



# CONVERSATION GUIDE:

## HOW TO CLEAN UP POLLUTING INFORMATION, AND RESPOND TO COMMON CLIMATE MYTHS

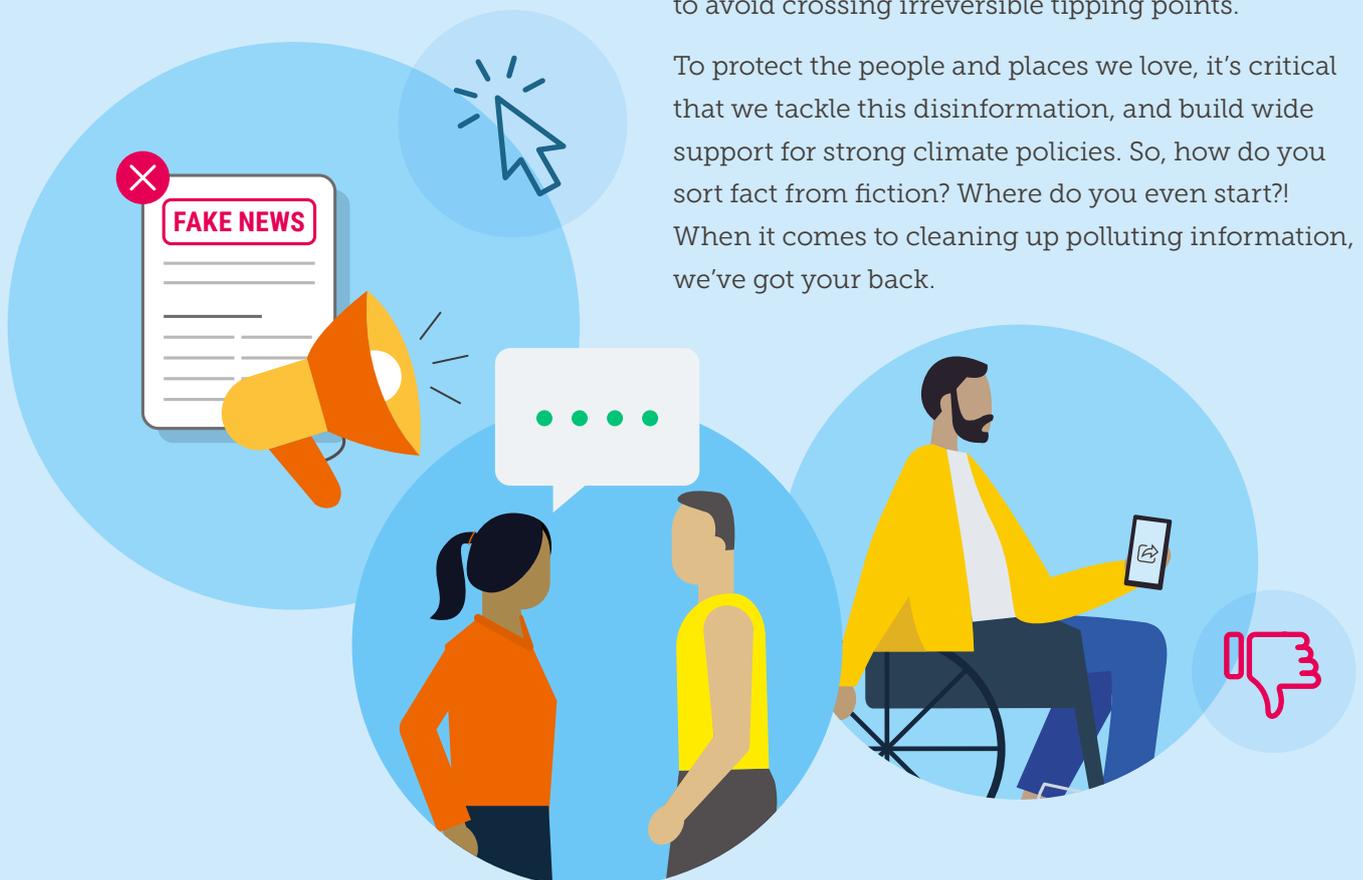
Feeling angry, shocked or overwhelmed by what you're seeing online? You're not alone. A lot of climate crap is being circulated by politicians, corporations and people who benefit from spreading lies.

The same techniques that were used for decades by the tobacco industry to cast doubt on the evidence linking smoking to cancer are being adopted to seed doubt about the science of climate change and discredit renewables.

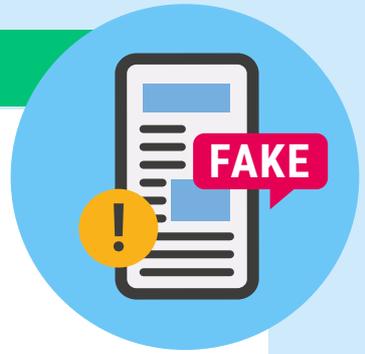
**The deliberate sharing of climate crap is likely to get much worse in the lead up to the next federal election and the stakes couldn't be higher.**

The outcome of this election will determine whether or not we have a Federal Parliament that drives the rapid cuts to climate pollution we need this decade to avoid crossing irreversible tipping points.

To protect the people and places we love, it's critical that we tackle this disinformation, and build wide support for strong climate policies. So, how do you sort fact from fiction? Where do you even start?! When it comes to cleaning up polluting information, we've got your back.



# SPOTTING CRAPPY INFORMATION



It can be easy to tell a lie, but it's getting much harder to spot one.

Here are the top ten "tells" to look for when reading or reacting to online information.

## Top 10 'Tells' to Look For:

**1 Click bait:** A claim or headline that's outrageous, designed to get your attention or evoke a strong emotional reaction.

**2 Manipulation:** Images that have been distorted or created by AI (often hands, fingers, or detail around the face can be revealing) or taken out of context.

**3 Cherry picking:** Choosing a single fact, example or quote as "proof" of a claim when there's plenty of evidence from reliable sources that prove otherwise.

**4 Conspiracy theories:** These can be outlandish, and will often blame the government or assume the worst intentions of others.

**5 False choices:** Giving people a false dichotomy or binary options. For example, if you have flown in a plane, therefore you can't possibly care about climate change.

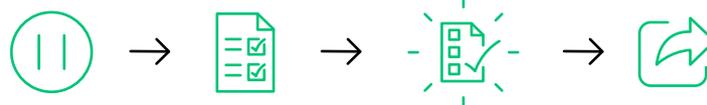
**6 Satire:** Using humour and memes to pass off lies as true stories.

**7 Comparing apples to oranges:** Equating two things that are fundamentally different. For example, trying to elevate or equate an impact from large-scale renewable energy projects to the catastrophic climate impacts resulting from widespread coal, oil and gas pollution.

**8 Attaching:** Drawing a connection between two, unrelated things. For example, Australians love ice-cream, and power bills are up - so therefore, ice-cream is to blame for rising power prices.

**9 Astroturfing:** 'Community groups' that are set up and funded by corporations, or those with a vested interest. For example, the "Get Clear on Nuclear" website has been created by the Minerals Council, whose membership is dominated by coal and gas corporations.

**10 Sourcing:** Where no source is provided to justify a stated fact, or where a relied upon source is provided but is not independent or reliable, such as a known lobby or industry group.



Make sure you stop and think before you start liking, commenting on or sharing content online. Try to verify the information via an original, reliable source or track down a second source publishing the same information.

It's always a good idea to **pause**, **assess** and **check** before you engage with or share anything!

# THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT DISINFORMATION FIRES, IS TO PREVENT THEM FROM TAKING OFF



## 1 Pre-bunk

The best approach isn't to myth bust, it's to get out in front of the myth or lie. So when your local community is preparing for the bushfire season ahead, start talking about the role that pollution from coal, oil and gas is playing in overheating our planet and driving unnatural disasters like the Black Summer bushfires. Or, start talking about the benefits of renewable energy projects - and what good practice looks like - before any proposal is made for your community.

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## 2 Spread + share good information

If we don't help grow the good info that's out there, it'll create a vacuum that will be filled by crap.

The most compelling information centres people (not things) and stories rather than straight up facts.

When you share stories of people benefiting from renewable energy and storage, or communities that have been impacted by unnatural disasters fuelled by climate pollution, or photographs of sheep grazing beneath transmission lines, - you are helping to spread compelling information that cleans up people's feeds.

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## 3 Lead with shared values

It's easier to connect with others if you:

- **Focus on shared values:** For example, "we all want to preserve Australia's beautiful natural places so our kids get to enjoy the great outdoors like we did".
- **Help people visualise your point, instead of offering a critique of their view:** Think about a "sticky" image (or fact) that successfully gets your point across rather than making a long argument.
- **Centre outcomes for people:** Inclusive and human-centred language helps connect people with your message. For example, explaining how local renewable power projects create local job opportunities for young people in your region, so they don't have to move away for their career.

## TOP THREE STEPS FOR FIGHTING FIRES



1

Pre-bunk



2

Spread + share  
good information



3

Lead with  
shared values

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DO SPOT A TURD

Be careful you don't accidentally help spread the lies while trying to rebut them. Sharing or commenting on fake news - even with the intention of pointing out the myth or lie - can actually bump it up in social media feeds so more people see it.

The best way to fight back against lies is by reporting the content to the social media platform or posting your own **truth sandwich**.



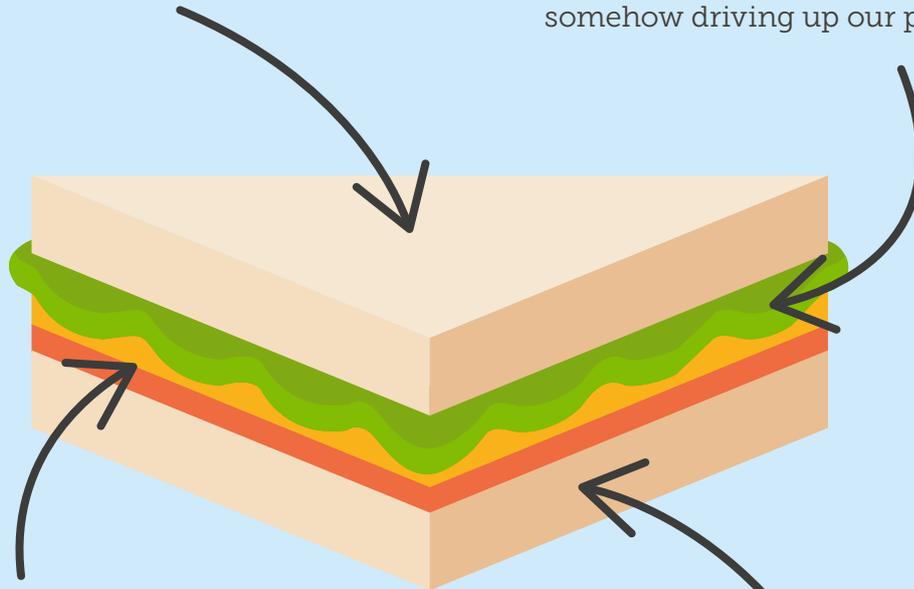
## THE TRUTH SANDWICH: HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

### 1. Start with the Fact:

"Solar electricity is the cheapest electricity in human history."

### 2. Introduce the Fallacy:

"Some people falsely claim that renewable energy like solar is somehow driving up our power bills."



### 3. Explain the Lie:

"These people are trying to connect two, unrelated things to undermine renewable energy. They don't tell you that coal-fired power stations keep breaking down and need to be replaced. They don't say that renewable energy powers about 40% of our national electricity but the majority still comes from coal and gas. They ignore independent experts at CSIRO, who confirms renewable energy backed by storage is the cheapest new energy source available for Australia."

### 4. End with the Fact:

"Four million Australians already have solar on their rooftop, and are saving money on their energy bills as a result. Coal-fired power stations are on the way out, and we need a plan for more renewable energy before the lights go out and our kids' future goes up in smoke."

## CLIMATE MYTHS, AND RESPONSES

During the holiday season it's common to socialise. Make sure you're ready for a conversation about anything - including combatting myths! Here are five common climate myths, and an example of how to respond:



### MYTH 1

**"Australia's always been hot."**

This ignores the role that climate change is playing in heatwaves becoming longer and hotter, and extreme heat days becoming more common.

### RESPONSE

Spring 2024 was the hottest ever recorded for Australia. We know that pollution from coal, oil and gas is overheating our planet and making Australia - which was already a hot and dry continent - even hotter.

I used to love summer, but now I worry about...[share your concerns. For example: more dangerous bushfires and whether I should be fleeing my home early because there's no way to defend against the type of bushfires that take off in the hot, dry and windy conditions we're seeing so much more often due to climate pollution.]

### MYTH 2

**"What about when the sun doesn't shine, or the wind doesn't blow."**

This implies that, because specific renewable sources of energy like solar and wind don't occur constantly, we can't access them whenever we need them.

### RESPONSE

You'd never put all your eggs in one basket, but the energy system we built last century does just that: it relies on a few, very large coal-fired power stations. Whenever they break down, or need fixing, we risk blackouts. It's outdated technology. The way we use energy has already changed, and we are building a flexible, clean and modern system to suit.

Renewable electricity can power us 24/7 because it's always sunny or windy somewhere in our grid, and we can store excess energy created where the sun is shining or wind is blowing and use that whenever we want. Already, renewable power like solar and wind supplies about 40% of our electricity needs nationally - and that's doubled in six years.

Experts say with coal on the way out, we need to get on with building more renewable power backed by storage.

### MYTH 3

**"We need nuclear."**

Nuclear is often presented as a simple or straightforward answer to our problems when it's not.

### RESPONSE

Going nuclear means risking blackouts as all our coal-fired power stations are due to close before a single watt of nuclear energy could possibly be produced.

What we do need is more renewable power, backed by storage, online before the rest of our coal-fired power stations close, the lights go out and kids' futures go up in smoke.

#### MYTH 4

**"Power costs too much and it's the fault of renewables."**

Many people are trying to falsely link renewable energy to power price increases.

#### RESPONSE

Rising power bills are driving more and more Australians to turn to rooftop solar and home batteries - because, by installing these clean technologies, households are using less electricity from the grid. [If you have your own experience of this - then share it!] More than 4 million households have solar panels now, and collectively they're saving \$3 billion a year off their energy bills.

Most increases in power prices can be attributed to high gas prices, because all other forms of power generation are paid what gas generators cost to run - gas is the "price setter" in our main energy grid.

#### MYTH 5

**"What we do doesn't matter. What about China?"**

Australia's contribution to climate pollution is sometimes deliberately downplayed relative to the performance of nations.

#### RESPONSE

If your neighbour was dumping rubbish on their lawn, would you do the same or tell them to clean up their act? Every country around the world needs to be cutting climate pollution further and faster, but most countries - including China - are making welcome changes. Last year, China built more solar and wind capacity than the rest of the world combined!

The real question is, as the sunniest country in the world - and one of the windiest - why isn't Australia making more of our natural advantages to build more clean sources of energy?



## WHO IS MOST VULNERABLE TO CLIMATE CRAP?

We're all vulnerable to disinformation, but certain communities are more likely to be directly targeted with climate and energy myths and lies in the lead up to the federal election.



### THOSE WHO LIVE NEAR COAL-FIRED POWER STATIONS

**Why?** Australia's traditional energy producing communities are facing changes when it comes to one of the biggest employers in their area closing down or transitioning from one source of energy production to another. They are concerned about what the future looks like, and what job options they may have in the future.

**What do they need to know?** Switching to renewable energy enables more high-value industries to operate within Australia, with good, long-term jobs created across regional Australia.

#### Example:

- [Energising Australia](#), Clean Energy Council
- [Coal Worker of 40 Years](#), Climate Council



### THOSE WHO LIVE NEAR PROPOSED NUCLEAR REACTOR SITES

**Why?** They live near the seven nuclear reactor sites proposed by the Federal Opposition, and are being targeted by pro-nuclear campaigns wary that local opposition to nuclear makes it challenging for the scheme to be considered socially acceptable.

**What do they need to know?** Polluting coal is on the way out, and nuclear fails to fill the gap. When communities on the front line of the nuclear debate are worried about significant community, environmental and health risks - from the risk of nuclear meltdowns to radioactive waste - why would we risk it?

#### Example:

- [Newcastle, NSW](#): World's busiest coal port embraces renewables, Climate Council
- [Strathbogie, VIC](#): How a little shire beat big bills, Climate Council
- [Kidston, QLD](#): From old gold mine, to modern solar town, Climate Council



### THOSE WHO LIVE ON THE COAST

**Why?** They cherish the natural environment and ocean lifestyle, and are being confronted with a new type of development: offshore wind.

**What do they need to know?** Climate pollution is overheating our oceans and our planet, and threatens all living things. Offshore wind provides more of the clean energy we need and can create huge amounts of constant power - day and night. Offshore wind happily coexists with marine life in many places already.

#### Example:

- Belinda Baggs (@belindabaggs on Insta 25/10)
- Young marine ecologist [Phebe Fidge](#)
- University of Wollongong [FAQ](#)
- [Code Blue](#), Climate Council
- [UK's answer to energy](#), Climate Council





## FARMING COMMUNITIES

**Why?** They are sensitive to changes to the local landscape and competition for land or resources.

**What do they need to know?** Climate pollution is overheating our planet, and driving unnatural disasters that threaten the viability of farming. The sun and wind can be harvested to protect agriculture, make host farms more financially sustainable and providing long-term economic benefits for the community. Farming livestock and crops happily coexists with renewables.

### Example:

- [Good Neighbours](#), New Joneses
- [Farming Forever](#), Farmers for Climate Action



## COMMUNITIES THAT HOST OR MAY HOST ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION LINES

**Why?** They are worried about impacts on the look or feel of their local area, or the environment.

**What do they need to know?** Poles and wires are the backbone of our electricity system. The way we use energy has already changed, and we need to upgrade grid infrastructure so every community can access the renewable energy they need. Poles and wires can coexist with farming, and burying them underground is rarely a viable option.

### Example:

- [Good Neighbours](#), New Joneses
- [Farming Forever](#), Farmers for Climate Action



### Ready to test yourself?!

- [CrankyUncle](#) game
- [Get Bad News](#) game

## ABOUT THE CLIMATE COUNCIL

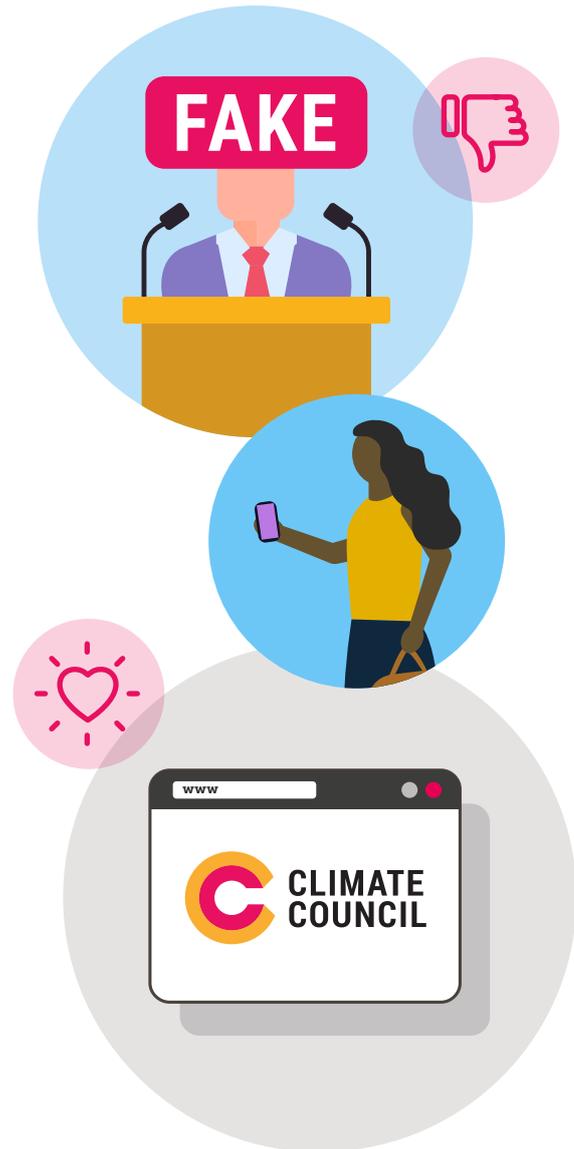
### **Debunking climate misinformation is what Climate Council does best.**

For the past 11 years we've brought together Australia's leading experts in climate impacts, economics, health, emergency response, energy, communications, policy and advocacy to get the right information in the hands of the right people so we can create massive, society-wide change. Every year, we generate tens of thousands of media hits (making us one of the leading voices in public debates about climate change, clean energy and more) and we reach millions of eyeballs with our digital content.

### **It's been working.**

We've helped change the national conversation on climate. We helped set the scene for what was dubbed 'the climate election' of 2022, when the most pro-climate Federal Parliament in our history was elected. And over the past few years, we've beaten powerful, vested interests to help secure major policy wins that are slashing climate pollution and injecting billions of dollars into clean power.

**100% independent and community funded, the Climate Council's impact is powered by caring supporters who are passionate about scaling up climate action in Australia.** Our independence is vital to our mission - it means we can speak truth to power, and hold decision-makers in government and industry accountable to what the science demands.



**Make a tax-deductible donation today** to power the fight against the climate lies threatening our kids' futures.

**DONATE**