen is increasing the transparency of what's in the system and what they are doing there ... We can do a risk assessment properly once we know all the mechanisms behind the platforms.⁵⁸

7.63 Despite this, researchers noted that transparency and access to digital media platform data about mis/disinformation and its prevalence are in decline and tools are difficult to use. They highlighted that this data is essential to understanding mis/disinformation and protect against its impacts.⁵⁹

7.64 The QUT Digital Media Research Centre expanded, noting that currently available platform data is 'profoundly inadequate' with 'datasets often error-prone, difficult to use' and lacking the 'full range of content or engagement dynamics'.⁶⁰

7.65 Accordingly, researchers called for comprehensive transparency and accountability regulations for digital media platforms, including legislated access to data that tells us how Australians are finding, sharing and being influenced by information on digital and social media, and the extent of money generated through digital media and advertising.⁶¹

7.66 The University of Melbourne pointed to the European Commission's adoption of a delegated act under the DSA, which allows European researchers to access internal data from Very Large Online Platforms and Very Large Online Search Engines:

This marks a major step toward promoting independent research on systemic digital risks, including disinformation, algorithmic bias, and

⁵⁸ Dr Sora Park, Director, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 17 February 2026, p. 39.

⁵⁹ See, for example: Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 11; QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 19, 30 and 35–36]; Dr Michelle Riedlinger, Associate Professor, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, pp. 29–30; Ms Carly Lubicz-Zaorski, PhD Researcher, Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 30.

⁶⁰ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 35].

⁶¹ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 19 and 35]; ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 14; Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 69–70.

electoral manipulation. By facilitating access to platform data, the initiative empowers the scientific community to support evidence-based digital policy and improve online safety and transparency.⁶²

7.67 However, Professor Klaus Jensen of the Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science, advised that although the DSA allows for independent researchers to have better access to platform data, so far 'it has proven relatively difficult to get that kind of access, and it's partly also a question of enforcing the rules'. Professor Jensen noted that while the rules are now in place, they don't yet have the resources to enforce the required transparency in practice.⁶³

7.68 This was supported by evidence provided to the committee by Dr Rys Farthing from the News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, who spoke about the legal threats faced by researchers and the chilling effect this has on digital platform research in Australia:

I know researchers who are afraid of using sock puppet accounts. I know researchers in Australia who are afraid of scraping because of the threat of legal action against them. I think there's a chilling effect of what's imagined as possible, particularly where you've got researchers embedded in universities. I know a lot of university institutes are afraid of that as well. I think there's a limitation that happens because of that fear. I quite often go and look at the ad library from an Australian perspective, and it's not as complete. It's not as wholesome. The information isn't there. There are gaps. We tend to see these second-rate versions of libraries offered to Australian researchers.⁶⁴

7.69 To this end, Dr Farthing stated that the DSA has put in place 'quite a comprehensive system that gives researchers a bit of transparency'. Importantly, it has created 'a presumed right of access' for public interest researchers, which Dr Farthing described as 'really important, because what we see in other contexts is that independent tech researchers who are looking at things on these platforms actually face legal threats from these platforms themselves'.⁶⁵

Approach to regulation

7.70 The suggestions in the previous section aligned with the views of a range of submitters who recommended regulation of platforms through greater focus on

⁶² University of Melbourne, answers to spoken questions on notice, 29 September 2025 and written questions on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 28 October 2025), [p. 3].

⁶³ Professor Klaus Bruhn, Chair, Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate Science, International Panel on the Information Environment, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 63.

⁶⁴ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 82.

platform transparency than 'harmful content' and its moderation,⁶⁶ arguing that consumers have a right to know how digital platforms work, including transparency about algorithms, their harms, advertiser and content labelling and moderation, and a responsibility to educate their users.⁶⁷

7.71 However, various contributors to the inquiry also raised the need for a balanced and proportionate approach to digital platform regulation—particularly in the wake of the unsuccessful attempt in 2024 to introduce legislation dealing with online mis/disinformation.

7.72 In particular, the committee heard there was a need to ensure protections for free speech. For example, Dr John Cook from the University of Melbourne said that blanket censorship was not the answer,⁶⁸ while the Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals put plainly that 'any attempt at legislating censorship or controls on free speech concerning climate change and energy policy will be viewed as profoundly anti-democratic and authoritarian':

Such controls would be vigorously opposed and probably ineffective as the history of citizen resistance shows ... the difficulty in defining what is the truth dooms any attempt to subject speech or writing to legal controls or sanctions. If the courts function as they should, legislating or regulating such an approach would be struck down and boomerang against those sponsoring it.⁶⁹

7.73 Further, the UTS Centre for Media Transition questioned whether it was possible to regulate disinformation, 'given its overlap with the fundamental right to freedom of expression'.⁷⁰

7.74 In line with this, the ACCAN contended that regulation to combat mis/disinformation on digital platforms must be appropriate:

Reforms to address misinformation and disinformation should facilitate consumer trust in communications services and online platforms.

⁶⁶ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [pp. 3 and 35–36].

⁶⁷ See, for example, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 35–36]; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, pp. 14 and 21; ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 15; Mr Alex Murray, Member, Climate Action Against Disinformation, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 70; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, p. 21; UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 8; Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 132*, p. 5; Martin O'Dea, *Submission 201*, p. 10; Les Daniel, *Submission 73*, [p. 3]; Ms Simone Abel, Head of Legal, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, pp. 37–38.

⁶⁸ Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 35.

⁶⁹ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 25. See also, Mr Timothy Gurowski, *Submission 225*, [p. 1]; Australian Environment Foundation, *Submission 5*, [p. 11]; Robert Onfray, *Submission 50*, [p. 4].

⁷⁰ UTS Centre for Media Transition, *Submission 67*, p. 7.

Consumers should be able to trust that services and platforms appropriately address disputes raised by their users and transparently communicate about how they are meeting their regulatory obligations. Inappropriate regulation of misinformation and disinformation online risks consumers withdrawing from online spaces and being unable to take advantages of the economic and social benefits which arise from broader access to online environments.⁷¹

- 7.75 The UQ Pro Bono Centre suggested that international models—in particular, those that 'impose mandatory transparency and accountability measures focusing on algorithmic detection and reporting of coordinated inauthentic behaviour'—could help guide Australia's approach to mis/disinformation on digital platforms. It pointed to the DSA as an example of regulation that balances the control of disinformation with the protection of free expression:

The European Union's Digital Services Act ('DSA') mandates large digital platforms to take concrete, auditable steps towards transparency and accountability, with a particular focus on algorithmic detection of false information and rigorous reporting of coordinated inauthentic behaviours. Platforms are now required to conduct risk assessments, publish mitigation strategies, and face regular independent audits to ensure compliance with disinformation control measures. The DSA promotes public transparency and helps strike a balance between curbing disinformation and protecting freedom of expression. Unlike more narrowly tailored legislative efforts, the DSA's approach offers a model that Australia could adapt, providing enforceable transparency, independent scrutiny, and meaningful accountability without resorting to government overreach or vague, broad censorship powers.⁷²

- 7.76 Dr Rys Farthing similarly described the DSA as providing a 'balanced model for regulation' that steers away from a focus on regulating certain types of content, which she argued is a 'discussion that industry loves because it invites complexity, and pulls everyone into the bottomless pit of definitions':

Part of the reason the Digital Services Act is a good instrument is it meaningfully puts platforms on notice. It doesn't talk about regulating particular types of content and trying to draw a line on what's in and what's out, who gets to decide what or who's a troll and who isn't ...

The DSA starts from a different question: what are the externalities from tech that we're worried about and what are the harms, be it youth wellbeing, national security or election integrity? Second, what are all the ways tech companies are attempting to mitigate these risks in their products? Third, is there an objective assessment of whether their mitigation strategies are sufficient? That strikes me as a balanced model for regulation that could get at all sorts of issues with the information architecture.⁷³

⁷¹ Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, *Submission 10*, [p. 1].

⁷² University of Queensland Pro Bono Centre, *Submission 63*, pp. 10–11.

⁷³ Dr Rys Farthing, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 80.

7.77 Further, the University of Melbourne stated that 'an effective Australian approach should combine platform accountability with real transparency'. It referred to models being developed in the EU that combine researcher access to data with a requirement for platforms to explain how they identify, measure, and limit risks to public debate and trust':

This would allow regulators to compare platforms using public evidence, require clear reporting of changes to advertising and recommendation systems, and ensure that manipulated media such as deepfakes are clearly labelled. Independent checks and strong complaints mechanisms would make this system credible, while still protecting free expression.⁷⁴

7.78 A similar view was expressed by the QUT Digital Media Research Centre, which indicated that focusing more on transparency and accountability rather than content moderation would help overcome freedom of speech concerns.⁷⁵

7.79 This concurred with a finding of a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which warned that reliance on technical measures on digital platforms (including reducing data collection and target ads, changing algorithms, takedowns, labelling) may have varying degrees of effectiveness, may come at considerable costs to platforms and businesses (including small businesses), and may suppress some legitimate content.⁷⁶

7.80 To this end, the University of Melbourne highlighted a United Nations report that proposed 'pathways to address the impacts of misinformation, while protecting rights such as the freedom of expression, privacy and public participation':

These include regulatory approaches focused on transparency, promoting public information regimes and access to information, protecting free and independent media and dialogue with communities and building digital, media and information literacy.⁷⁷

7.81 Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler of the University of Melbourne also pointed to other regulatory regimes that could be used as examples of action:

I think you can look to other areas of law where we sort of move beyond just an information based approach. Consumer law in Australia, for the longest time, was just about how we need to provide consumers with more information that would then be able to empower them to make better decisions. There are all sorts of limitations with those approaches, so now we see in our consumer protection regimes these more affirmative requirements ... You could apply that with a social media platform as well,

⁷⁴ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 9.

⁷⁵ QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 35].

⁷⁶ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide](#), 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 6–8.

⁷⁷ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 8.

saying that there is a reversing of the onus of proof. Rather than putting it all on the consumer to assess the quality of the information that is put to them, reverse it and put the onus back onto the social media platform to actually provide more protection of these consumers.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler, Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 36.

Chapter 8

Renewable energy project planning and implementation processes

- 8.1 As discussed in earlier chapters, much of the evidence received over the course of the inquiry related to energy transition developments, such as solar and wind farms, and transmission projects. Sentiment was strong, with some submitters for, and many against developments in their local area.
- 8.2 Against this backdrop, a key theme that emerged from the inquiry was the need to build trust and social licence in relation to both the energy transition as a whole and individual renewable energy projects.¹
- 8.3 The committee heard that trust and social licence are being eroded by a failure to acknowledge and respond to genuine community concerns, as well as variable standards within the clean energy industry.² For example, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) pointed out that the disruption and uncertainty associated with the energy transition means that host communities have 'genuine issues and concerns that must be addressed and acknowledged'.³
- 8.4 According to the AEIC and other submitters, failure to address these issues in a timely manner, along with gaps in information, 'provides fertile ground for mis and disinformation to take hold'.⁴ The AEIC explained:

Addressing these issues are [sic] difficult, but it is necessary to fill the information vacuum and honestly and transparently communicate these issues associated with the energy transition, explaining the benefits as well as acknowledging the perceived and real negative impacts on host communities.⁵

¹ See, for example, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 9; Hunter Jobs Alliance, *Submission 107*, p. 10; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 14; Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 1.

² See, for example, Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 5; Kerry Trapnell, *Submission 143*, p. 2; Stephen Johnston, *Submission 45*, p. 2.

³ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 1].

⁴ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 1]. See also, Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 5.

⁵ Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 5]. See also, Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, pp. 6–7; Ms Raphaela Raaber et al, *Submission 124*, p. 20; Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 8; Mr Murray Hogarth, *Submission 221*, p. 5.

- 8.5 A similar view was expressed by Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, which highlighted the erosion of trust and social licence that occurs when legitimate community questions lack credible answers:

Communities hosting projects often have legitimate questions but lack trusted, locally relevant and independent information. Without credible answers, public trust erodes, laying fertile ground for the spread of mis- and dis-information and making it harder to secure and maintain social licence for the shift to renewables.⁶

- 8.6 Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables also pointed to the importance of raising standards for renewable energy projects in order to build trust and counter mis/disinformation:

Community support for renewable energy depends not only on explaining the why and what of the energy transition but also on the quality of projects delivered on the ground. If renewable energy developments are done well, trust and social licence can follow.

This means prioritising regional communities that are directly experiencing the energy transition. Creating genuine avenues for local participation in project design and implementation helps to build understanding, while frontloading the benefits of the transition, such as through local jobs, investment, training and community benefits, ensures that opportunities are visible before impacts are felt.⁷

- 8.7 In line with this, inquiry participants recommended a range of actions that could be taken to:

- provide communities with timely access to accurate information about the energy transition and local energy projects; and
- improve energy project planning and development processes, as well as approaches to community consultation and engagement.

Timely access to accurate information

- 8.8 Evidence provided to the inquiry suggested a need for more timely access to accurate information about the energy transition at both national and local levels. This appeared to reflect the findings of the 2023 AEIC Community Engagement Review, which identified the need for a clear 'overarching transition narrative at the national level' as well as communication of more localised issues at the state, territory and local levels.⁸

- 8.9 In line with this, various participants viewed the Australian Government as having a pivotal role in providing a clear narrative about climate change and the energy transition—including the "what", "why" and "how" of the transition in a

⁶ Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 1.

⁷ Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables, *Submission 131*, p. 2.

⁸ Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 4].

way that is transparent, clear, and accessible'⁹—in order to address mis/disinformation and build social licence for the energy industry.¹⁰

- 8.10 To this end, the committee heard that more could be done before developments commence to build a narrative to explain the need for energy transition and the benefits that may arise. Ms Rachael Sweeney and Ms Veronica Quinless of One Gippsland told the committee:

We fully accept that some of that work is underway and will probably be strengthened as the rollout continues. But bringing communities along on the journey for those things is fundamentally important. Having a really strong co-ordinated approach, where there is transparency around the whole pipeline, is, I think, something that everybody is very interested to see.¹¹

Where I think we could benefit as a community and region is in getting that strong coordination and collaboration—I think it's more about the collaboration—between federal government and state governments. At the moment we're negotiating that separately, on separate fronts, but solid collaboration and coordination are probably what's needed in the region.¹²

- 8.11 The AEIC concurred:

There should be no doubt of the importance and value of a comprehensive national program to continue to build the understanding and awareness of the energy transition and the respective roles stakeholders play. The more communities understand it, the more they can embrace it.¹³

- 8.12 Development of a national narrative to counter mis/disinformation and establish clear and consistent messaging was also supported by Nexa Advisory, which recommended that the Australian Government:

Establish a clear, consistent public information campaign addressing the role of transmission in cost-of-living outcomes, system reliability, and national economic security, explicitly countering misinformation.¹⁴

⁹ Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 4].

¹⁰ Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 4]. See also, WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 13; Ms Julie Delvecchio, Chief Executive Officer, Electric Vehicle Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 75–76.

¹¹ Ms Rachael Sweeney, Secretariat, One Gippsland, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, pp. 40 and 47.

¹² Ms Veronica Quinless, Representative, One Gippsland, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 41.

¹³ Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [pp. 4–5]. See also, Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, pp. 8–9; Climate Council, *Submission 198*, [pp. 14–15]; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, pp. 6–7; Australian Energy Market Operator, *Draft 2026 Integrated System Plan (ISP): a roadmap for the energy transition*, 10 December 2025, p. 103; Steve Burgess, *Submission 154*, [p. 3]; Mr Keith Bennett, *Submission 217*, [p. 2].

¹⁴ Nexa Advisory, *Submission 222.1*, p. 5.

- 8.13 In line with this, Mr William Churchill of the Clean Energy Council urged support for the AEIC as a source of independent information about renewable energy:

We think there is a great cause for supporting the work of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner to provide independent information and supporting the dissemination of that out into the community to try and have some prebunked, debunked sources of information about clean energy.¹⁵

- 8.14 This view was supported by the AEIC, who told the committee that 'the role can and should be an independent trusted source of information':

Our intention is to provide some policy positions on things like decommissioning, fire risk, taxation, insurance and these sorts of things to provide a level of a trusted source of information from an independent source such as the Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. I think it's desperately needed, so that's my intention.¹⁶

- 8.15 The role of state, territory and local governments in communicating about local issues was also acknowledged.¹⁷ To this end, the AEIC advocated for a 'comprehensive national approach delivered at the state and regional level':

I think we will all agree that people pick and choose what sort of information resonates with them, but I think there should be an ongoing nationally consistent communication program that allows different stakeholders to communicate similar messages in a format that resonates with their communities. That, I think, was recommendation 6 from the Community Engagement Review. There has been some work done by the Commonwealth in that space. My view is that it needs to be continued and amped up a little bit ...¹⁸

- 8.16 The Net Zero Economy Authority also underscored the importance of providing factual information tailored for local contexts:

Respondents recognised the transition's complexity, and wanted to know how the transition would impact them locally. Place-based and tailored stakeholder communication and engagement was identified as a key requirement for effective communication. The research found that it was

¹⁵ Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer, Clean Energy Council, *Committee Hansard*, 12 November 2025, pp. 64–65.

¹⁶ Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 3.

¹⁷ Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 4]. See also, WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, pp. 13–14; Ms Julie Delvecchio, Chief Executive Officer, Electric Vehicle Council, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, pp. 75–76.

¹⁸ Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 4.

important to ensure that factual information is communicated before misinformation could influence individual perceptions.¹⁹

8.17 Dr Rebecca Huntley, Director of Research at 89 Degrees East, shared a similar perspective that suggested local messengers are often the most effective:

Some of the best messengers around the benefits of renewable energy are farmers, local mayors, custodians of the land, First Nations custodians of the land. They have to be local, and the only way that they can be effective messengers is if they have been engaged from the very beginning in the right kind of public consultation about the lasting local benefit of renewable energy projects.²⁰

8.18 Indeed, the committee heard that research has shown that social peers, that is 'friends and family members, community organizations, religious leaders, and medical professionals' were the most trusted and effective messengers during the COVID-19 pandemic, with evidence indicating that local leaders in communities are viewed as more trustworthy.²¹

8.19 Reflecting the above sentiment, Friends of the Earth informed the committee that a 'coalition of civil society organisations' had proposed a network of local energy hubs to empower locals 'to actively participate in and benefit from the clean energy shift that is underway'.²²

Local energy hubs

8.20 The creation of local energy hubs—operating as 'a fully funded network of 50 independent outreach centres across regional Australia'—was endorsed by several submitters.²³ For example, Mr Andrew Bray, National Director of the Renewable Energy Alliance highlighted the importance of community access to reliable and trusted sources of information:

... one of the biggest contributors to community anxiety is not being able to easily access factual, locally relevant and trusted information. When there is an information void, we see it filled time and time again by false and exaggerated claims. This is why our submission recommends the federal

¹⁹ Net Zero Economy Authority, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

²⁰ Dr Rebecca Huntley, Director of Research, 89 Degrees East, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 43.

²¹ Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [Countering disinformation effectively: an evidence-based policy guide](#), 2024, Washington, DC, pp. 47–48. See also, Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, *Submission 106*, pp. 3–4 and 7; News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra, *Submission 4*, p. 10; Climate for Change, *Submission 123*, [pp. 2–3]; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 2.

²² Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 8.

²³ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 8. See also, Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 5]; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, p. 13; Ms Courtney (Coco) Venaglia, National Organiser, and Mr Patrick Simons, Yes2Renewables Coordinator, Friends of the Earth Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, pp. 1–2 and 12.

government establish a network of local energy-information hubs in renewable-energy regions throughout the country.²⁴

8.21 In recognition that developers of energy projects are not necessarily trusted sources of unbiased information, it was envisaged that the hubs would be staffed by trusted locals, and be able to provide accessible and independent information about local issues and impacts to communities hosting renewables projects and work to streamline consultation processes and better enable communities to better engage with developers regionally.²⁵

8.22 Ms Jessica Trijsburg from the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) explained:

What we would hope to do and achieve through the hubs is the creation of better organisational processes that would enable information integrity internally and externally to be consistent and also building the capabilities of the community and other really key institutions in the communities, so that they also are acting in a trusted and trustworthy manner and are able to be part of a networked approach that is going to really repair a lot of the damage that's been done to the information integrity of our society.²⁶

8.23 Further, the MAV suggested that investing in local councils as hubs offers a unique value proposition as part of a response to climate disinformation:

Local government offers significant value to climate disinformation response models that offer the unique combination of being both locally embedded and contextualised—enhancing efficacy—yet within a sufficiently common structure of local governance that they are able to be replicated and recontextualised to localities across the country.²⁷

8.24 However, other participants were less convinced. Ms Sandra Bourke thought that local energy hubs may see the rebranding of lobby groups as 'community hubs', blurring the lines between public information and propaganda, and entrenching one-sided narratives about climate change and energy.²⁸

Energy project planning and development

8.25 Some submitters claimed that planning, oversight, governance and regulation of many energy projects have been insufficient, with BirdsSA stating:

²⁴ Mr Andrew Bray, National Director, Renewable Energy Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, 13 November 2025, p. 57.

²⁵ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 8. See also, Mr Neil Plummer, Board Member, Geelong Sustainability, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 64.

²⁶ Ms Jessica (Ika) Trijsburg, Head of Democracy and Diplomacy, Municipal Association of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November 2025, p. 53.

²⁷ Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 13.

²⁸ Ms Sandra Bourke, *Submission 80*, p. 12.

... unfortunately, there is ample evidence that government oversight at both federal and state levels has often been superficial, rushed, and complicit rubber stampers rather than informed regulators ...

We are pro renewables. We are anti poorly planned, poorly managed, poorly regulated, poorly governed renewables.²⁹

- 8.26 Community groups called for better government leadership and strategic planning (including for project siting), independent review, transparent, competitive processors with 'sensible standards' to ensure projects deliver for communities and the natural environment, and 'comprehensive mapping of renewable energy projects to better understand cumulative pressures from multiple developments in single regions'.³⁰
- 8.27 The committee heard that a lack of information and inappropriately sited, badly planned and constructed energy projects have led to feelings of mistrust in Australian communities.³¹
- 8.28 Submitters explained that there is also more that can be done to collect wind, environmental, biodiversity and other mapping and data to help ensure that quality information is available to inform decisions about the siting of renewables projects with minimal ecological and social impacts and help address the effects of cumulative local projects.³²
- 8.29 In addition, community ownership and/or more equitable financial compensation across communities impacted by energy projects were also seen as essential to increasing the social licence for projects, so that wealth is distributed across the community, and projects don't automatically create divisions in communities.³³

²⁹ BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [p. 2]. See also, Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, pp. 2–3; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 9.

³⁰ Kalapa Wycarbah Local Action Committee, *Submission 90*, [pp. 1–2]. See also, Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, pp. 2–3; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 9; Steve Burgess, *Submission 154*, [p. 3]; Ms Satya Tanner, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 39; Friends of Chalumbin, *Submission 13*, p. 2; Karen Fox, *Submission 31*, [p. 6].

³¹ BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [pp. 2–3]. See also, North Queensland Natural History Group Inc, *Submission 26*, p. 8; Kalapa Wycarbah Local Action Committee, *Submission 90*, [p. 2].

³² BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [p. 2]. See also, Ms Elisa Morgera, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 57.

³³ Ms Satya Tanner, Member, Climate Capital Forum, *Committee Hansard*, 30 September 2025, p. 39; Karen Fox, *Submission 31*, [p. 6]; Australian Energy Information Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 3].

- 8.30 Further, there were calls for whole-of-system and whole-of-life costings and impacts for all energy projects to enable open and transparent comparisons and meaningfully inform public debate and policy.³⁴
- 8.31 Other possible measures to improve renewables planning and development included assessment by an independent expert panel, reconsideration of land-use options, stronger governance, inclusive of tender processes, and policy and standards frameworks which will help ensure that projects are 'proposed, scoped and built to the best possible standards'.³⁵

Project consultation and engagement

- 8.32 The AEIC told the committee that most of the concerns it dealt with relate to community engagement and a lack of recognition of community concerns. In support of this, the AEIC pointed to its 2023 AEIC Community Engagement Review (see Box 8.1), which 'highlighted a pretty poor performance from the industry in terms of community engagement and responding to community'.³⁶

Box 8.1: AEIC Community Engagement Review (AEIC Review)³⁷

In July 2023, the Minister for Climate Change and Energy commissioned the AEIC to advise on improving community engagement on renewable energy infrastructure developments.

The AEIC Review sought input from a range of stakeholders, including landholders and community members living close to renewable energy developments. It made nine recommendations to improve engagement (overview provided below):

1. appoint an independent body to design, develop, implement and operate a developer rating scheme;
2. governments to continue their deployment of programs to better plan and control development of new generation and transmission projects;

³⁴ Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals, *Submission 81*, p. 23; Rainforest Reserves Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 30; Mr Keith Bennett, *Submission 217*, [p. 2]; Property Rights Australia, *Submission 59*, pp. 2–3; Australian Environment Foundation, *Submission 5*, [p. 11].

³⁵ BirdsSA, *Submission 136*, [pp.2–3]; Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p.10; Australian Environment Foundation, *Submission 5*, [p. 11]; WWF Australia, *Submission 113*, pp. 14–15.

³⁶ Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 2 and 3.

³⁷ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Community Engagement Review](#) (accessed 13 February 2026) and ECOMC 2024, [ECMC response to the Community Engagement Review](#), Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council, Canberra, July 2024. CC BY 4.0 (accessed 13 February 2026).

3. states and territories to support and expedite sourcing information necessary for contemporary land use planning;
4. progress, complete and expedite the deployment of process reforms which would materially improve processes and reduce time needed to obtain planning and environmental approvals for projects;
5. establish a new ombudsman function focused on handling complaints about energy infrastructure;
6. develop a communications program that provides local communities with information about the reasons for the energy transition;
7. implement appropriate cross jurisdiction oversight governance arrangements that should be in place for transition projects of national significance;
8. provide a whole-of-government approach to identify, cultivate and generate tangible economic and investment attraction opportunities for regional businesses, including First Nations peoples and their enterprises; and
9. encourage local community groups to proactively identify community benefit opportunities and take ownership of sound opportunities to secure support and funding; and consider community benefits when assessing projects.

The Australian Government is working through the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council to respond to the AEIC Review.

- 8.1 The University of Melbourne noted that, in the absence of genuine engagement, those most affected by climate and energy policies can become more susceptible to mis/disinformation about those policies:

Workers, communities and classes who are most affected by new climate and energy policies are more likely to be susceptible to disinformation about such policies, especially if they already feel politically neglected and view political and policy elites as untrustworthy and disconnected from their concerns and lifeworlds. Just and orderly transition strategies that acknowledge and address their concerns, and provide opportunities and funding for genuine stakeholder engagement and collaboration over transition pathways, are needed. These measures can rebuild trust and lessen receptivity to misinformation, while at the same time providing a more durable social license for the energy transition in ways that complement strategies of misinformation inoculation.³⁸

- 8.2 Likewise, the Community Power Agency told the committee that 'one consistent lesson has been that, when people don't have clear, trusted information or meaningful opportunities to shape decisions, misinformation fills that gap' and

³⁸ University of Melbourne, *Submission 128*, p. 11.

that 'once you lose this shared foundation for constructive conversation, trust can erode and conflict often follows'. The Community Power Agency argued 'that when people are genuinely part of the process, understanding deepens, trust strengthens and misinformation has far less space to take hold'.³⁹

- 8.3 Unsurprisingly, the committee heard widespread calls for governments and developers to improve engagement, communications and consultation with communities about local energy projects, to avoid dangerous information vacuums. As responsibilities for such projects are divided across levels of government and between the public and private sectors, the message from submitters, such as Friends of the Earth, was clear:

The government should conduct a thorough review of its consultation processes to ensure that first, communities have adequate opportunity to raise and respond to questions and concerns, and second, the feedback that is received through community events and submissions processes is an accurate reflection of community sentiment.⁴⁰

- 8.4 In addition, some participants suggested that developer engagement should include more transparency and communications about development processes, findings, unknowns and uncertainties of the project to help allay concerns in communities.⁴¹ The AEIC elaborated:

I think one area where there can be some opportunities is planning. The community's understanding of how the planning system works—who has jurisdiction, what the particular steps are and, importantly, how they can involve themselves in that process, because it is an opaque process at best and it's not everyone's day-to-day job. These are businesspeople, parents or carers. It's not their job to understand the planning process. When an investment or proposal comes to their community, they're not quite sure of when it's going to happen, how it's going to happen or how they can involve themselves. So a real opportunity I see is in enabling and improving the capacity of the community to understand and be engaged in the process to pick the planning process so that they are equipped to provide meaningful information to that process.⁴²

³⁹ Ms Eleanor Buckley, Communications and Project Manager, Community Power Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 48.

⁴⁰ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 9. See also, QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, [p. 31]; Nick Jorss, *Submission 139*, p. 21; Kalapa Wycarbah Local Action Committee, *Submission 90*, [p. 2]; Australian Energy Market Operator, [Draft 2026 Integrated System Plan \(ISP\): a roadmap for the energy transition](#), 10 December 2025, p. 103.

⁴¹ See, for example, Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, pp. 5 and 8–9; Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, pp. 6–7; Steve Burgess, *Submission 154*, [p. 3]; Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Submission 2*, [p. 5].

⁴² Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 9.

- 8.5 A similar view was expressed by Mr Andrew Hallam, who argued for 'early and ongoing transparent engagement' in relation to large-scale renewable energy projects:

The government should start building a relationship with the affected community before a decision is made to go ahead with a large-scale renewable project. The government needs to be an active participant in the community discourse. Government communications staff need to 'seek out and listen to the public's questions and concerns'. Engagement in community discourse should continue at least until the construction of each renewable energy project has been completed.⁴³

- 8.6 There was also support for the proposal that the government develop a framework to 'streamline and maintain best practice standards for developer engagement' and to 'improve engagement and ensure legitimacy of consultation outcomes'.⁴⁴
- 8.7 To this end, the AEIC noted the improvements being implemented through the Developer Rating Scheme (see Box 8.2), which will report on companies' behaviour, community engagement, benefits sharing and social licence to help 'bridge the gap between what the expectations are in the community and the behaviour of the energy sector'.⁴⁵

Box 8.2: Developer Rating Scheme⁴⁶

The Developer Rating Scheme (DRS) will improve the way large scale renewable energy and transmission companies engage with communities when developing clean energy infrastructure.

The DRS will do this by providing transparent, periodic assessments of renewable energy and transmission businesses. Using objective measures, it will assess businesses' performance, track record, and capability— including their community engagement capability.

By doing so, the DRS aims to provide landholders and communities with greater transparency and confidence about companies that propose new energy infrastructure in their area.

⁴³ Mr Andrew Hallam, *Submission 195*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Friends of the Earth, *Submission 134*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, pp. 5, 8 and 9.

⁴⁶ Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Developer Rating Scheme](#) (accessed 12 February 2026); Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Developer Rating Scheme has commenced](#), 15 August 2025 (accessed 12 February 2026); The Hon Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, ['New scheme to drive higher standards for regional energy communities'](#), *Media Release*, 15 August 2025.

Equifax Australasia Credit Ratings Pty Ltd has been appointed to design, develop, implement and operate the DRS. The company has undertaken a pilot phase to refine the DRS in collaboration with governments, businesses, non-government organisations, landowners and communities.

Following the pilot, the DRS will introduce a free, public register of renewable energy and transmission businesses that meet minimum assessment standards.

Sixty developers signed up to pilot the scheme and test the business performance and community engagement assessments ahead of the scheme launch for further participants in March 2026.

Chapter 9

Committee view

- 9.1 As noted by multiple contributors to this inquiry, a robust information ecosystem is critical to the health of Australia's democracy and to its ability to meet the challenges arising from climate change—including the need to transition to renewable energy sources.
- 9.2 However, the committee heard that the integrity of Australia's information ecosystem is threatened by a proliferation of misinformation and disinformation (mis/disinformation), which is polarising public discourse and eroding trust in science and knowledge institutions.
- 9.3 The motivations behind the spread of climate change mis/disinformation are also complex, ranging from genuine community concerns through to ideological, political and commercial narratives that can amplify or delay climate action, protect established business models, or increase community divisions. However, the committee heard that its spread can also be motivated simply by a desire to generate advertising revenue—through the creation of 'clickbait'¹ to increase online traffic.
- 9.4 Worryingly, the committee heard that Australia has some of the highest levels of concern about information integrity globally. In addition, false and misleading information about climate change or the environment was one of the top misinformation topics encountered by Australian audiences, with levels of disinformation tending to spike around extreme weather events.
- 9.5 The committee heard that digital platforms play a central role in the spread of mis/disinformation, with particular concerns raised in relation to the role of digital platform algorithms and recommender systems, as well as bots and bot networks in amplifying and spreading false and misleading information.
- 9.6 In addition, submitters and witnesses told the committee that the widespread use of artificial intelligence (AI) had led to a self-perpetuating cycle of mis/disinformation in which AI uses existing mis/disinformation to create new content, which then becomes the basis for further AI-generated mis/disinformation—described during the inquiry as 'AI slopagenda'.
- 9.7 While there was a strong focus on digital platforms during the inquiry, there was also widespread recognition that false and misleading information is also spread via mainstream media and in real-world interactions.

¹ Clickbait is online content (often a headline, image or story) designed to attract attention and encourage people to click on a hyperlink, which can lead to content of questionable value.

- 9.8 The committee also heard concerns about the growing use of astroturfing as a mainstream tactic—where so-called 'grassroots' campaigns are in fact highly coordinated and well financed, often with links to think tanks, commercial/corporate interests, lobby groups, donors or political parties.
- 9.9 In line with this, the committee also received evidence about the role of so-called 'dark money' in the promulgation of climate and energy related mis/disinformation—particularly in relation to the current lack of transparency around donations to think tanks and third-party affiliated organisations.
- 9.10 Overall, the deteriorating information ecosystem has significant impacts on the Australian policy landscape, with climate mis/disinformation confusing public understanding of climate science, reducing support for action on climate change, and delaying renewable energy projects—with the associated economic opportunity costs, particularly for regional areas.
- 9.11 More than one witness described how the proliferation of climate change mis/disinformation has succeeded in shifting the Overton Window—the acceptable window of discourse—to undermine the previous consensus around climate policy.
- 9.12 Deteriorating information integrity also has significant local impacts on communities and individuals, with mis/disinformation campaigns related to renewable energy projects inflaming tensions and fuelling conflict. The committee heard concerning reports of bushfire survivors, landholders, and community group members alike being subject to harassment, intimidation, physical abuse, and even death threats.
- 9.13 However, it is clear to the committee that there is no simple fix for the spread of false and misleading information. Indeed, more than one contributor to this inquiry described it as a 'wicked problem' with multiple actors and complex drivers and interests. This is even more so for mis/disinformation related to climate change and energy, which are themselves inherently complex and highly contested policy areas.
- 9.14 The complex and multifaceted nature of climate mis/disinformation, and its wide ranging impacts led a number of inquiry participants to call for a systemic response—one that encompasses governments, knowledge institutions, and civil society.
- 9.15 However, in designing any response, the committee urges the Australian Government to heed those stakeholders who have called for a nuanced approach that does not dismiss legitimate community concern or stifle public debate.
- 9.16 Indeed, the committee recognises that silencing debate is likely to further undermine trust in communities, science, experts and public institutions, with

implications for the nation's climate and energy policy, as well as the resilience and effectiveness of Australian democracy.

A coordinated approach to information integrity

- 9.17 Evidence provided to the committee pointed to an increasing recognition of the need for systemic and coordinated approaches to effectively counter false and misleading information, with Australia's current piecemeal approach unlikely to deliver the reform needed to strengthen Australia's information ecosystem.
- 9.18 Various participants urged the Australian Government to take a systemic approach to strengthening information integrity, with a desire for coordinated action between levels of government and across knowledge institutions and civil society more broadly.
- 9.19 Accordingly, the committee supports a multifaceted approach to strengthening information integrity, with a strong focus on increasing transparency and elevating trusted local voices in regional communities.
- 9.20 At the same time, the committee is cognisant of the need for any approach to be grounded in human rights law to ensure a balance between strong action and the protection of individual rights and freedoms.
- 9.21 To this end, the committee agrees with the view expressed by some submitters that the boundaries between misinformation and disinformation are neither easy to determine, nor important. Rather, it is more important that individuals and communities have access to a diverse and healthy information ecosystem.
- 9.22 Australia also needs to be active in global movements to enhance information integrity. Accordingly, the committee considers that Australia should be a signatory to the United Nations Global Principles on Information Integrity and coordinate implementation of these principles.

Recommendation 1

- 9.23 The committee recommends the Australian Government support and adopt the United Nations Global Principles on Information Integrity and work to coordinate the application of these principles across government.**

Joining global efforts

- 9.24 There was significant support for Australia to join global efforts aimed at strengthening climate change information integrity. This would enable information and data sharing to help to curb the spread of misleading climate change narratives and build the evidence base around the effectiveness of measures to improve information integrity.
- 9.25 For this reason, the committee supports calls for Australia to become a signatory to the Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change.

Recommendation 2

9.26 The committee recommends the Australian Government officially endorse the Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change launched at COP30 in Belem, Brazil.

Building trust, resilience and transparency

9.27 The committee heard broad support for a range of reforms to strengthen information integrity and address climate change and energy related mis/disinformation. These included actions to develop trusted, reliable sources of information, increase resilience through media, digital and science literacy, and improve information transparency and accountability.

Information transparency and accountability

9.28 Improving information transparency and accountability were key themes of the inquiry. Substantial evidence received during the inquiry recommended improving information transparency and integrity to counteract false and misleading information about climate change and energy.

9.29 Given the role of politics and politicians in the spread of climate change and energy mis/disinformation, the committee heard calls from across the spectrum of opinion for more transparent political donations, and information about lobbyists and vested interests.

9.30 The committee recognises that multiple contributors have advocated for changes to funding declarations to improve transparency and provide insight into funding flows—both domestic and international. The committee suggests that this area deserves further exploration, especially in the lead up to a federal election.

9.31 Further, the committee suggests there is a need for greater support for regulators, such as the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, to combat greenwashing.

9.32 Lastly, the committee wishes to raise the issue of the use of AI to prepare submissions to government agencies and parliamentary inquiries—including this one. The committee suggests there could be value in developing a framework to guide submitters in relation to the use and disclosure of AI. In relation to submissions to energy project consultations, this could include thresholds for consideration of submissions based on location where appropriate (such as community-based versus outside views), with penalties for fraudulent work to discourage a mass of fraudulent submissions, including to parliamentary committees.

Recommendation 3

9.33 The committee recommends the Australian Government ensure the adequacy of resourcing for regulators such as Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to combat and expose corporate greenwashing.

Recommendation 4

9.34 The committee recommends the Australian Government explore ways to ensure greater transparency of campaign activities, such as the creation of third parties, that are resourced by commercial/corporate interests in the lead up to a federal election.

Trusted, reliable sources of information

9.35 Multiple inquiry participants underscored the need for trusted and reliable sources of information to combat false and misleading information.

9.36 However, the committee also recognises that levels of distrust in government institutions and scientists mean that finding sources of information that are considered unbiased and authoritative can be difficult.

9.37 Therefore, the committee agrees with the view that a whole system approach is needed to ensure access to accurate and reliable information. This includes actions to ensure a strong media ecosystem (backed by fact checking services), and support for research into mis/disinformation related to climate change and renewable energy.

9.38 In line with this, the committee heard multiple calls for action to support and strengthen public interest journalism, particularly at local levels where there has been an erosion in media diversity.

9.39 The committee also supports stakeholders calls for better monitoring of mis/disinformation networks and more research into development of climate and energy misinformation and disinformation. This could include funding an independent public misinformation monitoring program as a cross-sector entity to monitor misinformation trends across platforms, using AI and social listening tools. This could be achieved by formalising a network of existing research capability. Being independent, it would be less vulnerable to future political influence.

Recommendation 5

9.40 The committee recommends the Australian Government continue to provide funding support for regional and independent media outlets.

Recommendation 6

9.41 The committee recommends the Australian Government increase funding for social sciences research relating to threats to climate and energy information integrity including potential solutions.

Recommendation 7

9.42 The committee recommends the Australian Government explore funding models for independent monitoring support (for example, via the Australian Internet Observatory) to track hidden digital influence ecosystems and provide independent transparency and accountability of platforms.

Media, digital and science literacy

9.43 Evidence presented to the inquiry emphasised the merit of science, media and digital literacy education, as well as development of critical thinking skills across the population, will help empower individuals to identify and respond to mis/disinformation and build democratic resilience.

9.44 The committee urges the Australian Government to increase investment in targeted digital literacy programs, with a particular focus on helping individuals critically assess online information, understand algorithmic content curation, and identify misinformation and disinformation.

Recommendation 8

9.45 The committee recommends the Australian Government, through the regular Education Ministers' Meeting curriculum review cycle, broaden the Australian Curriculum 'digital literacy' general capability to strengthen media literacy.

Recommendation 9

9.46 The committee recommends the upcoming National Media Literacy Strategy incorporate the information integrity framework with examples from the climate and energy domain.

Recommendation 10

9.47 The committee recommends the Australian Government, coordinated through the Education Ministers' Meeting, establish stronger oversight and disclosure requirements for corporate engagement within school systems, with clear policies regulating philanthropic or corporate relationships that may interfere with educational integrity.

The role of digital platforms

9.48 The committee heard that the last decade has seen a rapid increase in the spread of false and misleading information, fuelled by the speed and reach of social

media platforms and amplified by algorithms and recommender systems designed to maximise user engagement—often via the promotion of extreme or harmful content which can lead to psychosocial harm.

- 9.49 The committee also heard concerns about a lack of action by digital platforms to prevent the spread and amplification of mis/disinformation on their platforms, despite repeated warnings and ample opportunities to respond.
- 9.50 Participants made a range of recommendations in relation to improving Australian monitoring and regulation of dis/misinformation on digital platforms. This included suggestions for broad regulatory reforms to enhance accountability and transparency, as well as specific actions in relation to bots and inauthentic accounts, AI, and access to digital platform data for research purposes.
- 9.51 There was also significant discussion about the approach that should be taken to any new regulation to ensure compliance with human rights and protect freedom of expression.
- 9.52 There was a strong view that Australia's voluntary Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation essentially allowed digital platforms to 'mark their own homework', leaving public interest subservient to the commercial imperatives of the digital platforms.
- 9.53 There was also support for improving the quality of data reported to the Australian Communications and Media Authority by digital platforms, as well as support for enabling legitimate data access requests from researchers to be made easier. Meaningful access combined with adequate legal protection will help researchers and civic groups identify systemic threats and risks to the energy transition created by climate and energy misinformation and disinformation.
- 9.54 There was also a significant focus on the impact of algorithms and recommender systems. The committee supports action such as that proposed by the Fix Our Feeds campaign, which would require social media platforms to offer an 'opt-in' option for algorithms, giving users the ability to control whether or not their social media feed is algorithm driven.

Recommendation 11

- 9.55 The committee recommends the Australian Government consider legislative or regulatory reform which identifies psychosocial harms, places the onus of responsibility in addressing these harms onto digital platforms and monitors effectiveness of their mitigations through regulatory and civic oversight.**

Recommendation 12

- 9.56 The committee recommends the Australian Government improve the quality of data reported to the Australian Communications and Media Authority**

from the digital platforms to include for example, thematic breakdown of their reporting inclusive of climate and energy data, denominator data, removal actions and paid advertising related to climate and energy.

Recommendation 13

9.57 The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider how researchers could be provided adequate legal protection to undertake their work in the digital platform space.

Recommendation 14

9.58 The committee recommends the Australian Government consider how to improve the complaints resolution process, including about false and misleading information online.

Renewable energy project planning and implementation processes

9.59 One of the key themes emerging from the inquiry is the need to build trust and social licence in relation to both the energy transition as a whole and individual renewable energy projects.

9.60 Currently, trust and social licence are being eroded by a failure to acknowledge and respond to genuine community concerns, as well as variable standards within the clean energy industry. Indeed, the committee heard that the majority of concerns dealt with by the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) relate to community engagement and a lack of recognition of community concerns.

9.61 In line with this, inquiry participants recommended a range of actions that could be taken to provide communities with timely access to accurate information about the energy transition and local energy projects. They also made a range of suggestions aimed at improving energy project planning and development processes, as well as approaches to community consultation and engagement.

9.62 The committee acknowledges the frustration experienced by communities in the absence of trusted sources of information, effective consultation and engagement, and independent data and research about energy projects. Accordingly, the committee supports a strong focus on community engagement—including community-led engagement—to help build social licence for energy projects. In addition, the committee urges all agencies involved in the energy transition and renewable energy projects to strengthen their communication and social licence capabilities.

9.63 The AEIC also told the committee of ongoing community concerns about the health impact of wind farms—despite the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) finding that there is no consistent evidence that wind farms directly impact human health. However, given the age of the

NHMRC research, the committee supports the AEIC suggestion that it would be timely to provide updated information on this issue.

Recommendation 15

9.64 The committee recommends the Australian Government ensure the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner is adequately funded for community engagement.

Recommendation 16

9.65 The committee recommends the Australian Government require the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner to provide a summary of threats to climate and energy information integrity in their annual report.

Recommendation 17

9.66 The committee recommends that the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation consider social licence on renewable energy projects. This could include:

- hiring new staff with expertise in social science, behavioural science, and community engagement, and;
- ensuring their decision making and advisory bodies have social licence expertise represented.

Recommendation 18

9.67 The committee recommends that the Australian Government task the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to provide advice on the costs and benefits of renewable energy creation, storage and transmission alongside clean manufacturing to create data needed to address local social licence concerns.

Recommendation 19

9.68 The committee recommends the National Health and Medical Research Council fund new research on the effects of wind energy on human health.

Recommendation 20

9.69 The committee recommends the Australian Government continue to strengthen communication and social licence capability across government agencies and departments. Improved information flow between jurisdictions and across departments will help address knowledge fragmentations across multiple sectors of the economy (e.g. transport, electricity, agriculture, emergency services).

Recommendation 21

9.70 The committee recommends the Australian Government resource community led engagement driven by organisations with proven track records in local communities. These models may include capacity building for local leaders in rural and regional areas, support for local governments that are contingent on their engagement with community organisations or groups with a proven track record.

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson
Chair**

**Senator Michelle Ananda-Rajah
Deputy Chair**

**Senator Andrew McLachlan CSC
Member**

**Senator Lisa Darmanin
Member**

**Senator David Pocock
Member**

Additional comments from the Australian Greens

- 1.1 We are living through a climate emergency. With each year new weather records are being broken, biodiversity is lost and people across the planet are suffering. Our global economy is also paying the price.
- 1.2 This is largely because the fossil fuel industry knew, lied, and denied catastrophic climate change, and then sabotaged climate action for decades, all the while raking in billions of dollars in profits every year.
- 1.3 The industry was assisted by political systems captured by donations and influence, and by information ecosystems corrupted by calculated propaganda and lies. The deliberate corruption of our information ecosystems that prevents accurate, trustworthy and timely information being provided to citizens goes hand in glove with our climate and energy crisis, and is in itself one of the greatest challenges of our time.
- 1.4 Although tactics have changed over the years, deliberate and organised climate policy obstruction continues to this day. Climate information integrity issues are not just about false information, they also involve the deliberate manipulation of public discourse.
- 1.5 As summarised by one witness to this inquiry:

Climate policy has not failed, it has been defeated.¹
- 1.6 Understanding this reality, and how this has come to pass, will be critical in the campaign for renewed hope in climate solutions and for tackling a future of climate breakdown.

Thanks and acknowledgments

- 1.7 The Australian Greens want to acknowledge and thank Government, Liberal and Independent Senators for working constructively in efforts to achieve a majority report on this critical matter of inquiry.
- 1.8 Given the politically contested nature of key topics explored in the inquiry, this is a significant achievement in itself, and reflects how seriously the Senate has taken this inquiry.
- 1.9 Whilst the majority report makes important recommendations, the Australian Greens felt the final chapter—the Committee View—and recommendations contained within should have gone harder and further. We comment on this below and make a number of additional recommendations for the Government to consider and respond to.

¹ Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*, p. 5 (emphasis added).

- 1.10 The Australian Greens would also like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in this important inquiry. We recognise that it has at times been controversial and difficult for some participants. This was hard to avoid when those passionate in their beliefs were being asked to reflect on the integrity of information provided by other parties whom they fundamentally disagreed with, or had been critical of in the past. Considerable efforts have been made by the committee to provide balanced and fair processes to respond to adverse reflections and give everyone a voice to mitigate any concerns.
- 1.11 While the scientific consensus on climate change that underlies the need for urgent action is clear and almost unanimous, as noted in the main report, what is thought to be 'misinformation' can be subjective and often reflects the political, ideological or vested interests of various parties to this debate. This was no different to the committee members themselves, some who held strongly differing views on both the veracity of climate science and the need for climate action, including the roll out of renewable energy. To put it another way, a (noisy!) minority of Senators who were climate deniers or serial blockers/obstructors of climate and renewable energy policy were always going to see this inquiry as a personal attack on their ideology and work. In the end, whatever criticisms were raised, all committee members had a platform and chance to have their say in the contest of ideas.

Background to this Select Committee

- 1.12 This establishment of this Select Committee, initiated by the Australian Greens and passed by the Australian Senate in the second half of 2025, was deliberately timed to coincide with COP30—the 'COP of Truth', hosted in Belem, Brazil. COP30 was the first time climate 'information integrity' was formally dealt with as a key agenda item at these critical negotiations. As far as the Australian Greens are aware, this is also the first parliamentary inquiry anywhere in the world that has looked specifically at this issue of the 'information integrity gap' in the global debate on climate change and energy, and particularly how this relates to Australia, and what needs to be done to remedy the challenges we face in ensuring Australians have access to accurate and trusted sources of information on climate and energy matters.
- 1.13 Over the past decade, most notably during the years of the first, and now second, Trump Administrations, the world has witnessed a renewed and unrelenting assault on climate science, policy and action. Closer to home, the so-called 'climate wars', raging for decades, also continue unabated in the Australian political context. Indeed, during this inquiry, the Liberal and National Party were again involved in a public spat over climate policy, which ultimately led to their dumping of their historic (and already weak) 'net zero' commitments.

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- 1.14 While this inquiry received significant evidence that politicians are key players in (or swayers of) the information integrity debate, the obstruction of climate policy and meaningful climate action goes much deeper than just politicians. There are numerous actors, many working in the shadows, influencing the integrity of our information ecosystems, and hence politics, policy and ultimately the obstruction of climate action. The United Nations (UN) has now formally recognised that deliberate, organised and deceptive information campaigns run by vested interests (political, ideological, financial) are a key (if not the biggest) barrier to achieving the climate action necessary to pull our planet back from the brink of climate collapse. This was discussed in some detail at COP30.
- 1.15 Overlaying this, the World Economic Forum identified 'disinformation' (deliberate lies and deceptions), including the use of artificial intelligence (AI), as the biggest short-term (2 years) risk to humanity for 2024 and 2025. This information integrity issue combined with the impacts of climate breakdown is the biggest long-term (10 years) risk facing humanity. Multiple witnesses during this inquiry, from national security agencies through to social science experts, corporations, government departments and non-government organisations also recognised the very real and growing dangers posed by the information integrity gap in our climate and energy debate.
- 1.16 A significant outcome for this inquiry was getting the Australian Government to agree to recommendations to support and adopt the 'Declaration of Information Integrity on Climate Change' launched at COP30 in Brazil, and endorse the UN Global Principles on Information Integrity, and apply these to Australia. This is a critical first step on the path to developing a national plan to combat climate and energy information integrity failures. The Australian Greens look forward to Australia joining other nations around the world in solidarity to tackle the dangerous scourge of climate disinformation that has so effectively undermined climate action for decades. Few nations are as vulnerable as Australia to climate collapse, or have more to lose from not acting to meet our Paris commitments.
- 1.17 This inquiry showed that improving information integrity is clearly relevant and critically important to Australia. The Australian Greens hoped that this inquiry would at a minimum raise awareness on what is a little understood or discussed issue undermining political climate action, and offer constructive solutions. The submissions, hearings and significant documented committee evidence will also provide valuable resources for further research in this area.
- 1.18 The evidence presented in this majority report is strong and clear that without a new, multifaceted approach to dealing with information integrity issues in Australia—such as the deliberate and deceptive propaganda campaigns undermining climate action, turbo charged by largely unregulated social media networks and the agendas of some conservative media outlets—we stand little

chance to meet our agreed science-based Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change emission reductions commitments. The stakes couldn't be higher given the frightening and rapid changes we are witnessing in our natural world. The Australian Greens believe we must do everything we can to restore information integrity in both the Australian and global climate debate. This parliamentary inquiry and its report is an important reminder of this, and hopefully an important step in this direction.

Climate obstruction & the noisy denial machine

- 1.19 Evidence submitted to this committee from numerous international witnesses and groups, including multiple representatives of the UN, the International Panel on the Information Environment, the Climate Social Science Network, Climate Action Against Disinformation, Brown University, McGill University and the Union of Concerned Scientists along with many others, have all outlined in detail the global nature of this urgent problem, and the associated importance of globally coordinated action.
- 1.20 Numerous submissions to the inquiry also highlighted how models of climate obstruction, predominantly developed, pressure-tested, and first delivered in the United States over many years, have subsequently been exported to various countries like Australia. Key to the amplification of the climate obstruction playbook is what was termed by one witness as the 'denial machine',² which includes conservative think tanks, law firms, PR firms, consultancies, third-party campaign groups and some conservative media outlets. Evidence to this committee indicates that the various parts of the machine, while not always working together in a co-ordinated fashion, have been firmly entrenched in our national climate and energy debate for decades.
- 1.21 It did not go unobserved by the Australian Greens that the 'denial machine' swung into action as soon as this Select Committee was officially confirmed. Within days, and in the months following the establishment of this inquiry, dozens of articles and news stories appeared in the Murdoch press, many of them opinion pieces—including commentary by prominent conservative think tank representatives—criticising the inquiry, its motivations, committee members and cherry-picking information to suit anti-climate or other agendas. Online attacks were also aimed at committee members from third-party political campaign groups such as ADVANCE, who the Australian Greens note have been funded in the past by Associated Entities linked to the Liberal Party, along with other millionaires and billionaires. Some committee members received over ten thousand emails criticising the inquiry over a single weekend.
- 1.22 While some 'cut and thrust' is to be expected in political debate and discourse on an issue such as climate and energy policy, ironically the inquiry itself

² QUT Digital Media Research Centre, *Submission 60*, p. 12.

provided a case study in real time, a demonstration straight from the climate obstruction play book. It showed clearly how a small minority of powerful, resourced, and motivated interests have so successfully used their platforms to crowd out other voices and hijack the climate and energy debate so successfully in Australia for so long.

- 1.23 To look at the Labor Government—with a significant House majority—working with the Australian Greens and independents in the Senate, one may be tempted to conclude that climate science and climate action has today ultimately won out in the decades-long political 'climate wars' in Australia. But this would be to ignore the fact that our current Government has not done nearly enough in committing to necessary emission reduction targets or stopping new fossil fuel projects, and with the Liberal National Party now having abandoned any semblance of climate policy, what pressure (apart from the Australian Greens and a few independents) is there now for Labor to do better?

A National Plan : strengthening information integrity on climate change and energy

- 1.24 The majority report confirms that the Australian Government has agreed to recommendations to officially endorse the 'Declaration on Information Integrity on Climate Change' launched at COP30 in Belem, Brazil, as well as to support and adopt United Nations Global Principles on Information Integrity, and work to coordinate the application of these principles across government. Enacting these commitments will require the development of a national plan or holistic approach to tackling climate information integrity issues such as dis and misinformation, as well as the urgent and growing challenges created by the rapid scaling and uptake of generative AI and large language model programs and products. The Australian Greens believe reference to plans for a national strategy and approach should be made more explicit in this report, and agree with a number of submitters and witnesses that the Australian Government should urgently begin work on developing a national plan or blueprint for tackling climate and energy information integrity issues.

Recommendation 1

- 1.25 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government develop and implement a national strategy and approach to information integrity, particularly in the areas of climate change and energy.**

Recommendation 2

- 1.26 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government amends the *Climate Change Act 2022* to require the relevant Minister for Climate Change and Energy to include a summary of all work done in support of strengthening climate change and energy information integrity in the annual**

climate statement to Parliament required through the *Climate Change Act 2022*.

Recommendation 3

1.27 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government consider expanding the priorities and remit of the Australian Climate Service to include the provision of independent, science-based prebunking and debunking information and advice related to climate change, particularly during and in the immediate aftermath of extreme weather events and natural disasters.

Truth in political advertising, astroturfing & impacts of weak information integrity on climate politics

- 1.28 Elections rely on voters being able to make informed choices based on accurate information about policies, candidates, and political parties. Due to the politicisation of climate action over the past half century by the vested and commercial interests seeking to obstruct the transition to clean energy, the climate and energy debate is regularly weaponised by bad faith actors during elections in Australia to support candidates whose positions more closely align with the commercial interests of large fossil fuel polluters. The committee's report outlines numerous case studies, including multiple from the most recent 2025 federal election, where advertising campaigns backed by significant levels of financial investment well beyond the realistic means of a legitimate community group, were delivered to Australian voters at large scale, with little real-time data available to understand the 'who, what and where' of these advertising campaigns as they were being delivered.
- 1.29 The committee was not able to reach majority consensus on a recommendation that the Australian Government urgently progress truth in political advertising reforms, with the Albanese Government choosing not to support this important recommendation. This is particularly disappointing given very recent history, with the Albanese Labor government introducing the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Communications) Bill 2024 in November 2024, largely aimed at delivering stronger oversight and regulation of political advertising. However, frustratingly, this bill lapsed with the dissolution of parliament in March 2025 and to date has not been reintroduced.
- 1.30 While the Albanese Government did not support this recommendation as part of the committee's final report, numerous submissions to the committee highlighted the importance of this reform in strengthening information integrity related to climate change and energy, as well as it being a critical element of the urgent reforms required to safeguard and strengthen Australia's democracy more broadly. The Australian Greens also note that many submitters called for truth in political advertising reforms to be extended and applicable to

third-party campaign organisations, given the high levels of advertising expenditure of some of these organisations during recent election cycles, and the projected election advertising expenditure expected by these third-party groups in the future.

- 1.31 This committee inquiry received significant amounts of public testimony and evidence through submissions that the strategy of 'astroturfing', particularly in relation to political advertising, has taken hold in Australia and is now widespread.³ This phenomenon is an emerging problem, particularly in relation to matters of climate change and energy information integrity. As detailed in the majority report of this committee, examples of fossil fuel-aligned commercial interests and billionaires providing high levels of financial support for campaign groups and advertising campaigns to provide the appearance of legitimate grassroots movement, but which obscure the true 'real time' origins of campaign funding and target pro-climate political candidates and their supporters, is undermining our electoral and democratic processes and slowing the urgently required transition to clean and renewable energy.

Recommendation 4

- 1.32 **The Australian Greens recommend that the Joint Select Committee into Electoral Matters (JSCEM) take note in its final report of the inquiry into the 2025 federal election of the clear and serious evidence gathered by this Select Committee inquiry related to commercial interests, particularly those aligned with the fossil fuel industry, using significant financial and other resources to distort the facts and parameters of public debate and influence elections.**
- 1.33 **The Australian Greens believe this is particularly relevant when considering that the JSCEM's Terms of Reference include: "reforms to address the ongoing threats of interference in our electoral system, both foreign and domestic."**

Recommendation 5

- 1.34 **The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government progress federal truth in political advertising reform before the 2028 federal election, with these reforms being extended to apply to Significant Third Parties and other related political advocacy and lobby groups.**
- 1.35 **Such reform would also ensure that all third-party actors are required to clearly authorise their campaigns and advertising material in-line with the requirements for political parties under the Commonwealth Electoral Act.**

³ See, for example, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society, *Submission 21*.

Recommendation 6

- 1.36 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government create a real-time, publicly accessible political advertising register to provide an independent, searchable database of all political advertising (digital, broadcast, print), alongside the advertising sponsoring entity.
- 1.37 Possible additional transparency measures on the advertising register could include the top funding sources for the advertisement featured.
- All advertising containing an electoral authorisation would be subject to submission to the register.
 - Advertising disclosure on the register would occur within 48–72 hours of ad launch.
 - Advertising would be retained on the register for 7 years.
 - Oversight of the political advertising register would be jointly managed by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

Recommendation 7

- 1.38 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government introduce regulation that limits or bans fossil fuel advertising, in line with current tobacco and gambling advertising restrictions, and introduces a ban on political donations from the fossil fuel industry, reducing the donation cap across all political donations to \$3,000 per term.

Recommendation 8

- 1.39 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government deliver more accountability from online platforms by requiring accurate classification and disclosure of online advertisers to stop mislabelling (for example, advertising label attribution of industry groups as ‘community groups.’)

Recommendation 9

- 1.40 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government expand the definition of lobbyists and update the lobbyist code of conduct.
- Currently, only third-party lobbyists, organisations and individuals that lobby on behalf of others, are required to register as lobbyists. As a result, approximately 80 percent of lobbyists are not subject to the Lobbying Code of Conduct and therefore operate without any oversight, restrictions, or transparency obligations.
 - This transparency is critical for developing better accountability in the climate change and energy policy-making process.

Tech Platform Accountability and Transparency

CHAIR: Going back five years, Meta posted a statement in September 2021 around your Climate Science Centre. In fact, at that time, you announced a suite of new measures aimed at directly addressing climate misinformation on your platforms.

Specifically, Meta committed to expanding Meta's Climate Science Centre; increasing reliable information about climate change by announcing investment in new climate grant programs, in partnership with the International Fact-Checking Network, to support organisations working to combat climate misinformation, and by expanding your 'Facts about climate change' section of the Climate Science Centre; and elevating climate voices.

But all the links on the webpage that was published at the time of this announcement are now dead.

So does Meta still actively fund and manage its Climate Science Centre?

Mr Milner: No, we do not.

CHAIR: And why is that the case?

Mr Milner: I was not involved in that decision. I can take that on notice to see if we can provide some more information.⁴

- 1.41 The inauguration of Donald Trump to a second U.S. presidential term in January 2025 appears to have precipitated a chain reaction across large tech and online corporations in relation to actions to maintain and strengthen information integrity standards on their platforms. Are we to believe it was a simple coincidence that two weeks prior to Donald Trump's second presidential inauguration, on 7 January 2025, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced an end to Meta's then-current third-party fact-checking program in the United States, instead announcing a move towards a Community Notes program across Meta's platforms, as X/Twitter had done in the months prior?
- 1.42 The confirmation from Meta executives during a public hearing of this committee that one of the world's largest social media and online platforms had ceased funding its climate fact-checking and knowledge sharing program was of particular note to committee members, highlighting a concerning shift away from platforms focusing on maintaining strong and proactive information integrity programs and standards, particularly in relation to climate change and energy, and towards placing the onus on users to correct or comment on flagged content through a 'community notes' approach. Evidence was provided to the committee that this 'community notes' is ineffective and possibly counterproductive to information integrity.
- 1.43 Significant evidence was provided to this committee inquiry that Australia should be evolving towards adopting an EU-style Digital Services Act or U.K.

⁴ Mr Simon Milner, Vice President, Public Policy APAC, Meta, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, p. 3.

Online Safety Act 2023 framework of legislation and regulations that provide more transparency and accountability from digital platforms, especially in relation to dealing with information integrity issues such as misinformation, disinformation and online harms. Of particular note, a significant number of submissions highlighted the need for greater transparency related to algorithm design and the inputs being chosen that dictate the types of content users are shown in their feeds, particularly relating to content on climate change and energy matters.

Facebook's algorithms are no different given we actively optimise for engagement. With the incentives we create, some publishers will choose to do the right thing, while others will take the path that maximises profits at the expense of their audience's wellbeing. **Ethical issues aside, empirically the current set of financial incentives our algorithms create does not appear to be aligned with our mission.**⁵

- 1.44 On 16 March 2026, just over a week before this final committee report was released, a BBC News investigation piece was published to coincide with the release of the documentary *Inside the Rage Machine*.⁶ This investigative piece detailed the accounts of more than a dozen whistle-blowers from Meta and TikTok, who detailed their experiences and accounts of what they claim was leadership pressure being exerted to maintain and enhance algorithmic design which prioritised content engagement over the safety of users,⁷ potentially driven by the profit motive, despite internal documents, analysis and research indicating a potential awareness of the damage this may do within the community. The Australian Greens note that Meta representatives refute claims relating to the design of algorithms being optimised for engagement at the expense of user safety.⁸
- 1.45 An important touchstone report and resource for this committee's work was the July 2025 report *Extreme Weather*,⁹ published by the Centre for Countering Digital Hate. This report analysed hundreds of posts across large online social platforms, tracking numerous instances where false and misleading claims related to extreme weather events and natural disasters were hosted without any form of fact-check, community note or information panel. It also outlined how Meta was profiting from content creation partnerships and advertising

⁵ BBC Two, Meta internal document cited in '*Inside the Rage Machine*' report, March 2026 [emphasis added].

⁶ BBC Two, *Inside the Rage Machine*, March 2026.

⁷ BBC News, *Meta and TikTok let harmful content rise after evidence of outrage drove engagement, say whistleblowers*, 16 March 2026 www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqj9kxqjwjo

⁸ See: *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, pp. 1–21.

⁹ Centre for Countering Digital Hate, *Extreme Weather*, July 2025, <https://counterhate.com/research/extreme-weather-false-claims/>

around posts denying extreme weather links to climate change, or other dangerous disinformation. Responses to questions on notice to Meta outlined how this couldn't happen in Australia, but it wasn't refuted that this occurs now in the US. This US-generated content is obviously available online globally. The Australian Greens believe that minimising profit incentives for creators across these platforms during and in the immediate aftermath of extreme weather events may be an appropriate action for the government to progress in order to protect public safety and reduce the proliferation of false or misleading information across online platforms when timely access to accurate and trusted information is paramount.

- 1.46 More broadly a range of solutions (a 'portfolio approach') are needed to tackle this issue, including more resources being put into fact-checking, pre-bunking and debunking deliberate, deceptive and false and misleading information on topics such as climate change and energy, especially around extreme weather events. Solutions such as third-party fact-checking aren't silver bullets to tackling dis/misinformation but evidence showed they do play an important role in strengthening information integrity. The Australian Greens are very concerned by evidence provided to this inquiry suggesting major tech platforms are reducing their commitments to simple and scalable misinformation solutions such as third-party fact-checking.
- 1.47 The use of 'community notes,' replacing more formal fact-checking programs, by companies such as X or Meta, or the use of generic 'information panels' as a substitute for third-party fact-checking services used by YouTube were criticised by experts who provided evidence to this committee as being insufficient or even counterproductive. The Australian Greens agree that online tech platforms shouldn't be the ones doing fact-checking themselves, but they should be funding such services, and significantly increasing resources in this area. Given the distinct trend away from fact-checking or other important content moderation actions across these platforms, the Australian Greens want a 'trust levy' legislated by the Australian Government which would direct a percentage of the revenues or profits of the big tech platforms - which are some of the biggest and most profitable companies on the planet - that would fund a portfolio approach to implementing solutions that strengthen information integrity in our democracy.

Recommendation 10

- 1.48 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government introduce regulation to better protect Australians from the negative impacts and dangers to community safety created by the spread of false and misleading claims related to extreme weather events and climate change online.**
- 1.49 This could be achieved by incorporating the United Nations Global Principles on Information Integrity online (of which Australia is a signatory)**

and relevant aims of the United Nations Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change into the Government's planned introduction of a Digital Duty of Care under the *Online Safety Act 2021*.

Recommendation 11

1.50 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government recommence work on legislative and regulatory reform to strengthen information integrity related to climate change and energy, possibly through a legislation framework similar to the European Union 'Digital Services Act', which strengthens public transparency, platform accountability and reporting requirements from news, social media and other related organisations and entities.

Recommendation 12

1.51 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government should ensure people have a free, independent service to escalate digital platform complaints, including about false and misleading information online, by expanding the remit and jurisdiction of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman to include digital platforms.

1.52 This is in line with recommendations from the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission Digital Services Inquiry and the Review of the *Online Safety Act 2021*, complementing the Albanese government's work on digital competition and a Digital Duty of Care.

Recommendation 13

1.53 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government, in consultation with relevant industry bodies, develop and implement a mandatory code of conduct related to online platform monetisation during, and in the immediate aftermath of, extreme weather events and natural disasters.

Recommendation 14

1.54 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government strengthen the powers of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to compel transparent and mandatory reporting of climate misinformation and disinformation in digital platforms and online advertising.

1.55 This could be achieved by penalising digital platforms for algorithmic amplification of false and misleading information relating to climate change and energy, and through requiring transparent reporting on content moderation, removal actions, and paid advertising related to climate and energy.

Recommendation 15

1.56 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government provides stronger powers to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to:

- enforce legitimate data access requests to platform providers from researchers, with associated penalties for non-compliance; and
- improve public access to digital platform content libraries for researchers.

Recommendation 16

1.57 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government increase funding for independent monitoring support (for example via the Australian Internet Observatory) to track hidden digital influence ecosystems and provide independent transparency and accountability from platforms.

Recommendation 17

1.58 The Australian Greens recommend that when looking at an EU Digital Services Act legislative framework and its applicability in Australia, the Australian Government recognises climate disinformation as a “systemic risk.”

1.59 This regulatory or legislative action should reflect the aims of Article 34 of the European Union’s Digital Services Act.

Recommendation 18

1.60 The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government undertake urgent work to combat the negative social impacts and harms created by algorithmically suggested content including by requiring social media platforms to provide users with the option to opt in and out of algorithms as called for by the ‘Fix our Feeds’ campaign.

Recommendation 19

1.61 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government expand the powers of the e-Safety commissioner and/or the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to establish a mandatory requirement for platforms to provide the Australian government quarterly reporting and disclosure of the sources, prevalence and scale of coordinated inauthentic behaviour (CIB) or ‘bot networks’ active across Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Search Engines (VLOSEs) in Australia, accompanied by actions taken by corporate owners to mitigate or remove these network and platform risks.

Impact of Traditional Media and Role of Independent Media

- 1.62 Evidence presented to the inquiry was strong and consistent that a robust and healthy local news and independent media sector is critical to combatting information integrity deficits such as dis and misinformation. Local media outlets are often some of the most trusted information sources,¹⁰ particularly in relation to renewable energy development and climate change. While these publications are often some of the most trusted sources of information, due to a multitude of pressures, local and independent media publications are struggling to remain viable and need urgent assistance. The Australian Greens believe the Australian Government has an important role to play in not only sustaining this sector, but actually supporting its growth.
- 1.63 Overlaying the importance of building independent media is the current concentration of media ownership in Australia. As touched on in the majority report, evidence was compelling that the Murdoch Press/News Ltd media outlets are one the biggest misinformers in the Australia climate and energy debate, consistently platforming climate sceptics and policy obstruction content and opinion. When asked directly about this, News Ltd responded during hearings that this was legitimate for public debate, and if climate misinformation was 'debunked' in the process of free speech and debate, this showed such a contest of ideas was healthy and working. This avoids the very real evidence provided to the committee that once misinformation is platformed (especially if consistently promoted), it travels very fast and is very difficult to debunk comprehensively or in a timely manner.

Recommendation 20

- 1.64 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government provides greater support for regional media outlets through increased and ongoing funding, including through development of local procurement policy for government advertising.**

Recommendation 21

- 1.65 The Australian Greens recommend the Australia Government fund research and consultation on developing and implementing more timely and effective climate change and energy fact-checking, pre-bunking, and debunking frameworks, particularly in the independent media, social sciences and digital sectors.**

Current and Future Impacts of AI on the Climate and Energy Debate

In a threat intelligence report that we published in March 2025, we did detect the use of Claude by actors to run what we called an influence-as-a-service

¹⁰ See: Local & Independent News Association (LINA), *Submission 18*.

operation. In that campaign, Claude was used in violation of our policies to basically orchestrate the operation of multiple social media accounts.

This was less about the generation of the content itself. It was a really novel attack where Claude was misused to dictate posting schedules and to dictate who these accounts should interact with.

That sort of activity is a concern and is a focus for our team. When we detected that, we shut that campaign down, and it influenced our monitoring capabilities going forward to detect that activity earlier. **That is the form of activity that we've seen, beyond just misinformation, in the world of fraud and scams, where Claude was used as an orchestrator to help automate some of these activities.**¹¹

- 1.66 The above public testimony provided to this committee's inquiry by a representative of Anthropic, was one of a number of submissions that pointed to the coordinated deployment of bot, or 'inauthentic,' online accounts to spread false or misleading information about climate change and provide the appearance of support for large new fossil fuel development. For example, in their submission the Union of Concerned Scientists highlighted that:

The cooperation of major tech companies and state officials in the spread of profitable disinformation has further established the "clickbait for profit" phenomenon.

A Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD) analysis released after COP29 found that thousands of bot accounts were used to disseminate pro-Azerbaijan propaganda following the release of news on the country's planned increase in natural gas production, despite concurrent suppression of climate activism and a worldwide call for Azerbaijani accountability.¹²

- 1.67 This evidence and that of many other submitters demonstrates that the coordinated and automated use of bots, possibly often powered by artificial intelligence models, is an immediate and rapidly escalating threat to the protection and strengthening of matters related to climate change information integrity.
- 1.68 As outlined on page 146 of this committee's majority report, on Wednesday 11 March 2026, just a few weeks prior to the tabling of this committee report, ABC News Verify published an explosive article titled *Foreign Facebook accounts using AI Pauline Hanson to manipulate Australians*, which provided shocking details of a massive campaign of 'fake news' (fake images, propaganda and disinformation) on Meta's Facebook platform targeting Australian political figures and commentariat. This investigation proved to be a timely and critical case study for this inquiry. Many of the hundreds of fake content posts studied by the ABC used AI to generate hyper-realistic images and video, some of it

¹¹ Mr Evan Frondorf. Head of External Policy, Partnerships and Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, p. 5, [emphasis added].

¹² Union of Concerned Scientists, *Submission 111*.

offensive and harmful. This has come to be referred to in the media as 'AI slopoganda.'

- 1.69 Who are these shady, untraced foreign interests seeking to exploit Australians by injecting this slop into our homes and politics? What are their motives? Is it profit? Power? Persuasion? Or some combination of all these and more? The truth is the public doesn't know exactly - which is simply not good enough. The work progressed by this committee has highlighted the gaping holes in our information integrity ecosystem, which is especially concerning when these large online platforms continue to play such a prominent role in our everyday lives. If it took an ABC News investigation to bring this to the world's attention - what more are we not seeing? If Meta and other large online platforms have this kind of information, what will it take to achieve transparency and accountability on this? Sadly to-date this has been desperately lacking.
- 1.70 ABC News Verify's investigative piece suggested a profit motive was behind the generation of this content, with foreign interests creating controversial and fake political content to exploit engagement algorithms, driving advertising revenues. If this is true, did Meta also profit from what was obviously 'co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour' (CIB) and disinformation, something that their participation in DIGI Inc's voluntary Australian code of conduct, the *Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation* requires them to detect and remove? The Australian Greens note Meta was reported as having taken down a number of these fake posts and accounts once it was brought to their attention by the ABC News Verify team.
- 1.71 It's relevant to point out this could have also been direct foreign interference by state actors in our Australian democratic political system. It may be a coincidence, but the timing of this massive fake news campaign, which experts labelled as the tip of the iceberg, coincided with an unprecedented rise in the polling vote of One Nation, which was significantly platformed in a favourable light by this disinformation campaign.
- 1.72 Whether it was monetisation of the algorithm driving this tsunami of fake news, direct foreign interference or even a shady third-party funded campaign to boost One Nation's vote The Australian Greens feel this needs a thorough investigation. Given the big role AI played in helping generate this content, including deep fakes, it is a chilling portent of what is to come down the line, and why we must have full transparency and accountability of such deceptive content undermining information integrity and democratic processes.

Recommendation 22

- 1.73 **The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government direct our National Security Agencies (ASIO, Department of Home Affairs) to investigate and report back to the Attorney General on the origins and motives behind the significant fake news campaigns reported on by ABC**

News Verify (11th March 2026), propagated by foreign interests, targeting Australian politics.

Recommendation 23

1.74 The Australian Greens recommend that the Australian Government direct the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to investigate why Meta failed to detect or remove, or if they profited from, what was most likely 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour (CIB)' on their Facebook platform, and what lessons can be learnt from such a concerning event given its increasingly likely use in the future, including why the use of offensive AI content didn't trigger warnings or the removal of posts.

Recommendation 24

1.75 The Australian Greens recommend the Australian Government provide the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) greater powers to mandate the labelling of AI-generated content with standardised disclosure formats and progress regulatory approaches addressing the impact of generative AI on climate, energy and broader political communication, based on the principles of transparency and accountability.

Other noteworthy points of interest from the Inquiry:

1.76 A key question considered by the committee has been: "What direct evidence is there tying fossil fuel interests to deceptive or misleading information campaigns undermining climate and energy policy in Australia?" There is some reference to this in the committee's majority report, but the Australian Greens would like to highlight that examples were provided in evidence. The Australian Greens note that on page 45 of US-owned Peabody Energy's 2025 Sustainability Report, Peabody Energy states that Coal Australia (which Peabody is a member of) provides "direct financial support to third-party organisations to campaign in support of pro-coal mining policies." As outlined in detail in submission evidence,¹³ Coal Australia funded \$3.68 million of third-party election, climate and advocacy campaigns around the 2025 federal election, through supposed 'community' organisations Australians for Prosperity and the Australian Institute for Progress. Questions were put to Coal Australia as to whether this paid advertising during the last election was (or could be perceived to be) misleading or deceptive, given there was no disclosure of fossil fuel funding associated with this advertising from a supposed 'community group.' Coal Australia representatives refuted the proposition that this strategy was a deliberate attempt to obscure the identity of Coal Australia

¹³ Dr Jeremy Walker, *Submission 243*.

campaign funders.¹⁴ While the Australian Greens are sceptical of this response, whatever their motive, it is a clear example of fossil fuel funding impacting the integrity of our national climate and energy debate.

1.77 Evidence was also provided to the committee that conservative think tanks play a pivotal role in climate obstruction. It might surprise some that this play book was developed many years ago. A 50-year-old document was provided by Dr Jeremy Walker (see below), highlighting the genesis of conservative think tanks in Australia, many of which have proudly and openly campaigned against climate action and renewable energy policies, indeed publicly boasting of their critical role in defeating climate change policy in Australia. Specifically, this letter dated 19 August 1976 written by Mr John Bonython, outlined why conservative think tanks are important in policy debates like climate and energy, because they can directly speak for business interests (without the public knowing). Obviously think tanks have evolved over the years, but given the complete lack of transparency on their funding, and their links to international networks previously associated with fossil fuel funding, the integrity of information they provide in public climate debates must be questioned.

1.78 At the time, Mr Bonython wrote;

Recently, at my instigation, Australia has had a visit from one Antony Fisher of London. A successful businessman, youngish but retired, he is the founder of the Institute of Economic Affairs, London. This has had, after a slow start, a good record of achievement in getting some academics and politicians and therefore people too, to see the error of the socialist-communist way.

So much so, that Fisher was recently invited to advise and direct the new Fraser Institute in Vancouver. He is in demand to do so elsewhere in the western world, including a show in Los Angeles and one in New York - quite apart from approaches from Europe.

Anyway, I was fortunate enough to get Fisher here (Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney talking to meetings of directors of companies etc.) for a fortnight. I am hopeful that we will be able to proceed along the route he has outlined.

I cannot tell you his method quickly. What I may say, what any business itself may say, is put down by many to "vested interest".

He has a technique of getting academics to say and write under their own names what business cannot say for itself. It is now having some good results in the U.K. and in Canada. I have had, over the years, a good bit to do with Chambers of Commerce, of Manufacturers, with politicians - and what they say is regarded sceptically by a public encouraged by leftwing academics.

Fisher's method seems to me to be the best I have come across.

¹⁴ Mr Stuart Bocking, Chief Executive Officer, Coal Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 16 February 2026, pp. 35–39.

1.79 If the vested interests or businesses referred to in this letter are fossil fuel aligned, as has been proven in the United States with similar think tanks, then this highlights more than half a century of impact and influence these industry-aligned think tanks and advocacy lobbyist organisations have exerted over Australia's climate and energy policy and public debate.

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair
Australian Greens
Senator for Tasmania**

Additional comments from Labor Senators

- 1.1 The world's climate emergency is Australia's job opportunity. Those jobs and economic benefits will and are disproportionately flowing to the regions. Renewables are not only building resilience into our grid as shown, for the first time, by no disruptions to our main grid over the 2025/26 summer but are keeping the lights on as ageing coal fired power stations reach their end of life. For regional communities, the economic benefits of large-scale renewable projects are indisputable ranging from jobs, to alternative income streams for farmers, buffering them over the long term from climate variability and in best cases, delivering shared benefits to near neighbours, local communities and councils. For coastal communities, offshore wind exerts a gravitational pull, attracting manufacturing, blue economy industries like low carbon fuel development and most importantly through the Net Zero Economy Authority, will help workers from declining fossil fuel industries transition to new jobs. With billions of dollars in investment locked up in over 130 renewable energy projects approved by the Albanese Labor government, regional communities are in the economic box seat.
- 1.2 Undermining these opportunities for the regions have been false and misleading narratives designed to sow division and doubt sometimes leading to outright hostility. In regional communities, a culture of fear is silencing democratic debate allowing false and misleading claims to thrive rather than be tested and challenged. This report highlights a playbook featuring a variety of actors who attack credible voices like researchers and scientists or farmers with lived experience while propagating dubious or fringe claims against renewables. Backed by vested interests, quasi scientists and pseudo experts, social media amplifies a political and profit motivated agenda which preys on grassroots fears, amplifying community opposition while simultaneous silencing others. AI generated *slopoganda* (doctored, politicised content) is only worsening community opposition to renewables as the digital platforms turn a blind eye while banking revenue from eyeballs. Maintaining the status quo is a deliberate strategy, designed to grind the gears of Australia's energy shift. Lining the pockets of vested interests is the name of the game. And regional communities pay.
- 1.3 Greater transparency aided by the amplification of trusted local voices and researchers is for now, the most effective response to threats to climate information integrity. Boosting national resilience is one expected outcome of the Government's National Media Literacy strategy along with ongoing support for regional and independent media. The Australian Government recognises short comings in community consultation which is why it has invested in a developer ratings scheme which aims to build social licence between renewable

energy developers and community through better consultation standards. Developers better crafting shared benefit plans in collaboration with regional communities is as vital as jobs.

- 1.4 Despite concerted efforts to obstruct the energy shift by a denialist, divided and divisive Coalition, Australia is making steady progress. For the first time, Australia's main grid hit a new milestone of 51 per cent renewable energy in the last quarter of 2025 overtaking the contribution from coal. Flush with roof top solar on 1 in 3 homes, households have enthusiastically embraced Labor's cheaper home battery scheme with over 280 000 installations and counting. Regional households are overrepresented in home battery uptake accounting for over 40 per cent of the total despite being less than 30 per cent of the overall population. Electric vehicle (EV) sales hit a record in December 2025 at 16.7 per cent with over 450 000 vehicles sold overall spurred by a range of measures the Albanese Labor Government introduced including tax breaks, new vehicle emission standards delivering greater choice (i.e. there were 56 EV models when we came to government in 2022, compared to over 150 models now) and concessional finance for key workers. Uptake has been highest in outer suburban areas with the EV car discount dominated by working Australians including nurses, teachers, police and tradies. EV charging infrastructure is continuing to improve with 1324 public stations installed by June 2025 up from 291 sites in March 2022. With \$40 million, Labor is expanding kerbside and fast EV charging especially targeting regional blackspots. Truck electrification has been assisted with concessional financing and grants for depot charging infrastructure taken up by some of our biggest logistics companies.
- 1.5 For renters, apartment dwellers and non-solar households, Labor's funding partnership with the States and Territories is helping them access the benefits of rooftop solar complemented by the roll out of 400 community batteries. Social housing occupants are benefiting from an \$800 million investment in energy upgrades. Collectively, our policies have seen emissions fall by 8.5 million tonnes in the year to September 2025 with year-on-year transport emissions falling for the first time ever outside the COVID pandemic. Our domestic usage of gas in the main grid has also fallen across summer periods from 2.7 Terra watt hours in 2021/22 to 1.5 Terra watt hours in 2025/26. Labor's domestic gas reservation of 15-25 per cent from 2027 will further help secure resilience for local industry and domestic demands.
- 1.6 With a target of 62-70 per cent emissions reduction by 2035 in an increasingly fractious world, we need to double down rather than reignite Coalition driven climate wars. Amidst cost-of-living pressures, households (including those without solar) in several states can look forward to 3 hours of free electricity from mid-year through Labor's Solar Sharer Scheme which exploits our solar energy glut. This is how we are enabling Australians to take control of their energy destiny, share the (solar) love and realise enduring cost of living relief.

- 1.7 Our Net Zero pathway underwritten by renewables backed by storage, pumped hydro and gas is delivering cost of living relief, energy resilience and reliability against a backdrop of an evolving global oil shock. Geopolitical volatility only sharpens the imperative for Australia to double down on energy sovereignty, recognising that, unlike fuel imports, the sun cannot be blockaded.
- 1.8 For regional communities, the stakes are even higher. Primary producers, transport companies and industry big and small are centred in our regions. To that end, the expansion of renewable energy is critical infrastructure which will not only replace ageing coal fired power but bake in energy independence at scale, in the heart of regional communities. Through our \$1.1 billion investment in low carbon fuels as part of our Future Made in Australia agenda, we recognise that Australia must diversify its liquid fuel mix. Again, the regions are well positioned to benefit as farmers will supply the feedstock like canola, sugar, sorghum and waste products towards biodiesel, sustainable aviation fuel and synthetic fuels made in the regions harnessing cheap renewable energy from the regions.
- 1.9 Australians do not wish to be beholden to foreign interests for energy and by staying the course articulated by the Albanese Labor Government's ambitious but achievable energy goals, they need not be.
- 1.10 We thank the secretariat, Hansard and broadcasting for their hard work and professionalism. To the many people, from community members, researchers, commercial interests, non-profits, community groups and representative bodies, thank you for your participation either via public presentations or through written submissions. The courageous advocacy of many participants from regional and coastal communities, in the face of adversarial attacks did not go unnoticed and we thank them for sharing their stories with us. We fight on.

Senator Michelle Ananda-Rajah
Deputy Chair
Labor Senator for Victoria

Senator Lisa Darmanin
Labor Senator for Victoria

Additional comments from Senator David Pocock and Senator Andrew McLachlan CSC

Introduction

- 1.1 We support the committee's report and acknowledge the substantial body of evidence gathered through this inquiry and contained in that report. The committee has heard compelling testimony from experts, civil society, and researchers about the scale and seriousness of misinformation and disinformation in Australia's climate and energy debate.
- 1.2 However, we do not believe the committee's report goes far enough. At a moment when democratic institutions are under significant and increasing pressure, incremental reform is not an adequate response. The evidence presented to the committee does not point to a marginal problem requiring modest adjustment. It points to a systemic failure, one that is already distorting public debate, undermining trust in institutions, and delaying urgent policy action.
- 1.3 Misinformation and disinformation are enabled by opaque systems of influence and weak regulatory frameworks. In the context of climate and energy policy, where powerful vested interests have both the means and the motivation to shape public narratives, these dynamics are particularly acute.
- 1.4 Misinformation and disinformation are widespread, often coordinated, and frequently linked to efforts to delay or derail climate action. It erodes public trust, polarises communities, and leaves Australians less able to make informed decisions about issues that directly affect their lives.
- 1.5 Yet despite this, the committee's report stops short of recommending the structural reforms needed to address underlying problems
- 1.6 We are therefore providing these additional comments to outline the reforms that we believe are necessary to restore integrity to Australia's information environment and to strengthen the foundations of our democracy.

Truth in political advertising

The Government's failure to act on its own reform

- 1.7 We are deeply concerned by the Government's failure to bring truth in political advertising laws to the 48th Parliament.
- 1.8 In late 2024, the Australian Government introduced the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Communications) Bill 2024. This bill would have, for the first time at the federal level, created enforceable standards against misleading and deceptive political advertising. It reflected recommendations of the Joint

Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and was modelled on the longstanding South Australian scheme.

- 1.9 The bill was not perfect. We acknowledge concerns raised about the proposed role of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), particularly the risk of placing the AEC in a quasi-adjudicative role that may expose it to politicisation. However, these are design questions, not reasons for abandonment. The bill represented a serious and workable first step toward restoring truth to Australia's electoral processes.
- 1.10 What has followed since has been nothing short of a dereliction of responsibility.

Silence, delay, and abdication

- 1.11 Since introducing the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Communications) Bill 2024, there has been no meaningful debate, no refinement, and no explanation for the failure to reintroduce it into the 48th Parliament. In a policy area so central to democratic integrity, this inaction is indefensible.
- 1.12 Australians continue to see misleading political advertising deployed with impunity. As has been observed in public debate, false claims, such as deliberately mislabelling candidates to mislead voters, remain entirely lawful under Commonwealth law.

A clear consensus for reform

- 1.13 Truth in political advertising laws are necessary and widely supported.
- 1.14 The Centre for Public Integrity identified truth in political advertising as a core integrity reform, noting that such measures are foundational to protecting democratic processes from manipulation and distortion.¹
- 1.15 The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) explicitly called for the Government to 'pursue truth in political advertising legislation ahead of the 2028 Federal Election',² warning that disinformation is 'a deliberate strategy' that is 'well-funded, coordinated, and linked to fossil fuel interests'³ and is actively undermining democracy.
- 1.16 The Climate Council similarly emphasised that Australians 'need confidence that they are voting on facts, not falsehoods'⁴ and recommended reform of political advertising laws as part of a broader response to misinformation.⁵

¹ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, p. 3.

² Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, p. 2.

³ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, p. 3.

⁴ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, p. 3.

⁵ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, p. 16.

- 1.17 The ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society pointed to the proliferation of misleading claims in political advertising, in particular in climate and energy debates. It concluded that national truth in political advertising laws are urgently required to address these harms.⁶
- 1.18 There is a broad coalition of integrity experts, civil society organisations, and researchers giving the Government a consistent message: Australia's current settings allow misinformation to flourish during elections, distorting public debate and eroding trust.

Recommendation 1

- 1.19 The Australian Government legislate truth in political advertising laws to ensure voters are protected from misleading and deceptive electoral communications ahead of the next federal election.**

Regulating bots and inauthentic accounts

The unchecked spread of inauthentic actors

- 1.20 The proliferation of bot accounts and inauthentic online actors is a grave concern. These accounts are a mechanism through which misinformation and disinformation is amplified.
- 1.21 The inquiry received submissions and heard evidence that bots and fake accounts are already active participants in distorting public discourse. The Climate Council warned that 'bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts accelerate the spread of climate mis- and dis-information, shaping the national narrative and drowning out credible information'.⁷
- 1.22 Similarly, Farmers for Climate Action provided direct evidence of coordinated campaigns using fake social media profiles designed to impersonate real Australians. These accounts were deployed to create the false impression of widespread opposition to renewable energy, misleading communities.⁸
- 1.23 Anthropic told the committee that this risk was only going to increase through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools.⁹
- 1.24 The RMIT Information Integrity Hub also highlighted that advances in AI are making this problem significantly worse, enabling the creation of 'seemingly

⁶ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, *Submission 21*, pp.2–3.

⁷ Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, p. 4.

⁸ Farmers for Climate Action, *Submission 130*, pp. 1–3.

⁹ Mr Evan Frondorf, Head, External Policy and Partnerships, Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, p. 6.

authentic content' and automated accounts that are increasingly difficult to detect.¹⁰

- 1.25 Bot networks and coordinated fake accounts can be designed to appear authentic; complete with profile photos, fabricated identities, and coordinated messaging.
- 1.26 This creates a distorted information ecosystem in which citizens engaging in public debate cannot easily distinguish between real community sentiment and orchestrated manipulation.

A regulatory vacuum

- 1.27 Despite the scale and seriousness of this problem, Australia currently has no clear legal obligation requiring social media companies to remove inauthentic bot accounts or to label automated accounts. This regulatory gap is indefensible.
- 1.28 Social media platforms design, operate, and profit from content generated or boosted through the use of bots. Yet they are under no enforceable duty to ensure that users are interacting with genuine human participants. The result is a system where manipulation is cheap, scalable, and largely consequence-free.
- 1.29 Parents for Climate submitted that coordinated disinformation campaigns, often involving bots and trolls, are now 'produced and spread faster, more cheaply, and with a veneer of credibility that is difficult for individuals to see through'.¹¹ Without intervention, this problem will only intensify.
- 1.30 Voluntary codes and platform self-regulation have failed. Bot accounts have continued to proliferate because of the fact that there are no enforceable consequences for allowing them to do so.
- 1.31 The solution is to legislate a clear obligation, attach meaningful penalties, and enforce it. Social media companies must be required to detect and remove bot accounts that impersonate humans. There is no legitimate reason to allow automated accounts to masquerade as real people.
- 1.32 Where automated accounts are used for legitimate purposes, they must be clearly and prominently labelled.
- 1.33 These obligations must be backed by significant civil penalties to ensure compliance.
- 1.34 Removing or labelling bots does not limit free speech. Bots are not human actors and should be afforded no rights to freedom of speech.

¹⁰ RMIT Information Integrity Hub, *Submission 118*, p. 1.

¹¹ Parents for Climate Action, *Submission 102*, p. 1.

Recommendation 2

1.35 The Australian Government introduce legislation imposing a clear legal obligation on social media companies to:

- (a) detect and remove bot accounts that impersonate human users; and
- (b) clearly and prominently label all automated or bot accounts that remain on their platforms, with these obligations enforced through meaningful civil penalties for non-compliance.

Algorithmic transparency and accountability

A system hidden from scrutiny

1.36 At the core of increasing misinformation and disinformation is the lack of transparency surrounding how social media algorithms shape online public discourse in Australia. Social media platforms have constructed a system of immense influence. The algorithms on which they base their business model now determine what millions of Australians see, hear and read.

1.37 Yet neither the public, nor policymakers, nor independent researchers can properly interrogate how these algorithms operate, what they prioritise, or whose interests they ultimately serve.

Evidence of algorithmic harm

1.38 The inquiry received compelling evidence that algorithmic systems are not neutral. Rather, they actively contribute to the spread and amplification of misinformation and disinformation.

1.39 The Climate Council highlighted that misinformation and disinformation 'are widespread across Australian media and politics, and have become a major barrier to effective climate action – undermining public trust in science, skewing public debate and delaying coordinated policy development'.¹²

1.40 Critically, these dynamics are not organic. They are driven and accelerated by platform design choices.

1.41 The ACF warned that false and misleading content spreads 'faster and further than facts, amplified by algorithms that reward outrage and division'.¹³

1.42 The ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society reinforced this point, identifying how platform algorithms curate and target content in ways that raise 'particular concerns about the spread of

¹² Climate Council of Australia, *Submission 198*, p. 4.

¹³ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Submission 147*, p. 3.

misinformation, non-transparent advertising, and non-compliance' with existing safeguards like the AEC rules.¹⁴

Platform secrecy as a barrier to accountability

- 1.43 Social media companies continue to use algorithms to curate information within systems that can only be described as black boxes.
- 1.44 Researchers are denied access to the data required to understand how algorithms function in practice. This prevents independent scrutiny of fundamental questions around what content is being amplified, and why.
- 1.45 The ANU Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions pointed to the role of digital platforms using 'algorithms [to] amplify sensationalist content and create echo chambers',¹⁵ while emphasising the need for greater transparency in how these systems operate. Its submission goes on to recommend requiring 'greater transparency from social media and digital platforms about how their internal algorithms curate users' social feeds and determine content recommendations'.¹⁶
- 1.46 Without access, these concerns cannot be properly tested, verified, or addressed. Australians are being expected to trust systems that cannot be independently examined for the impacts they have on our information environment.

Recommendation 3

- 1.47 The Australian Government legislate to require social media companies to provide suitably accredited independent researchers with meaningful access to the data, documentation, and platform interfaces necessary to study, understand, and publicly communicate how their algorithms function and the impacts those systems have on Australian society.**

User control over algorithmic curation

- 1.48 Australians are increasingly subjected to algorithmically curated content without any meaningful ability to opt out.
- 1.49 Australians should be able to choose how their information environment is shaped. In practice, that choice is rarely offered and, when it is, it is buried in settings designed to discourage its use.
- 1.50 If platforms are confident in the value of their algorithmic systems, they should have no hesitation in allowing users to opt out of them.

¹⁴ ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, *Submission 21*, p. 3.

¹⁵ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

¹⁶ ANU Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

Recommendation 4

1.51 The Australian Government legislate to require that social media companies provide users with a clear, easy, and default-visible option to opt out of algorithmic content curation, including ensuring that this option is not hidden or buried within platform settings and enables access to a non-curated or chronological content feed.

Inadequate and ineffective federal lobbying laws

- 1.52 Australia's federal lobbying laws are ineffective and not fit for purpose. The current federal lobbying framework allows vast swathes of influence to operate in the shadows, undermining transparency, and public trust.
- 1.53 Australians already believe that lobbying involves 'money buying influence and access'.¹⁷ The problem is that, under the current regime, that perception is not only understandable, it is, in many respects, accurate. The federal system regulates only a narrow subset of lobbyists, leaving the majority of influence activity entirely unexamined.
- 1.54 The definition of 'lobbyist' under the Commonwealth regime is so narrow that it excludes in-house corporate lobbyists, industry associations, and many of the most powerful actors seeking to shape public policy. The result is a system where, as has been widely acknowledged, approximately 80 per cent of lobbying activity occurs outside any formal transparency framework.
- 1.55 This means that major corporations, particularly in sectors like fossil fuels, where the stakes are enormous, can engage directly with ministers, parliamentarians and senior officials without disclosure or accountability. In the context of climate and energy policy, where disinformation is often driven by vested interests, this lack of transparency creates an environment in which misleading narratives are able to influence decision-making.
- 1.56 The Centre for Public Integrity made clear that transparency around lobbying and influence is foundational to addressing misinformation and restoring trust in democratic institutions.¹⁸ Without visibility over who is shaping policy, and on whose behalf, efforts to combat disinformation will remain fundamentally incomplete.
- 1.57 Similarly, Transparency International Australia highlighted that opaque lobbying and political finance arrangements enable vested interests to distort

¹⁷ See, for example, The Australia Institute, 'Most Australians think politicians' secret cash-for-access payments are corrupt', *Media release*, 4 November 2025 (accessed 23 March 2026).

¹⁸ Centre for Public Integrity, *Submission 129*, pp. 3–4.

public debate and policymaking.¹⁹ Weak lobbying laws are not a peripheral issue in the fight against misinformation, they are part of the problem.

Recommendation 5

1.58 The Australian Government urgently legislate a comprehensive overhaul of the federal lobbying regime to ensure full transparency of influence over public policy, including by:

- (a) replacing the Lobbying Code of Conduct with a legislative regime that provides transparency, integrity, and equality;
- (b) expanding the definition of 'lobbyist' to capture all individuals and entities engaged in influencing public policy, including in-house corporate lobbyists, industry associations, peak bodies, and consultants;
- (c) establishing a single, comprehensive, and publicly accessible register of all lobbying activity, including the identity of lobbyists, their clients or employers, and the policy issues on which they are lobbying;
- (d) requiring timely disclosure of all lobbying interactions with ministers and senior public officials, including the subject matter and purpose of those interactions;
- (e) mandating regular, standardised reporting of lobbying activities, including expenditure, campaigns, and advocacy efforts related to public policy;
- (f) broadening mandatory cooling-off periods to include senior advisors and officials; broadening the scope of cooling-off periods to include lobbying on any subject matter or advising or consulting on lobbying;
- (g) extending cooling-off periods to align with the duration of a standard parliamentary term; and
- (h) establishing an independent statutory authority to regulate lobbying at a federal level with powers to monitor, investigate and enforce lobbying laws, including the ability to audit disclosures and impose sanctions.

Conclusion

1.59 We support the committee's report and the substantial body of evidence it reflects.

1.60 We come to this inquiry from different parts of the Australian political landscape. An Independent senator and a Liberal senator reach shared conclusions on the basis of overwhelming evidence that Australia is confronting a systemic failure in the integrity of our information environment.

¹⁹ Transparency International Australia, *Submission 122*, pp. 2 and 5–6.

- 1.61 We are already in an environment in which many Australians find it difficult to distinguish what is true from what has been manufactured by malicious actors, or boosted by social media companies acting in their own self-interest.
- 1.62 Addressing the threats posed by misinformation and disinformation requires reforming the structural conditions that allow it to flourish. As a starting point, we have identified five areas for legislative change: truth in political advertising, the regulation of inauthentic actors, algorithmic transparency, user control over curation, and lobbying reform.

A note of thanks

- 1.63 We would like to thank the committee secretariat for all of the work put into this inquiry, and to all of the submitters and those who gave evidence to the committee.

Senator David Pocock
Independent Senator for the
Australian Capital Territory

Senator Andrew McLachlan CSC
Liberal Senator for South Australia

Dissenting report from Senator Matt Canavan

Introductory comments

- 1.1 This inquiry was conducted in a way which proved that it was not about a genuine effort to improve the accuracy of public dialogue but, instead, it was an attempt to bully and cajole people into silence. I have never seen a greater abuse of the Senate's purpose. Our Parliament should be the vehicle through which the people can challenge and critique the Government. Instead, with a Labor-Green majority in the Senate, this inquiry became the vehicle through which the politicians criticised the people.
- 1.2 The way our system works is if things are not working, and they are clearly not working at the moment, then the people get to elect new politicians. The way Labor and Green politicians conducted themselves in this inquiry showed that they would like to elect a new people.
- 1.3 There was an in-built ignorance in this inquiry about what is the nature of truth. This inquiry was conducted on the premise that there are certain inviolable truths about the workings of our planet, the precise impact of the burning of fossil fuels and even the cost of different energy technologies. But there was no attempt to establish how we know these things. Apart from a naïve repetition of the tired phrase 'trust the science', there was little interest in understanding what science is.
- 1.4 Science is the investigation of the workings of our natural world. Science, like the natural world itself, is constantly changing. Understanding how we know about the natural world is not science, it is a branch of philosophy or, in technical terms, epistemology. This discipline traces its origins back to Plato's Apology in which he quotes Socrates as saying that:
The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.
- 1.5 Unfortunately, this inquiry was conducted with the ignorant assumption that the Government knows everything, and the Science leaves no question unanswered. However, what marks science apart from many other academic disciplines, say mathematics, is that the conclusions are constantly changing. Only a fool would posit that today's scientific 'truths' will remain the same in a century's time.
- 1.6 Thomas Kuhn, one of the most influential modern philosophers of science, established the theory that science progresses through 'paradigm shifts'.¹ In any one time, there are a set of agreed principles established through the consensus of the scientific community. However, as anomalies emerge in the prevailing theory, new paradigms emerge to challenge the existing consensus. Eventually,

¹ The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962)

there is a scientific revolution that replaces the existing theories with a new understanding. This is most starkly seen in the progression from Newtonian to relativistic physics in the early 20th century.

- 1.7 As Thomas Kuhn argued, science does not progress linearly through the mere accumulation of facts. The point being that it is the very existence of non-conforming, or heterodox, theories is how scientific knowledge progresses.
- 1.8 The heart of this inquiry's approach has been to suppress, ridicule and silence anyone who expresses different views from the current scientific consensus. While I am sure that the Labor and Green Senators believe that in doing this, they are defending science, they are instead defeating it because it is the openness to have ideas challenged and critiqued that has allowed our scientific knowledge to rapidly advance.
- 1.9 What is strange about this inquiry's approach is that we have had a real-world experience of problems of silencing criticism during the COVID pandemic. During COVID, governments did censor views that were different from those of the medical authorities. The Australian Government censored over 4000 social media posts criticising government policies during the pandemic.² Social media companies aggressively censored people for de-claiming that COVID started in a lab, that the AstraZeneca vaccine was dangerous, that none of the vaccines stopped transmission and that lockdowns were too costly.
- 1.10 Many of the views that Government officials and social media companies took regarding COVID are now known to be wrong or at least the subject of legitimate debate. In the case of the AstraZeneca vaccine, it has now been de-listed. If governments had allowed more criticism, many of the costs of COVID may have been avoided. We are still dealing with the rampant inflation that was unleashed because governments panicked and kept the country locked down for too long.
- 1.11 You would think that having had this recent experience of the failures of censorship we would be cautious about repeating the same mistakes. But instead, the recommendations of this inquiry seek to double down and suppress criticism of the government's climate policies just as had been done with government climate policies. This is even, or perhaps it is because, the government's climate policies are clearly failing with energy prices skyrocketing (despite claims that renewable energy is the cheapest form of power) and industries are being lost to other countries not taking climate change action.
- 1.12 What was even worse about this inquiry's efforts were that often the targets of suppression were not those engaged in academic debate but simple community members who were opposed to the industrial development of rural areas. Most

² Kenny, C. 2023, 'Many censored social media posts did not contain Covid-19 misinformation', *The Australian*, 21 July.

people opposed to the rollout of large scale solar and wind projects do not subscribe to any views on climate change science. They are just opposed to the destruction of the Australian bush. This is demonstrated by the range of opposition across the political spectrum to these projects, which includes former leaders of the Greens party and the Chair of this inquiry. You do not need to descend into the knots of conspiracy theories about fossil fuel industry funding or the control of our debate by right-wing forces, to understand why there might be opposition to the construction of a 300-metre wind turbine next door to someone's house.

- 1.13 Because it was clouded by the fog of conspiracy theories, this inquiry often found itself in the position of taking the side of multi-national solar and wind developers over small community groups who just want to defend the relaxing ambience of their country communities.
- 1.14 There was a huge interest from the public in this inquiry. Only 243 submissions were accepted and published. While many thousands of emails were received, these were deemed to be 'campaign' emails, and, in line with the standard practice of most committees, these were not published or accepted as individual submissions.
- 1.15 My office received almost 6000 emails from people across Australia expressing their view that this inquiry was nothing more than a means to silence, shun and ignore those in the community who dare to question the man-made impact of climate change and the Labor government's obsession with net zero.
- 1.16 While I appreciated the opportunity to participate as a member of the committee, in my view it was always going to be a one-sided inquiry from the get-go. It saw some witnesses being verbally abused by aggressive committee members and others afforded a level of 'witness protection' by these same committee members. Some senators asking questions were not afforded due respect for their line of questioning.
- 1.17 The inquiry was interrupted by claims and counterclaims from submitters and witnesses against each other, within and outside of the formal inquiry proceedings.
- 1.18 Through the process, the Committee secretariat remained professional and diligent in its support of the committee through 10 public hearings, and I commend them for producing a substantive report and thank them for their patience through often trying hearings.
- 1.19 However, because of the overall bias inherent in the conduct of this inquiry (which was not the fault of the secretariat) I cannot support the recommendations of this inquiry. The one useful conclusion of the inquiry, however, was that the enormous amount of funding that goes to environmental and activist organisations deserves greater scrutiny.

- 1.20 In its submission, the Page Research Centre claimed that over \$108 million in foreign funding from international foundations (like the Sunrise Project and Greenpeace) has supported Australian campaigns aimed at dismantling the social license of coal and disrupting energy markets.³
- 1.21 In its submission, Coal Australia stated:
- ‘We believe that guarding against climate change and energy misinformation – including through foreign funded and aided environmental activism and climate change and energy misinformation – would be maximized by a regular report to Parliament from those agencies charged with national security, intelligence and oversight of elections.’⁴
- 1.22 Unfortunately, this inquiry did not adequately investigate these substantive claims and failed to call many of the activist groups that would seem to be funded from overseas sources invested in the rollout of renewable energy and related climate change policies. For that reason, I have not come to detailed conclusions about these matters. However, it would be useful for a future inquiry to look further into these issues and specifically whether the laws we have passed restricting the foreign funding of Australian politics are being subverted.

Senator the Hon Matthew Canavan
The Nationals
Senator for Queensland

³ Page Research Centre, *Submission 140*, p.13.

⁴ Coal Australia, *Submission 64*, p.3.

Dissenting report from Senator Malcolm Roberts

Dedicated to the people of Australia and our free speech

- 1.1 This dissenting report addresses the Chair's draft report and the conduct of this inquiry.
- 1.2 It shows that this inquiry was not a genuinely open examination of evidence. Rather, it was the result of prior assumptions, selective scrutiny, and a protected narrative aligned with the push for censorship in the name of misinformation and disinformation.
- 1.3 Central claims relating to climate and energy policy, and an asserted need for further controls on speech were not established with Scientific Proof or a sound Policy Basis.

Across western countries implementing the United Nations (UN) Paris Agreement and Net Zero, people are waking ... and questioning the climate and energy narratives.

- 1.4 During the last 18 years in Australia, seven Liberal and Labor Prime Ministers and Opposition Leaders have fallen victim to climate politics.
- 1.5 At the last British election on 4th July 2024, the Tories were swept from power after an abysmally small vote. Today, just 20 months later UK Labour is even lower in the polls.
- 1.6 Globally, people are waking. And the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is now desperately resorting to pushing a misinformation-disinformation bill across nations globally. To censure dissent ... to censor.
- 1.7 **At the time the motion establishing this select committee was moved the mover's objective and the inquiry's real objective was obvious ... to endorse a misinformation-disinformation censorship bill aligned with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres campaign for every western nation to have censorship controls in place over their people.**
- 1.8 Such is the complete lack of Scientific Proof for claims of climate catastrophism that it remains a topic of vigorous contention almost half a century since the UN Environmental Program's first Executive Director Maurice Strong fabricated 'global warming' and 'climate catastrophe'.
- 1.9 And that he fraudulently proclaimed to be due to HUMAN activity, principally the use of Hydrocarbon Fuels (coal, oil, gas) and animal farming.

Psychopathic UN criminal Maurice Strong fabricated false claims of climate catastrophism

- 1.10 **An extraordinarily clever and scheming Maurice Strong manipulated national leaders, to adopt his programs to supposedly 'save' the planet and humanity ... from humans.**
- 1.11 Maurice Strong was a founding director of the Chicago Climate Exchange, trading Carbon Dioxide Credits ... a corrupt global Carbon Dioxide TAX to make its directors billionaires.
- 1.12 And to provide the UN with ongoing revenue independent of member nation grants to guarantee revenue for Maurice Strong's oft-stated ambitions of UN global governance.
- 1.13 Maurice Strong was a Canadian oil magnate who, in 1972, started the UN Environmental Program (UNEP).
- 1.14 Six months later he manipulated his way to be UNEP's head.
- 1.15 In 1976 UNEP fabricated 'science' to BAN the insecticide DDT that had eradicated malaria in the west.
- 1.16 **After 40 to 50 MILLION Indians, Asians and Africans died needlessly of malaria, in 2006 the UN restored DDT's use.**
- 1.17 The world's list of mass killers includes Chairman Mao 60 million deaths, Maurice Strong 40-50 million, Joseph Stalin 40 million, Adolf Hitler 20 million ...
- 1.18 **Australia's current economic, environmental and societal destruction is based on the wily psychopathic UN criminal Maurice Strong's deception and fraud.**
- 1.19 Maurice Strong's tentacles across the globe and his internal connections with an amazing multitude of global organisations ranging from the Club of Rome to the World Bank had prominent roles in driving and entrenching unscientific climate catastrophism.
- 1.20 The scope of his manipulation is only partially revealed in the media report entitled 'At the United Nations, the Curious Career of Maurice Strong'.¹
- 1.21 Maurice Strong built paths and systems for climate prostitutes stealing subsidies for solar and wind power.
- 1.22 Maurice Strong is infamous for his quote, '*the enemy is humanity itself*'. He reportedly stated his life's aims as being to '*deindustrialise western civilisation*' and to put in place '*an unelected socialist global governance*'.
- 1.23 In 1992 during an interview Maurice Strong said, quote: '*We may get to the point where the only way of saving the world will be for industrialised civilisation to collapse ... isn't it our responsibility to bring this about?*'.

¹ See: www.foxnews.com/story/at-the-united-nations-the-curious-career-of-maurice-strong

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- 1.24 In his report for the UN, The Club of Rome's Maurice Strong stated, quote: 'in searching for a new enemy to unite us being humans globally we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine and the like would fit the bill'.
- 1.25 In 1992, UN Earth Summit Secretary General Maurice Strong said, quote: *'It is clear that current lifestyles and consumption patterns of the affluent middle class involving high meat intake, consumption of large amounts of frozen and convenience foods, use of fossil fuels, ownership of motor vehicles, small electrical appliances, home and workplace air conditioning, and suburban housing are not sustainable.'*
- 1.26 The report said human activity caused these 'dangers' and needs a GLOBAL response.
- 1.27 Many senior UN climate bureaucrats, including Christiana Figueres when she was head of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN FCCC freely admit that climate catastrophism's intent is to put in place a new world economic order (socialism) under UN programs.
- 1.28 The UN FCCC oversees the politically-driven UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC that Maurice Strong created to drive catastrophism.
- 1.29 When American law enforcement wanted Maurice Strong for illegal water trading and the UN's Oil-For-Food scandal he exiled himself in China.

The UN Climate Narrative and the Energy Narrative

- 1.30 In short, the core climate narrative is that HUMAN production of Carbon Dioxide must be drastically cut or even stopped to prevent an imminent, global climate catastrophe endangering humans, humanity, the natural environment and our planet.
- 1.31 The energy narrative has evolved as the politics changes yet is in essence that transition to solar and wind electricity generation is essential to save the planet through implementing Net Zero Carbon Dioxide policy and will result in lower electricity prices and more jobs.
- 1.32 For more detail, please refer to pages 9 and 10 in my submission, No.125, available on the inquiry website.²
- 1.33 The climate narrative and the energy narrative include the unfounded and false claim that these beliefs and energy policies are based on science and the false claim that all the proposed solutions are based on science.

² See: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Information_Integrity_on_Climate_Change_and_Energy/ClimateIntegrity/Submissions

Scientific Proof involves using solid data as evidence in logical points to prove cause-and-effect.

1.34 Scientific methodology relies on objective observation, measurement and data.

1.35 SCIENTIFIC PROOF requires Data in Logical Points to understand and prove Cause-And-Effect.

The Howard Liberal-Nationals implemented climate catastrophism without Scientific Proof

1.36 The Howard Liberal-National government started and entrenched the implementation of the psychopathic Maurice Strong's dishonest climate and energy madness when it:

- used the states to circumvent the federal constitution to steal farmers' property rights to enable Australia's compliance with the UN's 1997 Kyoto Protocol;
- imposed its Renewable Energy Target now destroying what had been the world's best electricity supply grid;
- created the National Electricity Market that is really a national bureaucratic racket manipulating electricity supply and prices while distorting the system for Australian and global beneficiaries; and,
- proposed the first policy for a Carbon Dioxide Tax ... an Emissions Trading Scheme to make Maurice Strong a billionaire.

1.37 The Howard government did this claiming its climate and energy policies were based on climate science.

1.38 Yet, in 2013, six years after being booted from the Prime Ministership, Howard quietly confessed publicly in distant London that on the topic of climate science he is agnostic. He did not have the science.

1.39 Last year he again repeated here in Australia that he is agnostic on climate science.

The current Albanese Labor government has no Scientific Proof for cutting HUMAN Carbon Dioxide

1.40 In answer to my questions at the inquiry, the current Department of Climate Change Energy, Environment and Water was unable to provide me with the specific location of the Scientific Proof that production of Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity has a detrimental effect on climate, is a danger and needs to be cut.

1.41 Scientific Proof being defined as Empirical Scientific Evidence in Logical Scientific Points being a framework that scientifically proves Cause-And-Effect.

1.42 Minister Chris Bowen's department could NOT provide me with SCIENTIFIC PROOF climate is changing.

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- 1.43 **Instead, officers deferred to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN IPCC) and admitted that it relies on the (politicised) UN IPCC that Maurice Strong founded through his UNEP and the UN World Meteorological Organisation.**
- 1.44 **The UN IPCC provides no hard 'data' as proof. Instead, all six UN science reports each rely on distortion and fraud.**
- 1.45 My 2012 assessment of the UN IPCC's first four reports is available online.³
- 1.46 The UN IPCC's fifth and sixth reports use guesses to label 'likelihoods' and 'confidence levels' to dishonestly imply statistical rigour where none exists.
- 1.47 Note that during an inquiry hearing, I asked Ms Charlotte Scadden, Senior Adviser on Information Integrity in the Office of the UN Secretary-General, to provide me with specific Scientific Proof of the UN's climate narrative. She took the question on notice.
- 1.48 In her written replying she failed to provide Scientific Proof. Her answers show abysmal ignorance of the concept of rational thought and lack of understanding of what constitutes science and scientific proof.
- 1.49 Her response is akin to that of a young child. It reveals complete ignorance of scientific evidence and process. Or possibly an attempt to hide the UN IPCC's lack of scientific proof.

Maurice Strong's stated broader agenda – global control

- 1.50 As Australians and their families' financial position goes backward Labor, Greens & Liberal moderates' social policy attacks & divides Australians as colonisers, de-gendered & disrespected.
- 1.51 Maurice Strong drove those strategies with policies to smash the two basic structures of human civilisation ... the family and the nation state.
- 1.52 In the planned absence of both structures, people turn to government and global policies.
- 1.53 The UN IPCC distorts climate science to push the UN's campaign of 17 so-called 'Sustainable Development Goals', as part of **Maurice Strong's UN's Agenda 21 program.**
- 1.54 Prime Minister Paul Keating's Labor government signed UN Agenda 21 at the 1992 UN conference in Rio de Janeiro, being a **commitment to global governance in the 21st century.**
- 1.55 The campaign later became UN Agenda 2030, being a commitment to global governance in 2030.

³ www.climate.conscious.com.au/docs/new/2_AppendixIPCC.pdf

- 1.56 Prime Minister Howard's Liberal-National coalition government arguably advanced Agenda 21's implementation with more vigour than did any other government.
- 1.57 Under both Labor and Coalition governments and the Greens party, Australian climate and energy policy are sourced in unfounded UN IPCC claims.
- 1.58 Some prime ministers and Greens Members of Parliament since 1992 have personally echoed, reinforced and entrenched the unfounded claim that human impact on climate is an 'existential threat to the human race, to our natural environment and to earth itself'. Contradicting science.

Now the UN proclaims free speech and scientific debate as existential threats

- 1.59 Now the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is claiming that climate misinformation-disinformation is an '*existential threat*'.
- 1.60 The UN's agenda is global control of speech and censorship to prevent discussion opposing the UN's climate and energy agenda.**
- 1.61 Yet a hallmark and key ingredient of the scientific method and process and Human Progress is scientific questioning and debate. These all need free speech.
- 1.62 As with false claims of catastrophic climate change, the Liberal-Nationals introduced proposed misinformation-disinformation legislation. This time under Prime Minister Scott Morrison.
- 1.63 When the Albanese government formed government it introduced misinformation-disinformation censorship legislation.
- 1.64 Due to our strong support for free speech, One Nation then guided public opposition that in turn drove the Labor government to withdraw the proposed censorship bill.
- 1.65 Senator Whish-Wilson's motion to hold this inquiry passed the senate thanks to Greens and Labor combining on a unity ticket to support censorship.

The current Albanese Labor government has no basis for Energy Policy

- 1.66 Responding to my question during the inquiry, Minister Chris Bowen's department revealed it has no specific, measured Policy Basis for transitioning Australia to solar, wind and batteries.**
- 1.67 The department has never provided the specific impact of HUMAN Carbon Dioxide, being the necessary policy basis.
- 1.68 Thus, confirming no Cost Benefit Analysis. No evaluation of policy options. No Business Case. No Plan. No tracking implementation.
- 1.69 We're NOT 'transitioning'. Minister Chris Bowen is blindly driving Australia over a cliff.

- 1.70 At a cost estimated to be \$1.3 to 1.9 TRILLION. ... for nothing.
- 1.71 As a result to date, Australians now suffer the world's most stupid and highest electricity prices.
- 1.72 There is no basis for transitioning to solar and wind under Maurice Strong's UN Agenda 21 Sustainable Development Goals.**
- 1.73 Meanwhile, President Trump's America uses REAL science to restore affordable Hydrocarbon Fuels – coal, oil and natural gas. And to restore the American economy. See below.
- 1.74 The so-called transition is not an issue in China, India, Asia, Africa, Russia and other nations where it is either not implemented or is given lip service.

Unmentionables expose reality

- 1.75 When reality raises its head there are unmentionable truths that when stated climate catastrophists either run from or deny or smear and denigrate the speaker or call for censorship laws.
- 1.76 In doing so climate catastrophists expose their superficial claim of reality that is not reality. Instead, it is mis-disinformation.
- 1.77 These truths include the following practical facts:
- **Crops were grown in high latitudes in the past** – meaning earth was hotter then than today.
 - **Warm periods have occurred about every 1,000 years** – and were hotter than present.
 - Warmer periods were scientifically classified and labelled as Climate Optimums because these warm periods enhanced human civilisation and the natural environment.
 - **Ancient records mention bountiful warm periods** – in addition to proxy measurements.
 - **There is no proof that this latest Warm Period following the Maunder solar Minimum from 1645 to 1715, the coldest period within the Little Ice Age from roughly 1300 to 1850, has a new and unique cause** – as HUMAN production of Carbon Dioxide was tiny in past warmer periods.
 - **There is insufficient data to confidently predict the climate. This is fundamental because** long period cycles are involved in climate. At least 6000 to 10 000 years of climate data are necessary to predict climate.
 - **Current climate models use computers that are too slow to model the laws of physics** so that the UN IPCC can introduce unfounded ideological assumptions as parameters.
 - **Prediction from a weather station time series is pointless** because error limits become enormous after 30 years.
 - **Ensemble computer models using unvalidated computer models** that are not independent and not based on proper causal mechanisms violate

forecasting principles and that's another reason why the UN IPCC's dreams about the future are labelled 'projections', and cannot be labelled 'forecasts' that require far higher standards.

- **The CSIRO admitted it has never said Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity is a danger** and when pressed on the fact that prominent politicians attribute this to advice from CSIRO, its climate team suggested we ask the politicians for their source.
- **CSIRO admitted today's temperatures are NOT unprecedented.**
- **Solar and wind electricity sources are not required to rationally meet an irrational climate target.**
- **The World Bank's original target of 'limiting temperature rise to 2°C' was concocted** not determined scientifically with rational thought. As was the more recent target of limiting temperature to 1.5°C. It is a political target designed to scare people and spur compliance.

Reality is catching up quickly to expose Maurice Strong's misinformation-disinformation

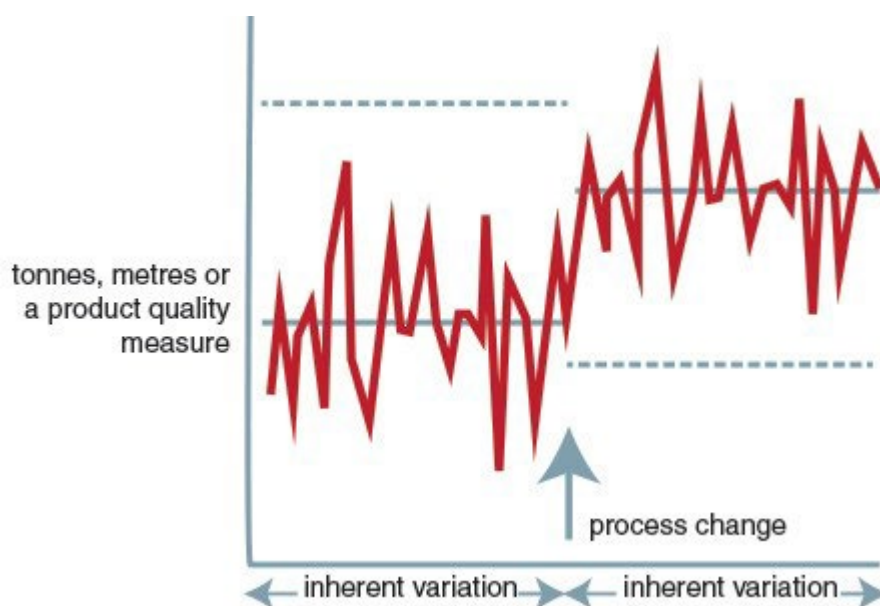
1.78 My team has 24 000 datasets from science agencies worldwide, including our Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO.

1.79 With statistical analysis and cross-plotting.

1.80 To understand real-world empirical data, we need to understand variation.

1.81 There's variation in everything including materials, events, tasks, people, natural phenomena, weather, ...

1.82 There are two broad types of variation: Inherent natural variation, and process change. Plus, cycles whose duration varies from daily, to annual, and to other cycles such as galactic cycles of around 150 million years.



- 1.83 Time frames are important. We all experience and know that daily variation in temperatures can be huge. Seasonal variations can be large. Yet over a 30-year climate cycle temperature may be consistent.
- 1.84 The overwhelming majority of people have limited understanding of variation. This enables those who mis-disinform to fit an upward or downward sloping line to data while relying on changing the start and end dates. Or to present data out of context.
- 1.85 Proponents of climate catastrophism often use these and many other tricks to fabricate the perception of warming where there is no such overall trend. This cherry-picking of data is done to mislead casual observers into concluding that warming is occurring when there is none.
- 1.86 Our 24,000 datasets confirm ongoing inherent natural variation in cycles that warm and cool, warm and cool, ...
- 1.87 They show no change in climate. Not temperature; not rainfall; not storm frequency, severity or duration; not drought; not ocean temperature; not extreme weather, not any aspect of climate.
- 1.88 Not one of the UN IPCC's predictions of doom has come true.

Some recent examples of nature's reality expose Maurice Strong's claims as fraudulent

- 1.89 The climate narrative states that the upward trend over the last 70 years in Carbon Dioxide levels is due to human production of Carbon Dioxide and that severely cutting the use of Hydrocarbon fuels (coal, oil and gas) will stop this and reverse the upward trend into a downward trend.
- 1.90 Recent examples confirm that nature alone controls atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels.
- 1.91 Firstly, after the global financial crisis in late 2008, there was a severe recession in 2009 across most of the world. The use of Hydrocarbon fuels plummeted. And so the production of Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity plummeted.
- 1.92 Yet atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels continued rising. Not even an inflection. No change in trend.
- 1.93 Secondly, during the Covid lockdowns across much of the world during 2020, there was another severe recession across the world. The use of Hydrocarbon fuels plummeted. Production of Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity plummeted.
- 1.94 Yet atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels continued to rise. Not even an inflection. No change in trend.

- 1.95 In questioning CSIRO and BOM about the lack of inflection, let alone reversal, I received two contradictory replies. CSIRO said there was an inflection. So, I asked for a statistical description. CSIRO never provided it.
- 1.96 BOM though said that there is a long lag time and that any inflection would not be seen for a long time.
- 1.97 CSIRO says it's immediate. BOM says it's not. Both do not know. Yet both pretend they know.
- 1.98 Both are wrong. HUMAN Carbon Dioxide production clearly has no effect on atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels. Clearly Nature alone controls atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels.
- 1.99 Why? Henry's Chemistry Law and the fact according to the UN IPCC that oceans contain, in dissolved form, 50 times the Carbon Dioxide contained in earth's entire atmosphere. Others say 70 times. Slight changes in ocean temperature due to solar variability affect the release of Carbon Dioxide into the atmosphere as oceans warm and the absorption of Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere as oceans cool.
- 1.100 Nature confirms this variation seasonally as the massive surface area of the southern hemisphere oceans cool and warm during winter and summer. This is clearly seen in the data. Seasonal variation regardless of human production.
- 1.101 Ernst Georg Beck's peer-reviewed scientific papers reveal accurate measurements of Carbon Dioxide levels showing that levels around 200 years ago were higher than today. Some as much as 40 per cent higher.
- 1.102 Industry did not and cannot determine atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels
- 1.103 Satellite measurements of Carbon Dioxide levels reveal that, contrary to the UN IPCC's implied claims, Carbon Dioxide is not well-mixed and instead varies enormously, naturally.
- 1.104 Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide levels in the past have been many times higher than today ... and life thrived.
- 1.105 Facts and statistics about Carbon Dioxide reveal it is Nature's trace atmospheric gas essential to all life on earth and that it is not a pollutant and cannot create heat.⁴
- 1.106 Another aspect of the climate narrative claims falsely that as HUMAN Carbon Dioxide production increases, atmospheric temperature increases.
- 1.107 During the last 30 years since 1995 global production of Carbon Dioxide from HUMANS has ever increased due to increasing economic activity in China, India, USA, Europe, Russia, Brazil, Asia, ... yet the most accurate measurement

⁴ www.climate.conscious.com.au/galileodocuments/CO2_withquestions.pdf

of atmospheric temperature from the University of Alabama Huntsville analysing NASA satellite data reveals:

- short term warming and cooling cycles due to El Nino and La Nina natural variation in temperature, with
- the overall 30-year trend being flat or statistically insignificant and almost flat.

1.108 Dramatically higher production of HUMAN Carbon Dioxide has had no effect on global atmospheric temperature.

1.109 Indeed, as industrial activity increased from the mid 1930's through World War 2 and the post-war economic boom, HUMAN production of Carbon Dioxide from industry increased dramatically, yet atmospheric temperatures FELL from the mid-1930's until 1976's natural Great Pacific Climate Shift.

1.110 Temperatures in Australia since the 1860's using instruments that continued unchanged until the 1980s reveal that temperatures in Australia were far warmer during the 1880s-1890s than in recent decades and today.

1.111 Further, heatwaves were hotter, longer and more frequent back in the 1880s-1890s than today.

1.112 A list of some of the many natural climate drivers and interacting cycles is available on page 23 of the *Thriving with Nature and Humanity* report.⁵

1.113 Let's give the last word to the UN IPCC in its first science report in 1990 when it revealed temperatures on earth were warmer during the Medieval Warming Period 1,000 years ago – well before cars, before widespread animal farming, before power stations, and before Hydrocarbon fuels coal, oil and gas. See page 19 of the *Thriving with Nature and Humanity* report.⁶

1.114 I strongly recommend Dr Anne Smith's submission No.14 to this inquiry, available via the inquiry website.⁷

1.115 Mr Peter Bobroff independently and objectively assessed all reports and while his assessment report confirmed my submission No.125 as one of the highest scoring in terms of rational thought and other assessments of logical, objective, factual content, his assessment showed Dr Smith's report to be demonstrably even stronger.

⁵ www.climate.conscious.com.au/_documents/Thriving%20with%20nature%20and%20humanity_single.pdf

⁶ www.climate.conscious.com.au/_documents/Thriving%20with%20nature%20and%20humanity_single.pdf

⁷ www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Information_Integrity_on_Climate_Change_and_Energy/ClimateIntegrity/Submissions

- 1.116 My reading of her submission confirms it as highly impressive in terms of being complete, comprehensive and accurate.
- 1.117 Her citing of 316 references includes scientific, peer-reviewed papers. Further, her references include references to both sides of the censorship debate.
- 1.118 Her objective, structured, logical and rigorous observations, diagnosis, conclusions and recommendations on federal governance and climate and energy policy confirm my experience in the senate and in listening to communities across Australia.⁸

CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology fail to provide Scientific Proof and fail to provide Policy Basis

- 1.119 In 2016-2017 my team and I cross-examined CSIRO on its climate 'science'. A detailed report on this is available as an appendix to my submission number 125 to this inquiry. My submission and both appendices contains details on facts about climate science and energy.
- 1.120 My submission comments on CSIRO's GenCost report that fraudulently pretends to cost the transition to solar and wind. My submission No.125 and both appendices are available on the inquiry website.⁹
- 1.121 My Appendix No.1 includes peer-reviewed scientific papers rebutting CSIRO's many claims.
- 1.122 CSIRO failed in three presentations to provide Scientific Proof that Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity is a danger. Instead, under our team's cross-examination CSIRO admitted it has never stated or claimed that HUMAN Carbon Dioxide is a danger.
- 1.123 CSIRO further admitted that today's temperatures are NOT unprecedented. They have occurred before.
- 1.124 CSIRO and BOM each previously replied to my various requests of them to provide me with Scientific Proof that Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity affects climate and needs to be cut. My requests were in Freedom of Information requests, correspondence and questions during senate Estimates hearings.

1.125 CSIRO and BOM have always failed to provide Scientific Proof.

- 1.126 CSIRO and BOM are government funded and push the government's UN climate and energy narratives despite having no Scientific Proof and no scientific Policy Basis.

⁸ www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Information_Integrity_on_Climate_Change_and_Energy/ClimateIntegrity/Submissions

⁹ www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Information_Integrity_on_Climate_Change_and_Energy/ClimateIntegrity/Submissions

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- 1.127 Both are influential in contributing to the UN IPCC's 'science reports' that dishonestly contradict science.
- 1.128 Dr Anne Smith's submission No. 14 contains accurate comments exposing CSIRO's GenCost report on her submission's pages 9 and 29.
- 1.129 CSIRO's misleading GenCost report omits key costs that are essential in transitioning to solar and wind. This is discussed in detail on pages 46 to 50 of my submission No.125.
- 1.130 GenCost dishonestly understates the cost of solar and wind energy and grossly overstates the cost of coal-fired energy. Despite GenCost's tricks, coal still remains cheapest source of energy.
- 1.131 Yet CSIRO's recent media release implies otherwise and contradicts its own GenCost report.

Former Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel

- 1.132 **The former Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel** made many strong public statements on climate and supporting the climate and energy narratives.
- 1.133 In our meeting on Monday 27 March 2017 Dr Finkel failed to provide the empirical scientific evidence for claiming that Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity needs to be cut.
- 1.134 In our meeting with Dr Finkel on 27 March 2017, he emphatically admitted that he is **not** a climate scientist and does not understand climate science in detail. On that basis, the Chief Scientist agreed to a further meeting, which he did not attend, and Minister Sinodinos sent CSIRO in his place.
- 1.135 When agreeing to a second meeting we invited Dr Finkel to bring with him **any** climate scientist he cared to select.
- 1.136 Despite Dr Finkel admitting he does not understand climate science, he was a loud and vigorous advocate for cutting HUMAN production of Carbon Dioxide.
- 1.137 As Chief Scientist, he was government funded.

President Obama's Science Adviser now questions the UN's climate 'science' narrative

- 1.138 Physicist Steve Koonin was President Obama's science adviser, and recently raised questions and challenges casting serious doubts on the UN's climate narrative.
- 1.139 Under enforcement of proposed misinformation-disinformation censorship laws, it seems that such scientific debate would be banned.

USA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has released a major scientific study disagreeing with the UN's climate narrative

1.140 On July 23, 2025 the USA Department of Energy's Climate Working Group produced the report '*A Critical Review of Impacts of Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the U.S. Climate*'.

1.141 It contradicts the UN's climate narrative.

1.142 The USA EPA's Climate Working Group includes former UN IPCC scientists who abandoned the IPCC when they publicly claimed that the UN body is not scientific.

1.143 The EPA's report is available online.¹⁰

National agencies and academics misrepresenting climate science to push UN climate narratives

1.144 In addition to the UN IPCC's fraudulent lack of Scientific Proof for its climate narrative and lack of a scientific Policy Basis for its energy narrative, the UN IPCC misrepresents climate, nature and climate science.

1.145 As do its many associated prominent climate agencies in select western nations such as Australia's CSIRO, America's NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies until President Trump's administration started holding NASA-GISS accountable, the UK Meteorological Office, ...

1.146 The UK Met Office built a corrupt global temperature database that had never been audited. Until independent Australian climate scientist Dr John McLean's audit that found more than 70 categories of serious errors.

1.147 The UK Met Office was at the heart of the Climategate scandal falsely omitting temperatures that showed no warming.

1.148 NASA-GISS under its Director Gavin Schmidt, has been shown to have corrupted temperatures in America and overseas. Including fabricating temperature measurements where no recording stations existed.

1.149 Together with various national bodies created to push the UN's climate narrative. These include for example the Gillard Labor government's Climate Commission and many energy bureaucracies initiated under Labor-Greens and Liberal-National governments.

1.150 Government paid and/or funded academics who pushed the UN climate and energy narratives using misinformation-disinformation contrary to nature and contrary to science. These bodies and academic activists often contained academics and/or agency heads with apparent severe conflicts of interest.

¹⁰ www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/DOE_Critical_Review_of_Impacts_of_GHG_Emissions_on_the_US_Climate_July_2025.pdf

- 1.151 These include Dr Michael Mann and co-authors who produced the fraudulent Hockey Stick temperature graph that falsely purported unprecedented temperature rise while **preventing true scientific peer review**.
- 1.152 The UN IPCC splashed their graph across UN publications and reports and captured the media entrenching false claims of global warming. Until the graph was quietly dropped after Canadian statisticians Steve McIntyre and Ross McKittrick did their due diligence that resulted in the graph being declared fraudulent.
- 1.153 All the government-paid academics and alarmists' doomsday forecasts failed. For example, mammalian palaeontologist Professor Tim Flannery's wild and unsubstantiated forecast that Australian dams would never fill again preceded major flooding that led to dams spilling over within months.
- 1.154 It has been revealed that the CSIRO's Chief Executive Dr Megan Clark apparently supported a Carbon Dioxide Emissions Trading Scheme while on the Advisory Boards of Rothschilds Australia bank and Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Both banks stood to gain trillions of dollars from such a tax.
- 1.155 A discussion of prominent Australian academic activists pushing climate alarm can be found online.¹¹
- 1.156 Note references to Mr Peter Bobroff's Tome22 that documents academics' links to global agendas and proximity to Maurice Strong. For example: Professor Will Steffen.¹²
- 1.157 My comprehensive report of an investigation made at the request of ABC Radio host Steve Austin can be found online.¹³
- 1.158 It provides many detailed appendices revealing the many sources of misinformation-disinformation associated with the UN's climate narrative and associated bodies pushing the same narrative.
- 1.159 Of particular interest are analyses of former American Vice-President Al Gore and his fraudulent, unscientific support for the UN climate narrative and his connections with Maurice Strong's Chicago Climate Exchange trading in bogus Carbon Dioxide credits.¹⁴
- 1.160 Note that as Opposition Leader in 2007, Labor's Kevin Rudd brought Al Gore to Australia to entrench his campaign centred on Rudd's unfounded and false

¹¹ www.climate.conscious.com.au/docs/new/9_appendix.pdf

¹² <http://tome22.info/Persons/Steffen-Will.html>,

¹³ www.climate.conscious.com.au/CSIROh!.php

¹⁴ www.climate.conscious.com.au/docs/new/3_AppendixAlGore.pdf

claim on 31 March 2007 at Parliament House, in Canberra, when he declared climate change to be *'the great moral challenge of our generation'*.

1.161 There is a multitude of comprehensive analyses of climate misinformation and disinformation prior to 2014.¹⁵

1.162 Including a comprehensive report on the CSIRO.¹⁶

Real scientists emerge with the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change, NIPCC

1.163 When prominent scientists from around the world, including scientists involved with the UN IPCC realised that the IPCC was politicising and misrepresenting climate and humanity, they formed the Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change, the NIPCC.¹⁷

1.164 Member scientists have done truly scientific work that accurately portrays nature's control of climate and exposes the UN IPCC reports and claims as fraudulent.

The reason why 44 years of UN climate claims remain hotly disputed

1.165 The reason why, after 44 years, there is no global or Australian clarity on climate policy due to HUMAN Carbon Dioxide is clear: there is no Scientific Proof as basis for such a claim.

1.166 Instead, the UN's core climate claim is based on misinformation and more particularly, deliberate disinformation in pursuit of a global political agenda.

1.167 The UN has cleverly usurped the fundamental basis of science ... rational thought. Under such conditions, nature's reality keeps popping up and getting in the way of UN disinformation.

1.168 Disinformation that began with the psychopathic UN criminal Maurice Strong in 1980.

1.169 There is no evidence of any need for implementing the UN's campaign for global censorship via misinformation-disinformation legislation.

1.170 To the contrary, the UN needs to be prosecuted for misinformation-disinformation.

Biased senate inquiry designed to produce a pre-determined conclusion

1.171 This is far and away the worst senate inquiry I have experienced.

¹⁵ www.climate.conscious.com.au/

¹⁶ www.climate.conscious.com.au/CSIROh!.php

¹⁷ <https://climatechangereconsidered.org/about-the-nipcc/>

- 1.172 It was established to blatantly support and produce a pre-determined outcome in support of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's global agenda for nationally legislated misinformation-disinformation censorship regimes across the planet.
- 1.173 It has been far and away the worst-chaired senate inquiry I have experienced.
- 1.174 Examples of bias include bias in allocating the call and time to senators for questioning witnesses. This was apparent from the start of hearings and occurred despite open complaints to the Chair from another senator and from me.
- 1.175 Despite our open complaints during the early hearings and our requests for fairness, the Chair (Greens party) and Deputy Chair (Labor), in one session scheduled from memory for an hour, allocated the first 44 minutes of witness time to themselves as Chair and Deputy Chair before changing the call when senators pointed to this Greens-Labor domination and hogging of the inquiry.
- 1.176 At a subsequent similar hearing, the Chair and Deputy Chair allocated themselves 50 minutes before switching the call. This prompted me to record the Chair's allocation of time to each senator as shown in the following data:

Witness/Organisation: META

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	27 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	18 minutes
Senator David Pocock:	21 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	12 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	8 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Dr Jeremy Walker

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	18 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	13 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	6 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	13 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Coal Australia

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	18 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	12 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	11 minutes
Senator David Pocock:	10 minutes

Senator Malcolm Roberts: 8 minutes

Interestingly the Chair on this occasion stated that Senator Pocock would have 10 minutes and I would have five minutes, despite there being 25 minutes remaining at the time he allocated the call to Senator Pocock.

Witness/Organisation: Community Power Agency

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair: ceded his self-allocated
5 minutes to Labor

Senator Lisa Darminin, Labor: 15 minutes

Senator Matthew Canavan: 5 minutes

Senator Malcolm Roberts: 5 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Page Research

Senator Matthew Canavan: 13 minutes

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair: 11 minutes

Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair: 5 minutes

Senator Malcolm Roberts: 5 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Surfers for Climate

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair: 7 minutes

Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair: 9 minutes

Senator Malcolm Roberts: 5 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Tik Tok

Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair: 23 minutes

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair: 10 minutes

Senator Malcolm Roberts: 7 minutes

Witness/Organisation: University of Canberra

Senator Lisa Darminin, Labor: 22 minutes

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair: 13 minutes

Senator Malcolm Roberts: 10 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Dr Karl Kruszelnicki

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	7 minutes
Senator Lisa Darminin, Labor:	4 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	start time recorded, end time not recorded
Senator Matthew Canavan:	nil recorded

Witness/Organisation: Private briefing

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	16 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	>17 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	12 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	9 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Australian Human Rights Commission

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	11 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	19 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	12 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	6 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Responsible Future Illawarra

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	26 minutes
Senator Lisa Darminin, Labor:	15 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	16 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	8 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Minerals Council Australia

Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	20 minutes
Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	11 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	5 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	9 minutes

Witness/Organisation: N&MRC

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	20 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	10 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	11 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Department of CCEEW

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	13 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	14 minutes
Senators Whish-Wilson & Ananda Rajah together	33 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	13 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	24 minutes

Witness/Organisation: AAP (this hearing was made public)

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	17 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	12 minutes
Senator David Pockock	7 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	9 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	5 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Google

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	24 minutes
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	17 minutes
Senator Matthew Canavan:	9 minutes
Senator David Pockock	12 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	6 minutes

Witness/Organisation: Anthropic

Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	16 minutes
Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	18 minutes
Senator David Pocock:	11 minutes
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	11 minutes

Totals	Average minutes per call	Total minutes given call
Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, Chair:	16	254
Senator Ananda-Rajah, Deputy Chair:	15	205
Senator Lisa Darminin, Labor:	14	56
Senator Matthew Canavan:	10	124
Senator David Pocock:	10	50
Senator Malcolm Roberts:	9	144

1.177 Additionally, the Chair in particular, and the Deputy Chair frequently interjected themselves into further questioning during or after another senator was given the call.

1.178 Overwhelmingly, the Chair gave himself first call. On those occasions where he did not do so, he gave a Labor senator first call.

1.179 Biased selection of witnesses favoured those supporting the climate and energy narratives and those advocating for misinformation-disinformation legislation. A brief analysis during the early hearings revealed that of the first 36 witnesses called, two were neutral federal government departments, six appeared to be from organisations opposed to censorship and the remaining 28 were from organisations supporting censorship.

1.180 The omission as witnesses of key distinguished scientists widely known to disagree with the UN's climate and energy narratives was prominent. For example, Professor Ian Plimer, Dr Jennifer Marohasy, Professor Peter Ridd,

1.181 The Chair and Deputy Chair verbally attacked some witnesses with whom they disagreed, treating some with disdain and lack of respect and not with honesty.

1.182 Dr Anne Smith's submission No.14 comments on the inquiry's bias starting on her pages 25 and 64. I concur.

1.183 Dr Anne Smith raises serious and valid comments in her letter dated 22nd October 2025 complaining about the conduct of Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, the chair. Specifically, she listed these topics among others, quote:

- *"Public commentary on a live inquiry ...*

- *Possible coordination with a media outlet ...*
- *Direct coordination and attempt to shape witness response ...*
- *Pre-inquiry bias and public commentary ...*
- *Misrepresentation of responses by The Guardian (newspaper) ...*
- *Impact on community confidence ...”.*

Politicians’ lack of rational thought and lack of understanding of what is Scientific Thought

- 1.184 I agree generally with Dr Smith’s rebuttal of Jeremy Walker’s comments. Having worked in and led the entirely voluntary *The Galileo Movement*, working closely with its founders and Directors at the time John Smeed and Case Smit, I know that we did not receive funds from Atlas as Jeremy Walker falsely claimed in his submission
- 1.185 Dr Walker’s submission was notable for providing no Scientific Proof nor scientific basis of energy policy.
- 1.186 Generally, witnesses advocating censorship made broad and sweeping claims and accusations while reluctant to name entities and often reluctant to provide specific evidence. This paucity of rational thought and specific evidence was sometimes cleverly hidden using emphatic tones and/or emotion and/or ideology.
- 1.187 I refer to page 14 of my Submission No.125 that reveals Senator McAllister lacks understanding of what constitutes Scientific Proof, yet she repeatedly made claims she had proof. This lack is clear and yet she remains an advocate in public and in parliament and in the government for current climate disinformation and false climate claims and unscientific energy policy.
- 1.188 This has been explained to Senator McAllister yet she persists in misinforming people to the extent that it is now disinformation about science and about climate.
- 1.189 Similarly, starting on page 41 my submission reveals Greens Senator Peter Whish-Wilson does not understand what constitutes Scientific Proof.
- 1.190 Similarly, starting on page 42 my submission reveals Senator David Pocock does not understand what constitutes Scientific Proof.
- 1.191 I refer to two telling lists of members of parliament on my submission’s pages 12 and 13. And to other pages mentioning members of parliament.
- 1.192 In my dealings with members of parliament prior to entering the senate in 2016 and after entering the senate in 2016 and 2019, I have never met nor heard of a member of parliament with Scientific Proof that Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity is a danger and needs to be cut.
- 1.193 I have never had any member of parliament, nor any academic, nor public servant, nor any government agency or department advocating for cutting

HUMAN Carbon Dioxide who provided Scientific Proof of their advocacy nor accept my challenge to debate climate science.

1.194 Nor so-called science communicator and inquiry witness Dr Karl Kruszelnicki despite his advocacy for the climate narrative. Except, I note that Dr Kruszelnicki initially accepted my challenge and then soon after pulled out of our agreed debate.

1.195 Despite debate being a recognised and important part of the scientific process.

1.196 None of the advocates for cutting Carbon Dioxide from HUMAN activity, namely parliamentary, academic, activist, journalist or communicator has shown the rational thought required for professing Scientific Proof or energy Policy Basis.

1.197 Rational thought is the process of thinking logically and systematically to arrive at conclusions or solve problems based on reason, evidence and critical analysis.

1.198 It involves the use of facts, principles and coherent reasoning to make decisions or evaluate claims, free from excessive emotional bias, prejudice or unfounded assumptions and ideology.

1.199 Key features of rational thought include:

- Logical consistency: ensuring that conclusions follow logically from premises or evidence;
- Evidence-based: relying on observable/measured, verifiable and credible data or information;
- Critical analysis: evaluating arguments, identifying flaws and questioning assumptions;
- Objectivity: striving to minimise personal biases and focusing on impartial reasoning; and,
- Goal oriented: aiming to achieve clarity, solve problems or make informed decisions.

“Thinking is difficult. That’s why most people judge.” Carl Jung

1.200 And one may add, that’s why many people fall for, and spread unfounded opinions, ideologies and scams.

1.201 Rational thought contrasts with irrational thought in which emotions, misinformation, or illogical reasoning drive uncritical thinking.

1.202 Lack of rational thought leads to people holding an opinion without cross-examination. Such opinions are worthless.

1.203 It was one of Maurice Strong’s objectives to bypass rational thought and entrench misinformation-disinformation as a prerequisite for entrenching

control and wealth transfer using emotionally driven fear-based climate and energy narratives.

Roots of censorship

- 1.204 Now that rationalists and evidence are on the ascendancy in climate science and public discourse, the only recourse for defenders of irrational thought is authoritarianism, that can become aggressive when stakes or emotional commitment are high.
- 1.205 This now drives the UN Secretary-General's call for mis-disinformation laws to censor and stop debate. To control.
- 1.206 And always beneath control there is ... fear.
- 1.207 Fear of being proven wrong and embarrassed.
- 1.208 Fear of being exposed as wrong on deeply entrenched political positions.
- 1.209 Fear of donors and powerbrokers losing subsidies for solar and wind.
- 1.210 Numerous diverse political fears ...
- 1.211 Rational thought though is the foundation to scientific inquiry, ethical deliberation and effective decision-making. All vital for Human Progress.**
- 1.212 All vital for Human Rights based on objectivity, freedom and choice. Choice leads to responsibility that begets personal inner freedom.
- 1.213 The conduct of the inquiry follows the path to introduce mis-disinformation bill to prevent debate and dissent. And to thereby entrench the psychopathic criminal Maurice Strong's UN control and wealth transfer using his climate catastrophism and seventeen sustainable development goals aiming to control every aspect of people's lives.

The biggest sources of climate and energy mis-disinformation are government and the UN

- 1.214 Lessons from the inquiry include the fact that the biggest source of mis-disinformation is governments and politicians aligned with the UN's dishonest global climate agenda and energy narrative.
- 1.215 Their climate and energy narratives are fabricated in contradiction of nature and science.
- 1.216 Secondly, as their narratives are now unravelling and climate alarm crumbling, they want to censor dissent.
- 1.217 The behaviour of some senators confirms my experience and conclusions that the biggest problem facing Australia is shoddy governance.
- 1.218 Often, governments from both major political parties eschew and contradict hard data.

-
- 1.219 And when deferring to globalist issues contradicting rational thought, these senators cede Australia's national sovereignty.
- 1.220 The inquiry revealed the opposite of the Greens and Labor claims as their basis for needing mis-disinformation legislation.
- 1.221 For example, there was none to limited evidence of small funding for those groups opposing censorship legislation, with such opponents generally being community groups consisting entirely of volunteers.
- 1.222 Yet, concurrently the inquiry revealed massive overseas and government funding for well organised groups with paid staff pushing the UN and government narratives.

Recommendations

- 1.223 There is no rational basis for proposing mis-disinformation laws to control speech and thought.
- 1.224 No basis for censorship apart from when stopping child abuse and violence or physical threats.
- 1.225 On the latter, laws already exist to deal with these cases.
- 1.226 To remain a free country, we must oppose mis-disinformation laws. Not only is there no need for such laws, they are highly damaging and thwart Human Progress.
- 1.227 The reverse is needed. Specifically, when politicians introduce policies, regulations, agencies or the like claimed to be based on science, those politicians should be required to post their claimed scientific evidence so that it can face increased scrutiny.
- 1.228 When government funds the basis for scientific claims, governments need to be required to fully fund an opposing team of scientists charged with the goal of debunking the government's science.
- 1.229 This is a concept known as Red Team versus Blue Team.
- 1.230 After all, science advances or is verified when debated.
- 1.231 We need accountability. While free speech cannot guarantee accountability, it facilitates true accountability. It is a pre-requisite for accountability.
- 1.232 The absence of free speech always means no accountability.
- 1.233 Instead of less transparency, governance in Australia needs more and wider scrutiny.
- 1.234 A start could be to televise cabinet meetings so voters can see how their elected representatives behave.

1.235 Apart from an arrangement for some national security matters to be dealt with in camera, increased transparency would increase parliamentary accountability and effectiveness.

Conclusions

1.236 This inquiry was biased from the outset, directed toward predetermined outcomes, and conducted as part of a broader agenda to suppress dissent in the climate and energy debate. It was not a fair examination of evidence.

1.237 It was a managed process designed to protect a preferred narrative and to give that narrative the appearance of committee authority. Serious allegations were made, repeated, and amplified, yet all lacked credible proof.

1.238 Scientific Proof was not established. Policy Basis was not established. An inquiry built on allegation, narrative, and suppression rather than rational thought, evidence, scrutiny, and fairness cannot claim credibility.

1.239 Its conclusions should be treated accordingly and dismissed.

Senator Malcolm Roberts

One Nation

Senator for Queensland

Dissenting report from Senator Ralph Babet

Protecting Free Speech in Climate Discourse

- 1.1 This dissenting report is submitted by Senator Ralph Babet, in response to the findings of the Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy.
- 1.2 While I recognise the importance of ensuring the public receives accurate information, I strongly oppose any effort that seeks to restrict lawful opinion, debate, and criticism in matters of climate policy.
- 1.3 Science, by its nature, is never settled. It evolves through scrutiny, dissent, and rigorous testing. Suppressing alternate opinions on this particular branch of science in the name of combatting 'misinformation' undermines both democracy and scientific inquiry.
- 1.4 The direction of this inquiry, framed by the terms such as 'disinformation,' 'misinformation,' and 'astroturfing,' suggests a preordained narrative: that disagreement regarding climate change is illegitimate and must be silenced. I reject this approach.

Science Must Remain Open to Challenge

- 1.5 Science is not strengthened by censorship. It thrives in an open forum where views can be debated. When one side of the debate has their opinions labelled as 'misinformation,' they imply certainty. But no scientific field, and certainly not climate science, is immune to error or evolution.
- 1.6 Richard Lindzen, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology recently said that '*Science is not a source of authority. It's a methodology. It's based on challenge.*'
- 1.7 The Clintel Declaration, recently published and signed by hundreds of scientists and academics, also suggests that climate science is very much evolving, and is not beyond question or debate. Submission 223 to this inquiry agrees with this notion, stating that '*Scientific information is a developing process of the latest research, and is never settled nor determined by consensus*'.
- 1.8 If power is granted to the state to determine what constitutes misinformation, it is inevitable that legitimate dissent or debating points will be caught in the net.

Climate Change: Debate Must Not Be Censored

- 1.9 There is growing pressure to equate skepticism about anthropogenic climate change with the spread of harmful misinformation. This is an authoritarian impulse that threatens the foundations of a free society. We must be crystal clear: disagreement with prevailing climate orthodoxy is not misinformation or

disinformation. It is political opinion and scientific inquiry – both of which must be protected in any society, including ours.

- 1.10 There is no single incontestable truth about the scale, scope, or threat of climate change. The Australian public has the right to hear a range of views, including from those who believe the danger is overstated.
- 1.11 What is obvious from the many submitters and witnesses advocating for climate action and action against misinformation/disinformation, is that they are relying on external experts and agencies to have gotten the climate science right. It seems that many of these individuals, have been influenced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) position.
- 1.12 Consider the words of the winner of the 2022 Nobel Prize for Physics, Professor John. F. Clauser, who said in 2023: *'... in my opinion the IPCC is one of the worst sources of dangerous misinformation'* and also *'Misguided climate science has metastasized into massive shock-journalistic pseudoscience ... there is no real climate crisis.'*
- 1.13 Professor Clauser is not the first Nobel prize winner to say such a thing, or to reject irresponsible climate alarmism and the rush towards expensive renewable energy. The Clintel Declaration – a document that rejects the politicisation and alarmism of contemporary climate science – was recently published on 25 October 2025. It contains over 2000 signatures of scientists, academics and industry leaders, including Professor Clauser's, as well as 186 distinguished signatories from Australia.
- 1.14 To say that any opposing views on the so-called climate emergency are invalid or 'misinformation' – because apparently 'the science is settled' – is disingenuous and has the veneer of political or financially motivated bias.

Community and Environmental Concerns Might be Suppressed

- 1.15 A recurring theme across 39 separate submissions was concern not just about speech suppression, but about the impacts of renewable energy projects on regional communities and the environment. Many of these submissions raised consistent points: communities feel voiceless, consultation processes are tokenistic, and the environmental costs of large-scale wind, solar, and transmission projects are being ignored.

Misinformation/Disinformation is Undefined and Unworkable

- 1.16 The vast majority of the evidence and assertions throughout this inquiry, and in the subsequent report, presumes a solid and unambiguous definition of misinformation or disinformation. As Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner (AHRC) said in the 17 February 2026 hearing:

'... the fundamental challenge we come up with is: how do you define misinformation and disinformation for the purposes of the law? There are many working definitions. People kind of understand what you're meaning

in a vernacular sense, but there's no accepted international definition of what we mean by mis- and disinformation, and putting it in legislation in a form that is specific enough to ensure that we're having an approach that doesn't disproportionately capture a wide range of speech that isn't strictly mis- and disinformation is incredibly challenging and is something where we've struggled to find examples that really do meet that mark. That definitional problem is a really significant hurdle to overcome.'

Contradictions and Weak Definitions of Something Almost Unenforceable

- 1.17 The Australian Government has not been able to clearly articulate how its expenditure will affect the climate in measurable terms. When asked to quantify the impact of billions of dollars of climate-related spending, responses defer to international reports, models, and projections rather than presenting clear cost-benefit analysis or expected outcomes. No definitive or measurable results are provided.
- 1.18 Chapter 3 of the Committee's report devotes much time and space dealing with the many and varied organisations and groups that are supposedly already engaging in misinformation and disinformation. Without a solid, clear, working definition of mis/disinformation, how can any of these organisations be accused of engaging in this activity? There is still too much about this situation that is vague and ill-defined.
- 1.19 Much of the remainder of the report deals with these supposed 'bad-faith actors' and the mechanisms to address them, all the while resting on the shaky premises that the science is settled, and that mis/disinformation is clear and unequivocal. The lack of a solid foundational definition, defined in the Australian context, for 'climate misinformation' undermines the vast majority of this report

Misinformation Frameworks

- 1.20 Point 1 of the Committee's Terms of Reference seeks to explore the prevalence and motivation behind misinformation. But the very definition of misinformation is disputed. If the government defines it too broadly, it risks sweeping up reasonable dissent.
- 1.21 Mr Daniel Wild, Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs agrees with this sentiment, as he stated at the 12 November 2025 public hearing:
- 'Misinformation laws can only be enforced by some kind of centralised governing entity, be it tech companies or government themselves, or tech companies at the behest of governments. This requires an adjudication of what is and what is not misinformation, which therefore requires an official definition of the truth and for that definition to then be enforced on the public.'
- 1.22 The danger is that any statement that contradicts government policy, or that casts doubt on popular climate narratives, will be labelled misinformation. This is a slippery slope to censorship.

1.23 Mr Wild agrees:

'I think that what the committee seeks to do with regard to misinformation is a smokescreen for censorship. We saw that with the government's misinformation laws that didn't even make it to the floor of the Senate in the last term. Certainly, that's one of the concerns that we and many Australians have when terms like misinformation and disinformation are used. As I outlined in the submission and my opening statement, because those terms are vague, they become defined by a central governing body, which is then used to censor debate.'

1.24 In the 17 February 2026 hearing, on this topic, Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner for AHRC said the following:

'The first is to recognise that setting up government or any individual body as the sole arbiter of truth on these matters is inherently problematic. The second is to recognise—and this was one of the objections that we had to an earlier draft of the mis- and disinformation law—that government itself can potentially be a source of misinformation. It's important to think through those issues when you're looking at any responses that put government at the centre, to ensure that we're not creating a situation where misinformation can potentially be reinforced without having any alternative channels to address that or setting up government as the sole arbiter of truth. Again, I would absolutely emphasise that that's not intended as a reflection on any existing government. It's a principled hypothetical position.'

Could Misinformation and Disinformation be Occurring on Both Sides?

1.25 A number of submissions raised objections to the inquiry's premise and implications. These submissions speak directly to the concerns of Australians who feel this inquiry is being used to suppress dissent rather than protect truth. Some of these are represented below:

- Submission #5 (Australian Environment Foundation) noted: '*The real misinformation on climate and energy policy in Australia stems from government sources.*' It warned against conflating dissent with danger and called for transparent data sharing and cost-benefit analyses. Not censorship.
- Submission #42 (Mark Ptolemy) stated: '*The true test of a democracy is not whether you agree with prevailing opinions, but whether you are free to disagree with them.*' He argued that suppressing speech on climate change or associated energy initiatives harms public trust and erodes our democratic foundations.
- Submission #55 (Anonymous) highlighted a chilling real-world example: '*I lost my job for expressing reservations about Net Zero targets at a company strategy day. No one asked if I was right. They just asked who let me speak.*'
- Submission #101 (Name Withheld) made a compelling argument against government-decided 'truth': '*If the government gets to define misinformation, it will define it in line with its policies. That is not science – it's propaganda.*'

- Submission #231 (Dr Bill Johnston): '*...misinformation and disinformation' arises not from fringe actors, but from how climate data is handled, adjusted and presented.*'
- 1.26 Together, these submissions reflect deep unease with how this inquiry was set up and conducted, and a common plea has emerged from submissions disagreeing with the main premise of it: let Australians speak freely on issues that affect their future, their livelihoods, and their country.
- 1.27 In addition, many of the submissions opposing the inquiry argue that the government and its agencies are responsible for mis/disinformation from time to time.

Regulatory Overreach and Threats to Democracy

- 1.28 Point 6 of the Committee's Terms of Reference addresses the effectiveness of parliamentary and regulatory responses. In the interest of freedom of communication, proposed changes that increase the power of regulators or departments to adjudicate truth in matters of political and scientific debate must be opposed.
- 1.29 Public trust in institutions risks being eroded when they are seen to be suppressing alternative views. The role of parliament should be to safeguard freedom of expression – not to restrict it.

Senator Babet's Recommendations

- (a) No regulatory or legislative changes should be made that limit the right of individuals, organisations, or media to express views on climate science or policy.
- (b) The government must explicitly protect dissenting opinions under law, even where such opinions challenge popular opinion.
- (c) The government is often wrong. Neither the government or its agencies should position itself as the sole arbiter or scientific truth.
- (d) Parliament and the public service must ensure they focus on the right of Australians to express their views on all matters, including climate science.

Senator Ralph Babet
United Australia Party
Senator for Victoria

Appendix 1

Submissions and Additional Information

- 1 Australian Communications and Media Authority
- 2 Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
- 3 Net Zero Economy Authority
- 4 News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra
- 5 Australian Environment Foundation
- 6 Municipal Association of Victoria
- 7 Loomberah Family & Farmland Incorporated
- 8 Queensland Conservation Council
- 9 Future Coal
 - 9.1 Supplementary to submission 9
- 10 Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- 11 Dr Peter Ridd
- 12 89 Degrees East
- 13 Friends of Chalumbin
- 14 Rainforest Reserves Australia
 - Adverse comment response from Dr Robert Brulle, received 28 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Australian Conservation Foundation, received 17 March 2026
- 15 Coronium Pty Ltd
- 16 Dr Adam Lucas
- 17 Ross De Rango
- 18 Local & Independent News Association
- 19 The Australian National University Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions
- 20 Celeste Pater
- 21 ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society
 - Adverse comment response from ADVANCE, received 10 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Mothers for Nuclear, received 12 October 2025
- 22 ADVANCE
 - Adverse comment response from The Sunrise Project, received 15 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Dr Jeremy Walker, received 14 October 2025
- 23 The Climate Centre
- 24 National Environmental Law Association
- 25 CWO REZist Inc.

- 26 North Queensland Natural History Group Inc
- 27 Professor Aynsley Kellow
- 28 Dr Matthew Rimmer
- 29 Australian Fusion Industry
- 30 Ian Penna
- 31 Karen Fox
- 32 Walter Shepherd
- 33 CHRRUP
- 34 Flight Free Australia
- 35 People for the Plains
- 36 Phoebe Morgan
- 37 Alexander Petersen
- 38 Simon McInnes
- 39 Anne Osborne
- 40 Euroa Environment Group Inc
- 41 United Nations Special Rapporteur on climate change and human rights
- 42 International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE)
- 43 Hamish Cumming
- 44 Logan Smith
- 45 Stephen Johnston
- 46 Andrew Gibson
- 47 Col Poulter
- 48 Doreen Mortimore
- 49 Emma Jeffrey
- 50 Robert Onfray
- 51 Simon Case
- 52 Climate Capital Forum
- 53 Darryl Elliott
- 54 Dr Kyla Tienhaara and Dr Fergus Green
- 55 Dr Timothy Florin
- 56 Comms Declare
- 57 Institute of Public Affairs
- 58 ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century
- 59 Property Rights Australia Inc.
- 60 QUT Digital Media Research Centre
 - Adverse comment response from ADVANCE, received 10 October 2025
- 61 Environmental Defenders Office
- 62 Climate Action Network Australia (CANA)
- 63 UQ Pro Bono Centre
- 64 Coal Australia
- 65 Australian Resources Development Pty Ltd
- 66 ANU Law Reform and Social Justice Research Hub
- 67 UTS Centre for Media Transition

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- 68 The Centre for Independent Studies
- Adverse comment response from Dr Jeremy Walker, received 14 October 2025
- 69 InfluenceMap
- 70 Tasmanian Climate Collective
- 71 Ketan Joshi
- 72 David Archibald
- 73 Les Daniel
- 74 Paul Goard
- 75 Name Withheld
- 76 Australia Exits the WHO
- 77 Rex Osborne
- 78 Climate Action Burwood/Canada Bay
- 79 Geelong Sustainability
- 80 Sandra Bourke
- Adverse comment response from Dr Jeremy Walker, received 14 October 2025
- 81 Independent Engineers, Scientists and Professionals
- 82 Jane Sultana
- 83 Deborah Pergolotti
- 84 Bruce Murray
- 85 Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance Inc.
- 86 Tony Harris
- 87 Piers Verstegen
- 88 No Offshore Wind Farm Zone - Warrnambool to Port Fairy Network
- 89 Nell Stevenson
- 90 Kalapa Wycarbah Local Action Committee
- 91 Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Landscape Guardians Inc
- 92 Sonya Elek
- 93 Dr John McLean
- 94 Marc Hendrickx
- 95 William (Jim) Pinkerton
- 96 John Whalen
- 97 Jenny Cambers-Smith
- 98 Australian Associated Press Ltd
- 99 Australian Science Communicators
- 100 Doctors for the Environment Australia
- Adverse comment response from ADVANCE, received 10 October 2025
- 101 No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens
- Attachment 1
 - Attachment 2
 - Attachment 3

- 102** Parents for Climate
- Adverse comment response from Mothers for Nuclear, received 12 October 2025
- 103** Responsible Renewables Committee, Port Stephens-Myall Coast
- 104** Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, McGill University
- 105** Climate Social Science Network
- 106** Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research
- 107** Hunter Jobs Alliance
- Adverse comment response from ADVANCE, received 10 October 2025
- 108** Lighter Footprints
- Adverse comment response from ADVANCE, received 10 October 2025
- 109** National Rational Energy Network (NREN)
- 109.1 Supplementary to submission 109
- 110** Protect the Bush Alliance
- 111** Union of Concerned Scientists
- 112** Future Smart Strategies
- 113** WWF Australia
- 114** Consumer Policy Research Centre
- 115** Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD)
- 116** Emeritus Professor Ian Plimer
- 117** Australian Democracy Network
- 118** RMIT Information Integrity Hub
- 119** Digital Rights Watch
- 120** Jewish Climate Network
- 121** Executive Council of Australian Jewry
- 122** Transparency International Australia
- 123** Climate for Change
- 124** Raphaela Raaber et al
- 125** Senator Malcolm Roberts
- Attachment 1
 - Attachment 2
- 126** Professor Matthew Hornsey et al
- 127** Corporate Carbon
- 128** University of Melbourne
- 129** Centre for Public Integrity
- 130** Farmers for Climate Action
- Adverse comment response from Meat and Livestock Australia, received 20 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Victorian Farmers Federation, received 22 October 2025
- 131** Community Power Agency, RE-Alliance and Yes 2 Renewables

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- 132 Australian Human Rights Commission
- 133 Greenpeace Australia Pacific
- 134 Friends of the Earth
- Adverse comment response from Wimmera Mallee Environmental and Agricultural Protection Association, received 6 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Responsible Future Illawarra Inc, received 10 November 2025
- 135 Professor Julia Steinberger
- 136 Birds SA
- 137 Dr Helen Hutchinson
- 138 Name Withheld
- 139 Nick Jorss
- Attachment 1
- 140 The Page Research Centre
- Adverse comment response from The Sunrise Project, received 15 October 2025
- 141 Kenneth Carey
- 142 Tania Neville
- 143 Kerry Trapnell
- 144 Sophia Walter
- 145 Dr Peter Cook
- 146 Scott McCamish
- 147 Australian Conservation Foundation
- 148 John Hughes
- 149 David Forbes
- 150 Mary Morris
- 150.1 Supplementary to submission 150
- 151 Philip Lormer
- 152 Nuclear for Australia
- 153 South Burnett Sustainable Future Network
- 154 Steve Burgess
- 155 Joanne Nova
- 156 Dr David van Gend
- 157 Michael Copage and Blake Johnson
- 158 Ellen Smith
- 159 Ellie Martus
- 160 Sydney Knitting Nannas and Friends
- 161 Darebin Climate Action Now
- 162 Climate Integrity
- 163 Steven Leuver
- 164 Michael Jonas
- 165 Brown University, Climate and Development Lab

- 166 Smart Energy Council
- 167 1 Million Women
- 168 Name Withheld
- 169 Name Withheld
- 170 Name Withheld
- 171 Name Withheld
- 172 Name Withheld
- 173 Name Withheld
- 174 Name Withheld
- Adverse comment response from National Rational Energy Network, received 9 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Southern Wimmera Renewables Research Association, received 6 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from Wimmera Mallee Environmental and Agricultural Protection Association, received 6 October 2025
- 175 Name Withheld
- 176 Name Withheld
- 177 Name Withheld
- 178 Responsible Future Illawarra Chapter
- Adverse comment response from Dr Jeremy Walker, received 14 October 2025
- 179 Mr Luke Gelder
- 180 Dr Mel Fitzpatrick
- 181 Good for the Gong
- 182 Mr Burchell Wilson
- 183 Mr Steven Nowakowski
- Adverse comment response from Queensland Conservation Council, received 21 October 2025
 - Adverse comment response from The Sunrise Project, received 15 October 2025
- 184 Ms Lucy Hamilton
- 185 Clean Energy Council
- 186 Ms Mikaela Humble
- 187 Dr Kesten Green
- 188 Ms Penny Tangey
- 189 Ms Cate Teece
- 190 Ms Carolyn Emms
- 191 Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action
- 192 Southerly Ten
- 193 Mr Stan Moore
- 194 Dr Jennifer Marohasy
- 194.1 Supplementary to submission 194

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- 195 Mr Andrew Hallam
196 Ms Anne McKenzie
197 Climate Communications Australia
198 Climate Council of Australia
199 Dr Marc Hudson
200 Drilled Media
201 Martin O'Dea
202 Mr Pierce Evans
203 Supermiljöbloggen
204 WePlanet Australia
205 Mr Dayne Pratzky
206 Amanda De Lore
- Adverse comment response from Dr Jeremy Walker, received 14 October 2025
- 207 Mr Richard Willoughby
208 Mr. Ronald Davison
209 Mr Trevor Scott
210 Ms Carol Richard
211 Disinformation in the City
212 Mr Grant Piper
213 Dr Brad Jessup
214 Dr Roy Gilbert
215 Mr Frank Bish
216 Dr John Happs
217 Mr Keith Bennett
218 Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group
219 Mr Michael Kottek
220 Mrs Michelle Hunt
221 Mr Murray Hogarth
222 Nexa Advisory
- 222.1 Supplementary to submission 222
- 223 Professor Ivan Kennedy
224 Mr Rafe Champion
225 Mr Timothy Gurowski
226 Voices of Wannon
- Adverse comment response from No Offshore Wind Farm Zone – Warrnambool to Port Fairy Network, received 10 October 2025
- 227 Dr Michael Seebeck
228 Confidential
229 Dr Larry Cashion
230 Ken Hodge
231 Dr Bill Johnston

- 232 Name Withheld
- 233 Name Withheld
- 234 Name Withheld
- 235 Confidential
- 236 Name Withheld
- 237 Confidential
- 238 Greenleaf Renewables
- 239 Electronic Vehicle Council
- 240 Mr Rob Cumming
- Submission 240 response from Mr Giles Parkinson
- 241 Surfers for Climate
- Adverse comment response from Responsible Future Illawarra Inc to submission 241, received 16 February 2026
 - Adverse comment response from Cliff Hall, received 5 March 2026
- 242 Confidential
- 243 Dr Jeremy Walker
- Adverse comment response from Atlas Network, received 22 January 2026
 - Adverse comment response from Rainforest Reserves Australia – Dr Anne Smith, received 22 January 2026
 - Committee comment on adverse comment response by Rainforest Reserves Australia, Dr Anne Smith
 - Adverse comment response from Sandra Bourke, received 22 January 2026
 - Adverse comment response from Rainforest Reserves Australia – Dr Anne Smith No.2, received 23 January 2026
 - Adverse comment response from NREN, received 1 February 2026
 - Adverse comment response from Advance, received 2 February 2026
 - Adverse comment response from Responsible Future Illawarra Inc, received 16 February 2026
 - Adverse comment response from Cliff Hall, received 5 March 2026
 - Michael Seebeck, Rainforest Reserves Australia, Response to adverse comments made by Dr Jeremy Walker, Chair and Deputy Chair
 - Adverse comment response from Rainforest Reserves Australia – Steven Nowakowski, received 29 January 2026

Additional Information

- 1 Polling Summary, received from Re-Alliance on 18 November 2025
- 2 Case Study, received from Re-Alliance on 18 November 2025
- 3 RE-Alliance Network Survey, received from Re-Alliance on 18 November 2025
- 4 Clarification of evidence given 13th November 2025, received from No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens on 12 December 2025

- 5 Correction to evidence given by Australian Conservation Foundation at hearing on 12 November 2025, received from Hancock Prospecting on 15 January 2026
- 6 Letter to Climate Integrity Committee - response to hearing invitation, received from Meta on 19 January 2026
- 7 Offshore Wind Developments Microplastic Shedding, Phytoplankton Risk, and Associated Hydrogen and Ammonia Production, received by Susie Crick 19 Feb 2026
- 8 1976 letter from John Bonython, Atlas Network records, Box 22, Folder 11, Hoover Institution Library & Archives [donated by the Atlas Network 2015]
- 9 1981 CIS Corporate Supporters list. Source Atlas Network archives Box 142, Folder 9 [donated by Atlas Network].

Answer to Question on Notice

- 1 Klaus Bruhn Jensen, answers to questions on notice, 29 September 2025 (received 29 September 2025)
- 2 Andrew Dessler, answers to questions on notice, 30 September 2025 (received 9 October 2025)
- 3 QUT Digital Media Research Centre, answers to questions on notice, 30 September 2025 (received 11 October 2025)
- 4 Jennifer Lacy-Nichols, answers to written questions on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 14 October 2025)
- 5 Australian Communications and Media Authority, answers to questions on notice, 29 September 2025 (received 15 October 2025)
- 6 Union of Concerned Scientists, answers to written question on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 21 October 2025)
- 7 InfluenceMap, answers to questions on notice, 29 September 2025 (received 21 October 2025)
- 8 Raphaela Raaber, answers to questions on notice, 30 September 2025 (received 22 October 2025)
- 9 Christian Downie, answers to questions on notice, 29 September 2025 (received 22 October 2025)
- 10 ADM+S, answers to questions on notice, 29 September 2025 (received 22 October 2025)
- 11 Alex Murray, answers to questions on notice, 29 September 2025 (received 24 October 2025)
- 12 ADM+S, answer to written question on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 27 October 2025)
- 13 Dr Christian Downie, answers to written questions on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 27 October 2025)
- 14 Dr Lucy Hopkins, answers to written questions on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 28 October 2025)

- 15 University of Melbourne, answers to spoken questions on notice, 29 September 2025 and written questions on notice, 14 October 2025 (received 28 Oct 2025)
- 16 Climate Integrity - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 17 Friends of the Earth - Adrian Cosgriff - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 18 Geni.Energy - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 19 LaTrobe Valley Sustainability Group - Daniel Caffrey - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 20 LaTrobe Valley Sustainability Group - Lorraine Bull - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 21 LaTrobe Valley Sustainability Group - Trevor Hoare - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 22 Municipal Association of Victoria - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 23 Nuclear Australia - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 24 Rainforest Reserves - Chris Uhlmann - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 25 WestWind Energy Development - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 November 2025)
- 26 Hunter Jobs Alliance - answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 19 November 2025)
- 27 People for the Plains, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 19 November 2025)
- 28 Re-Alliance- Tony Goodfellow, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 19 November 2025)
- 29 Re-Alliance- Lindsay Marriott, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 19 November 2025)
- 30 TAFE Gippsland, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 20 November 2025)
- 31 No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens - Frank Future, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 22 November 2025)
- 32 Geelong Sustainability, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 24 November 2025)
- 33 Climate Integrity, answers to spoken questions on notice, 12 November 2025, and written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 26 Nov 2025)
- 34 National Environmental Law Association, answers to questions on notice, 13 November 2025 (received 26 November 2025)
- 35 No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens, answers to questions on notice, 13 November 2025 and 18 November 2025 (received 28 November 2025)

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- 36 Municipal Association of Victoria, answers to questions on notice, 11 November 2025 (received 1 December 2025)
 - 37 EV Council - Aman Gaur, answer to written question on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 1 December 2025)
 - 38 Rainforest Reserves Australia, answers to questions on notice, 12 November 2025 and 18 November 2025 (received 2 December 2025)
 - 39 National Rational Energy Network, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 3 December 2025)
 - 40 EV Coucil - Aman Gaur, answers to questions on notice, 13 November 2025 (received 4 December 2025)
 - 41 News Corporation Australia, answer to questions on notice, 13 November 2025 (received 5 December 2025)
 - 42 News Corporation Australia, answer to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 5 December 2025)
 - 43 Institute of Public Affairs, answers to written questions on notice, 18 November 2025 (received 18 December 2025)
 - 44 Institute of Public Affairs, answers to written questions on notice, 5 December 2025 (received 18 December 2025)
 - 45 National Rational Energy Network, answers to written questions on notice, 5 December 2025 (received 19 December 2025)
 - 46 Rainforest Reserves Australia, answers to written questions on notice, 5 December 2025 (received 2 January 2026)
 - 47 Australian Democracy Network - answers to questions on notice, 6 February 2026 (received 13 February 2026)
 - 48 Dr Sora Park, answer to questions on notice, 17 February 2026 (received 24 February 2026)
 - 49 Charlotte Scaddan - answers to questions on notice, 6 February 2026 (received 26 February 2026)
 - 50 Minerals Council of Australia - answer to questions on notice, 17 February 2026 (received 4 March 2026)
 - 51 Coal Australia - answer to questions on notice, 16 February 2026 (received 6 March 2026)
 - 52 Dr Jeremy Walker- answer to questions on notice, 16 February 2026 (received 6 March 2026)
 - 53 Meta - answer to questions on notice, 16 February 2026 (received 6 March 2026)
 - 54 Australian Human Rights Commissioner - answer to questions on notice, 17 February 2026 (received 9 March 2026)
 - 55 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water - answer to questions on notice, 17 February 2026 (received 10 March 2026)
 - 56 Meta, answer to written questions on notice, 24 February 2026 (received 10 March 2026)

- 57 TikTok - answer to written questions on notice, 24 February 2026 (received 11 March 2026)
- 58 Australian Associated Press, answer to questions on notice, 17 February 2026 (received 4 March 2026)
- 59 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, answer to written questions on notice 9 Dec 2025 (received 13 March 2026)
- 60 Anthropic, answer to questions on notice 12 March 2026 (received 17 March 2026)
- 61 Google, answer to questions on notice 5 March 2026 and written questions on notice 11 March 2026 (received 20 March 2026)

Correspondence

- 1 Correspondence from Ms Barbara Mavridis, Vice-CEO of the Aligned Council of Australia to the committee Chair, received on 17 November 2025
- 2 Correspondence from the committee Chair, on behalf of the committee, to Ms Barbara Mavridis, Vice-CEO of the Aligned Council of Australia, sent on 4 December 2025
- 3 Correspondence from Ms Barbara Mavridis, Vice-CEO of the Aligned Council of Australia to the committee Chair, received on 11 December 2025

Tabled Documents

- 1 Article regarding Rainforest Reserves Australia's submission in The Guardian Australia, tabled at the public hearing on 12 November 2025
- 2 Letter from Dr Anne Smith, tabled by Rainforest Reserves Australia at the public hearing on 12 November 2025
- 3 Emails between Rainforest Reserves Australia and The Guardian Australia, tabled at the public hearing on 12 November 2025
- 4 Document tabled by Nuclear for Australia, tabled at the public hearing on 12 November 2025
- 5 New York Times article, tabled by Senator Malcolm Roberts at the public hearing on 6 February 2026
- 6 Report from Center for Countering Digital Hate, tabled by Chair Senator Whish-Wilson at the public hearing on 16 February 2026
- 7 Opening statement by Ms Charlotte Scaddan, tabled at the public hearing on 6 February 2026

Appendix 2

Public hearings and witnesses

Monday 29 September 2025
Parliament House - Room 2S3
Canberra

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

- Mr Tony Mahar, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

Australian Communications and Media Authority

- Ms Rochelle Zurnamer, Executive Manager, Gambling and Mis/Disinformation
- Ms Kelly Mudford, Manager, Disinformation and Platforms (via videoconference)
- Ms Autumn Field, General Manager, Content Division

ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society

- Professor Daniel Angus, Chief Investigator (via videoconference)

University of Melbourne (via videoconference)

- Dr John Cook, Senior Research Fellow
- Dr Jenn Lacy-Nichols, Senior Research Fellow
- Ms Rebekkah Markey-Towler, Research Fellow

InfluenceMap

- Mr Jack Herring, Australia Program Manager

Climate Social Science Network/ Australian National University

- Professor Christian Downie, Professor

Ms Elisa Morgera, Private capacity

International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE)

- Dr Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Chair, Scientific Panel on Information Integrity about Climate science (via videoconference)

Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD)

- Mr Alex Murray (via videoconference)

Tuesday 30 September 2025

Parliament House - Room 2S3

Canberra

Union of Concerned Scientists

- Ms Kate Cell, Senior Climate Campaign Manager (via videoconference)

Texas A&M University

- Professor Andrew Dessler (via videoconference)

Professor J Timmons Roberts, Private capacity

QUT Digital Media Research Centre

- Ms Caroline Gardam, PhD Candidate
- Ms Carly Lubicz-Zaorski, PhD researcher
- Professor Michelle Reidlinger, Associate Professor

Climate Capital Forum (Via videoconference)

- Ms Satya Tanner, Member
- Ms Blaire Palese, Founder and Chair
- Ms Naomi Campbell, Member

89 Degrees East

- Dr Rebecca Huntley, Director of Research (via videoconference)

Combined Submission from Academics (via videoconference)

- Ms Raphaela Raaber, Academic Staff Member at the Centre for People, Place and Planet, Edith Cowan University
- Dr Lucy Hopkins, Academic at the Centre for People, Place and Planet, Edith Cowan University
- Dr Eve Mayes, Senior Research Fellow/ Senior Lecturer (Pedagogy and Curriculum) at Deakin University

Tuesday 11 November 2025

Flinders Room

Mantra on Russell

222 Russell Street

Melbourne

Friends of the Earth

- Mr Patrick Simons, Yes2Renewables Coordinator
- Ms Coco Venaglia, National Organiser
- Mr Campbell Walker, Campaigns Coordinator (via videoconference)

Southerly Ten

- Ms Sarah Altman, Head of Public Affairs

ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century

- Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director
- Ms Alex Dunne, PhD Student

ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century

- Dr Ailie Gallant, Deputy Director
- Ms Alex Dunne, PhD Student

Jewish Climate Network

- Mr Joel Lazar, CEO

Executive Council of Australian Jewry (via videoconference)

- Ms Simone Abel, Head of Legal

One Gippsland

- Mr Simon Johnson, Board Member (via videoconference)
- Ms Veronica Quinless, Representing Board Member Justin Fallu
- Ms Rachael Sweeney, Secretariat (via videoconference)

Municipal Association of Victoria

- Ms Cana Kuyucak, Climate Futures & Resilience Lead
- Ms Ika Trijsburg, Head of Democracy and Diplomacy

Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group

- Mr Daniel Caffrey, President
- Mr Trevor Hoare, Member
- Mrs Lorraine Bull, Treasurer
- Mr Adrian Cosgriff, Voluntary Member

Geelong Sustainability (via videoconference)

- Mr Neil Plummer, Board Member

Wednesday 12 November 2025

Flinders Room

Mantra on Russell

222 Russell Street

Melbourne

Institute of Public Affairs

- Mr Scott Hargreaves, Executive Director
- Mr Daniel Wild, Deputy Executive Director

Rainforest Reserves Australia

- Dr Michael Seebeck, Member
- Mr Kenneth Carey, Community Support
- Mr Steven Nowakowski, Vice President

- Mr Chris Uhlmann, Community Support

Australian Conservation Foundation

- Ms Jane Gardner, Director of Engagement
- Mr Jack Redpath, Nature and Renewables Campaigner
- Mr Dave Sweeney, Anti-nuclear Campaigner

Nuclear for Australia

- Mr Will Shackel, Founder

Clean Energy Council

- Mr William Churchill, Chief Policy and Impact Officer
- Mr Bert Stewart, Farmer
- Ms Georgia Stewart, Farmer
- Mr Colin Kemp, Community Engagement

National Rational Energy Network

- Mr Grant Piper, Chair
- Ms Cathryn Nitschke, Committee Member
- Ms Mary Morris, Committee Member (via videoconference)

Climate Integrity

- Mr Chris Cooper, Climate Integrity Expert Network Member (via videoconference)
- Ms Claire Snyder, Executive Director (via videoconference)
- Mr Michael Mazengarb, Head of Corporate Accountability

Thursday 13 November 2025

Balinga Room
The Grace Hotel
77 York Street
Sydney

News Corporation

- Mr Michael Miller, Executive Chairman
- Mr Campbell Reid, Group Executive - Corporate Affairs, Policy & Government Relations

National Environmental Law Association

- Mrs Michelle Brooks, Director (via teleconference)
- Mr Michael Tangonan, Officer

No Offshore Turbines Port Stephens

- Mr Ben Abbott, President
- Mr John Hamilton, Treasurer
- Mr Frank Future, Member

People for the Plains

- Mr Stuart Murray, President

Hunter Jobs Alliance

- Mr Justin Page, Coordinator

RE-Alliance

- Mr Andrew Bray, Director
- Ms Sally Hunter
- Mr Lindsay Marriott

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action

- Ms Serena Joyner, Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Fiona Lee, Volunteer Bushfire Survivor Advocate (via teleconference)

EV Council

- Ms Julie Delvecchio, Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Aman Gaur, Head of Legal, Policy and Advocacy

Friday 6 February 2026

Parliament House - Room 2S3

Canberra

United Nations (via videoconference)

- Ms Charlotte Scaddan, Senior Adviser on Information Integrity

Digital Industry Group Inc.

- Dr Jennifer Duxbury, Director of Policy, Regulatory Affairs and Research

Australian Democracy Network (via videoconference)

- Mr Andrew Beaton, Campaign Director

Digital Rights Watch (via videoconference)

- Mr Tom Sulston, Head of Policy

Monday 16 February 2026

Parliament House - Room 2S3

Canberra

Meta

- Mr Simon Milner, Vice President, Public Policy APAC
- Ms Cheryl Seeto, Head of Policy, Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands

Climate Society and Environment Research Centre, University of Technology Sydney

- Dr Jeremy Walker, Senior Lecturer

Coal Australia

- Mr Stuart Bocking, CEO

Community Power Agency (via videoconference)

- Ms Eleanor Buckley, Communications and Project Manager
- Ms Claudia Hodge, Project Manager, Community Development
- Ms Emma Stilts, President of Manilla Community Renewable Energy Inc

Page Research Centre

- Mr Gerard Holland

Surfers for Climate (via videoconference)

- Mr Josh Kirkman, CEO

TikTok (via videoconference)

- Ms Jessika Lofstedt, Head of Public Policy, AUNZ

University of Canberra (via videoconference)

- Dr Rys Farthing, Professorial Research Fellow

Dr Karl Kruszelnicki (via videoconference), Private capacity

Tuesday 17 February 2026

Parliament House - Room 2S3

Canberra

Australian Associated Press

- Ms Emma Cowdroy, Chief Executive Officer (via videoconference)
- Mr Andrew Drummond, Editor-In-Chief (via videoconference)
- Ms Holly Nott, Head of Partnerships (via videoconference)

Australian Human Rights Commission

- Dr Lorraine Finlay, Human Rights Commissioner

Responsible Future Illawarra

- Mr Alexander O'Brien, President
- Mrs Amanda De Lore, Vice President
- Mr William Pinkerton, Member & Engineering Adviser
- Ms Susie Crick, Volunteer Marine Conservationist

Minerals Council of Australia

- Mr Sid Marris, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Daniel Zavattiero, General Manager - Climate and Energy

News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

- Dr Sora Park, Director

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

- Ms Rachel de Hosson, Branch Head, Climate Change Policy Branch
- Ms Alison Wiltshire, A/g Head of Division, Clean Energy Investment & Facilitation Division (via videoconference)
- Ms Luana Cormac, Branch Head, First Nations and Clean Energy Facilitation Branch (via videoconference)
- Ms Alannah Pentony, Branch Head, National Inventory Systems and International Reporting
- Mr David Earl, A/g Branch Head, Office of Energy Economics, National Energy Transformation Division
- Mr Chris Johnston, Branch Head, Climate Active, Risk and Science Branch

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

- Mr David Mackay, Deputy Secretary
- Ms Sarah Vandebroek, First Assistant Secretary, Online Safety and Classification Division
- Mr Andrew Hyles, Assistant Secretary, Digital Platforms, International and Policy Branch, Online Safety and Classification Division
- Ms Margaret Lopez, A/g First Assistant Secretary, Broadcasting, Media and News Policy
- Mr Andrew Verdon, Assistant Secretary, News and Journalism Branch

Thursday 5 March 2026

Parliament House - Room 2S3
Canberra

Google

- Mr Shane Huntley, CTO, Google Threat Intelligence Group
- Ms Rachael Lord, Senior Manager, YouTube Government Affairs and Public Policy.
- Mr Jean-Jacques Sahel, Senior Manager, Public Policy, Google

Thursday 12 March 2026

Parliament House - Room 2S1
Canberra

Anthropic

- Mr Evan Frondorf, Safeguards, Head of External Policy and Partnerships (via videoconference)

Appendix 3

Digital platform actions in relation to online misinformation and disinformation

Google

- 1.1 Google has 'teams of experts around the world working in the fight against misinformation'. Since 2021, Google has had a *Safety Engineering Center for Content Responsibility* in Dublin, which it describes as 'a regional hub for Google experts working to combat the spread of illegal and harmful content'.¹
- 1.2 Google's Jigsaw unit has collaborated with experts to study the effectiveness of prebunking—a technique designed to help people build resilience to misleading narratives before they encounter them. In particular, it alerts individuals to the false claims or tactics likely to be used in attempts to manipulate them, and refutes those claims or tactics.²
- 1.3 In October 2021, Google announced a new monetisation policy for Google advertisers, publishers and YouTube creators that prohibited ads for, and monetisation of, content contradicting 'well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change'.³
- 1.4 However, according to the Center for Countering Digital Hate in January 2023, Google profited 'by running ads on search results promoting ... climate disinformation' on the Daily Wire media outlet.⁴ Further, a 2023 report from the Center for Countering Digital Hate and the Climate Action Against Disinformation coalition argued that 'YouTube is breaking its promise not to profit from ads on climate denial content', with researchers identifying 100 videos breaching the policy that have carried ads.⁵

¹ Google, [Google's approach to fighting misinformation online](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

² Google, [Google's approach to fighting misinformation online](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

³ Google Ads Help, [Updating our ads and monetization policies on climate change](#), 7 October 2021 (accessed 5 December 2025).

⁴ Center for Countering Digital Hate, [Google runs ads on search queries for racist disinformation and conspiracies](#), 27 January 2023 (accessed 5 December 2025).

⁵ Center for Countering Digital Hate and Climate Action Against Disinformation, [YouTube's Climate Denial Dollars](#), May 2023, p. 3.

- 1.5 Google Drive, Google Docs and Google Maps all have policies that prohibit users from distributing content that 'deceives, misleads or confuses users', including misleading content related to civic and democratic processes.⁶
- 1.6 Google informed the committee that it's approach to managing misinformation and disinformation (mis/disinformation) involves three strategies: 'firstly, making quality count; secondly, counteracting malicious actors; and, thirdly, giving users more context'.⁷ Google acknowledged that it did not now, or ever, employ fact-checking as a strategy against mis/disinformation, but instead focused its efforts 'on a range of issues relating to deceptive practices' including 'the exploitation of AI through deepfakes'.⁸

YouTube

- 1.7 Google-owned YouTube's misinformation policy states that certain 'types of misleading or deceptive content with serious risk of egregious harm are not allowed on YouTube'. This includes some types of misinformation that could cause real-world harm, content interfering with democratic processes, and some types of technically manipulated content. Users are able to report content violating the policy.⁹
- 1.8 Users who violate Community Guidelines for the first time will likely receive a warning without penalty to their channel, with the option to undertake policy training to allow the warning to expire after 90 days (with the 90-day period starting from when the training is completed). If the same policy is violated within the 90 days, the channel may be given a strike. If a user has three strikes within 90 days, the channel may be terminated. YouTube also may terminate a channel or account after a single case of severe abuse, or when the channel is focused on a policy violation.¹⁰

LinkedIn

- 1.9 LinkedIn states that it removes 'specific claims, presented as fact, that are demonstrably false or substantially misleading and likely to cause harm'. It also removes 'content that is synthetic or manipulated in a way to misrepresent or distort real-life events without clear disclosure of the fake or altered nature of

⁶ Google, [Privacy, terms & AI: Google Drive](#) (accessed 4 December 2025); Google, [Privacy, terms & AI: Google Docs](#) (accessed 4 December 2025) and Google Maps User Generated Content Policy Help, [Prohibited and restricted content](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

⁷ Ms Rachel Lord, Senior Manager, YouTube Government Affairs and Public Policy, Google, *Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2026, p. 1.

⁸ Mr Jean-Jacques Sahel, Senior Manager, Public Policy, Google, *Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2026, p. 2.

⁹ YouTube, [Misinformation policies](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

¹⁰ YouTube, [Misinformation policies](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

the material'. In addition, content 'that is false or substantially misleading but not likely to cause harm is not eligible for distribution beyond the author's network'.¹¹

Meta

- 1.10 Meta's policy on disinformation (as at 4 December 2025) begins with the statement that misinformation 'is different from other types of speech addressed in our Community Standards because there is no way to articulate a comprehensive list of what is prohibited'. It notes that 'what is true one minute may not be true the next minute. People also have different levels of information about the world around them, and may believe something is true when it is not'.¹²
- 1.11 Meta states that it removes 'misinformation where it is likely to directly contribute to the risk of imminent physical harm' and 'content that is likely to directly contribute to interference with the functioning of political processes'. In both instances, Meta states that it partners 'with independent experts who possess knowledge and expertise to assess the truth of the content and whether it is likely to directly contribute to the risk of imminent harm'.¹³
- 1.12 Meta focuses 'on reducing its [mis/disinformation] prevalence or creating an environment that fosters a productive dialogue', noting that in 'some cases, people share deeply-held personal opinions that others consider false or share information that they believe to be true but others consider incomplete or misleading'.¹⁴
- 1.13 Previously, Meta partnered with international fact-checking organisations who review and rate climate change content in various languages. This includes information that experts say undermines the existence and impacts of climate change, misrepresents scientific data and mischaracterises mitigation and adaptation efforts.¹⁵ Information identified as false has a warning label applied and Facebook reduces the visibility of that content so fewer users can see it.¹⁶

¹¹ LinkedIn, [False or misleading content](#) (accessed 5 December 2025); LinkedIn, [Professional community policies](#) (accessed 5 December 2025).

¹² Meta, [Misinformation: Policy details](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

¹³ Meta, [Misinformation: Policy details](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

¹⁴ Meta, [Misinformation: Policy details](#) (accessed 4 December 2025).

¹⁵ Meta, [Stepping Up the Fight Against Climate Change](#), 14 September 2020 (accessed 19 August 2025).

¹⁶ Meta, [Our Approach to Climate Content](#), 4 November 2022 (accessed 19 August 2025).

- 1.14 In Australia, fact-checking for Meta's platforms was conducted by AAP Factcheck and Agence France-Presse.¹⁷ While RMIT Factlab was also a partner in 2024, it ceased operations in January 2025.¹⁸
- 1.15 In January 2025, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that Facebook and Instagram would be abandoning the use of fact checkers on its US platforms, replacing the system with a 'community notes' function where assessment of a posts accuracy is left to the users of the platforms themselves.¹⁹ However, Meta has advised the Australian Government it had 'no immediate plan' to end fact checking on its platforms in Australia.²⁰

Meta Climate Science Information Center

- 1.16 In September 2020, Meta acknowledged the company had a role to play in curbing climate change dis/misinformation online and announced that it would establish a Climate Science Information Center to connect its users to factual climate information.²¹
- 1.17 The centre provides a space for facts, figures and data from leading climate organisation such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN Environmental Programme, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), The Met Office and others.²²
- 1.18 However, questions have been raised about the future status of the Information Centre given Meta's announcement to suspend fact-checking on its US platform.²³

TikTok

- 1.19 TikTok's policy on Integrity and Authenticity, effective 13 September 2025, states that it does not 'allow misinformation that could cause significant harm

¹⁷ QUT, [Meta is abandoning fact checking – this doesn't bode well for the fight against misinformation](#), 9 January 2025 (accessed 19 August 2025); Jason Pollock, [Meta's Australian fact checkers stay, for now](#), *Ad News*, 9 January 2025 (accessed 5 January 2026).

¹⁸ Meta, [Meta response to the Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation](#), 27 February 2025, p. 17 (accessed 4 March 2026).

¹⁹ Brad Ryan, [After Trump's election win, Meta is firing fact checkers and making big changes](#), *ABC News*, 8 January 2025 (accessed 19 August 2025).

²⁰ Joseph Olbrycht-Palmer, [Meta has 'no immediate plan' to end fact-checking in Australia, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland says](#), *The Australian*, 14 January 2025 (accessed 19 August 2025).

²¹ Meta, [Stepping Up the Fight Against Climate Change](#), 14 September 2020 (accessed 19 August 2025).

²² Meta, [Stepping Up the Fight Against Climate Change](#), 14 September 2020 (accessed 19 August 2025).

²³ Jill Hopke, [Climate misinformation is rife on social media – and poised to get worse](#), *The Conversation*, 18 January 2025 (accessed 19 August 2025).

to individuals or society, no matter the intent of the person posting it'. This includes 'harmful conspiracy theories', 'hoaxes' and 'false information related to public safety, crises, or major civic events—when such content may lead to violence or cause public panic'. TikTok states that it works 'with independent fact-checkers and experts to assess the accuracy of content, and we factor their assessments into our moderation decisions'.²⁴

1.20 However, TikTok does allow:

- personal opinions that do not include harmful misinformation;
- people sharing personal medical experiences, as long as they do not promote misinformation or discourage professional care;
- conversations about climate policy, weather or technology, as long as they do not deny or misrepresent scientific consensus; and
- documentary or educational content reporting on or condemning misinformation.²⁵

1.21 TikTok is the only platform that 'explicitly bans climate change misinformation in its policies'. These policies refer to 'disinformation and misinformation that undermines well-established scientific consensus, so that's the basis on which it would make decisions about whether it breached its policies'.²⁶

X (formerly Twitter)

1.22 X's rules, as of 5 December 2025, stipulate that users may not:

- use X's services in a manner intended to artificially amplify or suppress information;
- use X's services for the purpose of manipulating or interfering in elections or other civic processes; or
- deceptively share synthetic or manipulated media that are likely to cause harm, with X stating that it 'may label posts containing synthetic and manipulated media to help people understand their authenticity and to provide additional context'.²⁷

Anthropic

1.23 Anthropic is the developer of AI assistant Claude, which can both generate content as well as perform automated tasks functions. Anthropic is incorporated as a public benefit corporation. Its stated purpose is the responsible development and maintenance of AI for the long-term benefit of humanity.

²⁴ TikTok, [Integrity and authenticity](#) (accessed 5 December 2025).

²⁵ TikTok, [Integrity and authenticity](#) (accessed 5 December 2025).

²⁶ Ms Autumn Field, General Manager, Content Division, Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Committee Hansard*, 29 September 2025, p. 15.

²⁷ X Help Center, [The X Rules](#), (accessed 5 December 2025).

Anthropic's constitution includes a set of principles that guide development of Claude's functions, and the corresponding safety. According to Anthropic representative, Mr Evan Frondorf, these principles require Claude to be factually accurate, represent consensus where it exists, be honest about the limits of its knowledge, but 'still engage with a range of perspectives, where appropriate, on contested topics'.²⁸

- 1.24 Mr Frondorf conceded that because the malicious misuse of AI models is possible, that was why Anthropic deployed a range of safeguards to reduce the occurrence in the first place and then detect and shut down instances where it had occurred. This includes detection tools—classifiers—which screen models for violations of policy and then block responses or flag content for review by enforcement staff. For content or activity that is not stopped by the first stage, Anthropic maintains a threat intelligence team which follows up on external leads or indications of abuse.²⁹
- 1.25 Anthropic further noted that it partners with various groups to stress test its models in areas such as election related mis/disinformation or mental health issues.³⁰

²⁸ Mr Evan Frondorf, Head, External Policy and Partnerships, Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, pp. 1, 2.

²⁹ Mr Evan Frondorf, Head, External Policy and Partnerships, Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, pp. 2, 3.

³⁰ Mr Evan Frondorf, Head, External Policy and Partnerships, Safeguards, Anthropic, *Committee Hansard*, 12 March 2026, p. 3.