



Climate Council of Australia

Submission to: Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy

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26 September 2025

About the Climate Council

Climate Council is Australia's own independent, evidence-based organisation on climate science, impacts and solutions.

We connect decision-makers, the public and the media to catalyse action at scale, elevate climate stories in the news and shape the conversation on climate consequences and action, at home and abroad.

We advocate for climate policies and solutions that can rapidly drive down emissions, based on the most up-to-date climate science and information.

We do this in partnership with our incredible community: thousands of generous, passionate supporters and donors, who have backed us every step of the way since they crowd-funded our beginning as a non-profit organisation in 2013.

To find out more about the Climate Council's work, visit www.climatecouncil.org.au.

Introduction

The Climate Council welcomes the Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy's inquiry into climate and energy misinformation and disinformation. As one of Australia's most prominent and trusted voices on climate science, impacts and solutions, we are dedicated to elevating evidence-based information to shape the national conversation about the climate crisis.

Australians are already living with more frequent and severe fires, floods and heatwaves, driven by escalating climate pollution. Yet persistent mis- and disinformation about climate science, renewable energy and the energy transition continues to distort public debate, undermine community confidence, and delay essential action. These campaigns—often amplified by actors with vested interests—have real-world consequences: they slow investment, increase costs, and leave communities more exposed to risk.

For a decade, non-government organisations like the Climate Council have filled an information gap. Born from the community response to the abolition of the former Climate Commission in 2013, we have produced hundreds of independent, evidence-based publications and engaged thousands of media stories to help Australians make informed decisions. But the scale and sophistication of today's information harms demand co-ordinated national leadership.

The Australian Government now has both the responsibility and opportunity to strengthen information integrity. Australians need clear, reliable information about how the energy transition affects households, regions and jobs; and our electoral and advertising rules must reflect contemporary expectations so people can vote on facts, not falsehoods.

The [National Climate Risk Assessment](#) released this month underscores what is at stake: climate change threatens our way of life across every sector and region. Australia will only meet this challenge by rapidly cutting pollution from coal, oil and gas and scaling clean energy — and by tackling mis- and disinformation that erodes trust in the solutions we need.

Summary

Climate Council findings

- 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.
- Climate mis- and disinformation in Australia is not isolated or incidental. It is systematic and well-funded. For decades, fossil fuel interests and allies have seeded false narratives to protect their commercial positions and profits.
- Astroturfing has become a defining tactic in Australia's climate disinformation landscape, distorting democratic debate by presenting orchestrated, funded campaigns as authentic, grassroots community opposition.
- Major Australian organisations responsible for spreading climate misinformation are linked to coordinated international networks, amplifying reach and influence.
- Bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts accelerate the spread of climate mis- and disinformation, shaping the national narrative and drowning out credible information.
- For too long, combating mis- and disinformation has been left to non-government organisations. Leadership from the Australian Government is urgently needed in tackling this serious issue.
- Australians need transparent, accessible and reliable information on how the energy transition impacts them. They need confidence that they are voting on facts, not falsehoods; and the Government needs to tackle the dangerous spread of misinformation through bots, trolls and inauthentic social media accounts.

Recommendations

1. **Establish Local Energy Hubs to provide communities with accessible, tailored, accurate information about what renewables mean for their region.**
2. **Reform political donation and advertising laws to ensure Australians can make informed decisions at the ballot box.**
3. **Identify and implement appropriate mechanisms to improve regulation and management of bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts on social media.**

Responses to the Terms of Reference

a) the prevalence of, motivations behind and impacts of misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy

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.

It is well-evidenced that the fossil fuel industry has been aware of the catastrophic impacts of the unchecked burning of coal, oil and gas since at least the 1950s; and for decades worked to keep this knowledge hidden. When the truth was revealed in 1988, the industry launched a global campaign to delay the shift to renewables. The campaign continues today, with powerful actors including corporations, governments and political parties in Australia and around the world attacking climate science, policies, and organisations that threaten their profits ([International Panel on the Information Environment 2025](#)).

Today, more than 99% of climate scientists agree that human-driven global heating is occurring ([Lynas et al 2013](#)). In the face of overwhelming scientific evidence, the fossil fuel industry, media and other actors have largely – though not entirely – moved past the era of climate denial. This month, when the [National Climate Risk Assessment](#) was released, several politicians and media outlets responded with a barrage of climate denial. Nationals Senator Matt Canavan dubbed it the “mother of all scare campaigns” ([Sky News 2025](#)). An article in The Australian stated the report was “pure speculation” and that rising temperatures are a “blessing” for some parts of the world ([Sloan 2025](#)). Similar statements can be found in many [news articles](#) and [TV segments](#) across Murdoch media outlets. These claims dangerously undermine trust in Australia’s leading scientific bodies that prepared the Risk Assessment - the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Geoscience Australia.

For the most part, mis- and dis-information campaigns now attack climate solutions: recent research by Climate Communications Australia found that nearly 15% of news articles on climate solutions contained misinformation ([Holmes 2025](#)). Like with climate denial, these campaigns also work to discredit science and data. For example, the [Institute of Public Affairs](#) recently stated that “the science institutions are not entirely trustworthy, and are in need of major reform.” ([Ridd 2025](#)).

Rampant myths and misinformation like these have arguably derailed, or significantly delayed, climate action in Australia: communities are polarised, and democratic processes are undermined. Globally, the United Nations has identified disinformation campaigns as a key barrier to global progress on climate change ([UN 2024](#)). The Climate Council has allocated significant resources to halt the spread of mis- and dis-information over the years. Key examples are outlined in the following table.

Examples of recent and ongoing climate mis- and disinformation campaigns in Australia

False claim	Key source/s	Seen disseminated by	Factual evidence
Carbon capture and storage (CCS) will help lower Australia's emissions	Fossil fuel industry ; Federal Coalition among others	Murdoch media including The Australian ; Sky News	Around the world, CCS projects are being built to allow for continued oil and gas production – a use that still makes up almost three quarters of world CCS projects – not to reduce emissions. In Australia, the fossil fuel industry is pushing for CCS so it has a license to expand its operations and boost its profits, not because it wants to cut emissions. It is far better and cheaper to avoid carbon emissions in the first place, rather than try to capture them after they've been released. Rather than wasting money on something that's expensive and ineffective, Australia should be investing in the things we know can cut emissions quickly and bring down power prices – like renewables backed by storage – and ending approvals of new and expanded fossil fuel projects. Climate Council fact sheet: What is Carbon Capture and Storage?
Climate change is not damaging the Great Barrier Reef	Institute of Public Affairs (IPA)	Murdoch media including The Australian ; Sky News	Multiple studies have confirmed that the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is under significant pressure due to climate change. Warming sea temperatures have led to mass coral bleaching, and the GBR will face catastrophic consequences without deep, rapid cuts to climate pollution (for example, Henley et al 2024). The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement on the GBR – involving more than 200 experts and based on evidence from over 4,000 publications – found that human induced climate change is the primary threat to the GBR (DCCEEW 2024). Climate Council resources: Underwater Bushfire: Vibrant Great Barrier Reef fading to a shadow of its former glory; Code Blue: Our Oceans in Crisis
Decommissioned wind turbine blades are being secretly dumped	Menzies Research Centre	Murdoch media mastheads including Sky News and 2GB	Only eight renewable projects – mostly very small wind farms built to serve remote communities – have reached their end of life in Australia. Most of these have been decommissioned, but some have been refurbished or even relocated. When projects are decommissioned, the infrastructure is removed from the property and disposed of in accordance with relevant regulations in that state. More than 90% of wind turbines, solar panels and batteries are recyclable (RE-Alliance 2025). Climate Council fact sheet: What happens to renewables when they reach retirement age?

False claim	Key source/s	Seen disseminated by	Factual evidence
Gas is a natural and clean “transition fuel”	Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association and fossil fuel corporations such as Woodside, who claims its gas can help reduce global emissions , and Australian Gas Networks who is facing ACCC action for making false and misleading representations.	Murdoch-owned News Corp entities (see Morton 2024); Australians for Natural Gas – a “grassroots” movement with links to the fossil fuel industry and the Coalition. The Australian Government has also perpetuated this narrative (for example, King 2023 and DISR 2024), as well as the Federal Coalition and several state and territory governments.	Gas is a harmful fossil fuel. It’s mostly made up of methane, which is highly effective at trapping heat, causing around 85 times the climate damage of carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. Gas has historically been an important energy source for Australia and our international trading partners, but this is changing rapidly as we move to renewables backed by storage and electrify our homes and businesses. While gas will have a small and diminishing role in the transition to renewables, we need far less of it than the industry and its backers claim. These claims are a guise to lock in new projects and revenue streams - evidenced in the recent North West Shelf decision, which the industry claims will increase Australia’s energy security when in reality the vast majority of the gas from the project will be exported . Climate Council resources include: The future of gas is small and dwindling ; 5 reasons why Australia needs to break up with gas ; Powering past gas: An energy strategy that works ; 5 reasons why the Albanese Government should not approve its most polluting fossil fuel project yet
Global temperature increases are not human-induced	Most recently, Trumpet of Patriots and the IPA		The IPCC has confirmed that the warming of the earth’s systems is unequivocal, and the influence of human activity is an established fact (IPCC 2023). Pollution from coal, oil and gas has been creating a blanket of heat-trapping gasses in the atmosphere, already raising the global average temperature by approximately 1.3°C above pre-industrial levels (Climate Council 2025). Climate Councillor David Karoly worked with ABC Fact Check to counter these claims in the lead up to the 2025 election.

False claim	Key source/s	Seen disseminated by	Factual evidence
Net zero is a threat to Australia's prosperity	IPA ; Advance Australia ; Members of the Federal Coalition	Various Murdoch media outlets including Sky News's " Real cost of net zero " documentary; The Australian	Climate change is a major threat to Australia's economic prosperity – as the National Climate Risk Assessment confirmed: at 3°C of warming, Australia can expect a \$135+ million drag on productivity, and property values could take a half-trillion dollar hit (Australian Climate Service 2025). Conversely, significant economic and diplomatic opportunities can flow from a strong target. Deloitte modelling has confirmed that a strong climate target could deliver a \$370 billion boost to Australia's GDP within the next decade and leave Australia almost half a trillion dollars better off by 2050 (Deloitte; Business for 75 2025). The Climate Council has developed multiple resources on this issue including our recent in-depth Stronger Target. Safer Future report.
Nuclear power is the cleanest, cheapest path for Australia to achieve net zero by 2050	Federal Coalition , Advance , Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) , Menzies Research Centre ; IPA	Murdoch media including The Australian and Sky News ; so called "grassroots" organisations such as Nuclear for Australia and its spin-off Mums for Nuclear	The Federal Coalition's nuclear costings, released in 2024, contained a number of misleading assumptions and omissions. Climate Council analysis found that the scheme would cost up to \$490 billion more than estimated, and add one billion tonnes more climate pollution from burning more coal and gas while waiting for nuclear reactors. In reality, the Coalition's plan was a smokescreen for its commitment to coal and gas, which would delay Australia's urgent and accelerating shift to clean energy and away from fossil fuels. Climate Council resources: Economic meltdown: Counting the real cost of Peter Dutton's nuclear fantasy; Why nuclear is not worth the risk for Australia.
Offshore wind farms kill whales and other marine life	Advance Australia	Murdoch media including Sky News	Scientists have confirmed that there is no evidence to link whale stranding or deaths to offshore wind energy development (US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2024). Scientists across the board agree that the biggest threat to whales and our oceans is climate change that's fuelled by the burning of coal, oil and gas (Australian Marine Conservation Society 2025). Climate Council fact sheet: Australia and offshore wind

False claim	Key source/s	Seen disseminated by	Factual evidence
Renewables are unreliable and responsible for high power prices	An ongoing campaign by various actors including Advance Australia , IPA and CIS	Murdoch media mastheads including Sky News and the Daily Telegraph	Coal outages have been a primary driver of power outage warnings in recent years (particularly during summer), as well as contributing to some of the most severe price spikes (Baringa 2024). Even though only about 17% of Australia's electricity comes from gas, research shows that because it is so expensive, gas prices drive 50-90% of pricing periods in the National Electricity Market (Nolan et al 2022). Analysis by Australia's leading energy and science bodies, including the Australian Energy Regulator, Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), Australian Energy Market Commission and CSIRO consistently shows that renewable power, backed by storage like pumped hydro and batteries, is the most cost-effective way to keep reliably powering Australian homes and businesses. Climate Council and CMC resources include: Under pressure: The climate crunch fueling inflation and hurting Aussie families; Comms Guide: Costly gas is pushing up power prices; What is the cheapest form of electricity for Australia?; Five reasons why your power bills are sky high; Lights Out: Ageing Coal and Summer Blackouts
The Black Summer bushfires were caused by arson and unrelated to climate change	The hashtag #ArsonEmergency originated on Twitter and was spread by bots and trolls (Graham 2020 ; Daume et al 2023)	Channel 7	Climate change fuelled Australia's devastating Black Summer. Extremely hot, dry conditions, underpinned by years of reduced rainfall and a severe drought, set the scene for the unprecedented fires. The hot, dry conditions that fuelled these fires will continue to worsen without substantial, concerted action to rapidly phase out coal, oil and gas (Climate Council 2020). The Climate Council's Summer of Crisis report provided the first comprehensive overview of the devastating climate impacts Australians experienced during the summer of 2019-20.

False claim	Key source/s	Seen disseminated by	Factual evidence
The New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES) will increase car prices / is a 'tax'	The Coalition , based on modelling and analysis by the automotive industry	Murdoch media including Sky News	There is no evidence to suggest that the NVES increases vehicle prices. In jurisdictions that have had a standard in place for some time, real-world evidence has not shown an increase in price for consumers in the cost of cars (Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts 2025). Analysis has shown that the figures used by the Coalition greatly overstated the penalties incurred. They were based on a draft version of the policy that was more stringent, and also included some high-emitting vehicles that are no longer available in the market (Driver 2025). In reality, the NVES will save Australians \$95 billion in fuel costs, \$13.85 billion in maintenance, and around \$5 billion in health benefits from cleaner air by 2050 (Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2025). Climate Council resources include 10 things you should know about Fuel Efficiency Standards and Briefing Paper: New Vehicle Efficiency Standard set to slash more climate pollution than getting every Aussie home off gas
Wind farm developers kill koalas using blunt force trauma	The Nationals via a 2GB radio interview	The Liberal Party of Australia and United Australia Party	The developer at the centre of these claims confirmed that no koalas had been injured or killed during the construction of the wind farm (Squadron 2023). More broadly, coal mines pose a far greater threat than renewable projects – for example, coal mines in the pipeline for approval in New South Wales Queensland threaten thousands of hectares of koala habitat (Queensland Conservation Council, NSW Nature Conservation Council and Lock the Gate Alliance 2024).

b) how misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy is financed, produced and disseminated

Climate mis- and disinformation in Australia is not isolated or incidental. It is systematic and well-funded. For decades, fossil fuel interests and allies have seeded false narratives to protect their commercial positions and profits.

As the examples above demonstrate, several key entities are responsible for producing climate and energy mis- and dis-information in Australia. These organisations are highly influential and their reach into Australian politics is deep. The [Menzies Research Centre](#) is openly affiliated with the Liberal Party of Australia. It claims, among other things, that Australia must go nuclear; investing in fossil gas will improve Australia's productivity; and that renewables "sabotage" energy reliability ([Menzies Research Centre 2025](#)).

While the other organisations are deliberately secretive about their donors, the information that is publicly available demonstrates that they are backed by fossil fuel interests and have ties to the Coalition, as well as coordinated international networks. Extensive research and investigations have demonstrated that:

- The [Centre for Independent Studies](#) (CIS), whose first Chairman John Bonython was the co-founder of fossil fuel giant Santos ([Santos 2025](#)), is an Australian branch of the US-based Atlas Network ([Walker 2023](#); [Atlas Network 2018](#)). The Atlas Network is discussed below under Part (d). The CIS's energy research program focuses on nuclear power and attacking the clean energy transition, including claims that CSIRO is hiding the cost of the renewable rollout ([CIS 2025](#)) and that renewables are to blame for blackouts risk conditions ([CIS 2025](#)).
- The [Institute of Public Affairs](#) (IPA) is another branch of the Atlas network ([Walker 2023](#); [Atlas Network 2018](#)), that denies the scientific consensus that humans are responsible for catastrophic climate change ([IPA 2025](#)). Court documents reveal that Gina Rhinehart's company Hancock Prospecting donated more than \$4 million to the IPA in 2016-17 ([Readfearn 2018](#); [NSW Caselaw 2018](#)). Ms Rhinehart is an Honorary Life Member of the IPA ([IPA 2022](#)), while former Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott is a "Distinguished Fellow" ([IPA 2022](#)).
- [Advance](#) is a newer branch of the Atlas Network ([Walker 2023](#)), that claims "mainstream Australia is being plundered by stupid laws and woke ideologies like 'net zero'" and makes it its mission to "save Australia and restore the balance" ([Advance 2025](#)). While Advance claims to be a grassroots organisation, it has various links to the Liberal Party including former Prime Minister Tony Abbott ([Begley 2023](#); [Walker 2025](#)) and has received funding from Liberal funding vehicle the Cormack Foundation ([Elliott 2025](#); [Australian Electoral Commission 2025](#)).

Many media outlets have played a role in spreading mis- and disinformation, whether willfully or inadvertently. However, Murdoch-owned mastheads play a particularly important role in disseminating the misinformation produced by the above groups,

flooding the media with multiple different “independent” sources of information ([Walker 2024](#)). This month, The Australian hosted an [energy forum](#) openly sponsored by some of Australia's biggest fossil fuel corporations: Woodside, Jemena, Chevron, as well as Australian Energy Producers ([The Australian 2025](#)) – an overt display of the national newspaper's strong ties to the fossil fuel industry. As Climate Councillor Lesley Hughes has stated: “Rupert Murdoch has been extraordinarily damaging. He bears enormous responsibility for the world's lack of necessary action on climate change. His outlets have actively promoted scepticism about climate science that has undermined the need to act” ([Readfearn and Morton 2023](#)).

c) the origins, growth and prevalence of ‘astroturfing’ and its impact on public policy and debate

Astroturfing has become a defining tactic in Australia's climate disinformation landscape, distorting democratic debate by presenting orchestrated, funded campaigns as authentic community opposition.

Astroturfing is a powerful tactic that creates the illusion of grassroots support or opposition – in this case, to the energy transition – which in reality is being orchestrated and funded by powerful political and fossil fuel interests. We saw this first hand in the lead up to the 2025 Federal Election, with the timing of the surfacing of certain groups clearly intended to influence the election outcome.

An [ABC investigation](#) in April this year revealed that [Australians for Natural Gas](#) – a pro-fossil gas group presenting itself as a grassroots movement – was working with Freshwater Strategy, the Coalition's internal pollster ([McGrath and Robb 2025](#)). Investigations also revealed that the organisation's directors included a gas industry executive and a NSW Liberal candidate. The group was reported to the ACCC for failing to disclose these interests, and greenwashing in relation to the role of gas in Australia's energy transition ([Climate Integrity 2025](#)). The group's [campaign for more fossil gas production in Australia](#) continues.

Many seemingly grassroots pro-Nuclear groups also began appearing on social media and online in the lead up to the election – using spokes and messaging strategically designed to target key demographics and electorates, demonstrating the sophistication, coordination and financing behind their work. [Nuclear for Australia](#), publicly presented as a non-partisan, youth-led group, was central to the highly resourced campaign to legitimise the Coalition's position on nuclear energy. While its funding sources and political ties are opaque, and its founder has denied political connections, analysis by GetUp ([2024](#)) shows Nuclear for Australia has links to the Liberal Party, nuclear and mining industries, and conservative campaign networks. Nuclear for Australia also launched a targeted spin-off, [Mums for Nuclear](#), designed to broaden appeal and build a constituency of pro-nuclear women. Australian branches of coordinated global groups, like [WePlanet Australia](#), were specifically targeted at climate-conscious voters, greenwashing the Coalition's nuclear power plan by framing it as an emissions reduction

solution for Australia. In reality, the Coalition's plan was a smokescreen for its commitment to coal and gas, which would delay Australia's urgent and accelerating shift to clean energy and away from fossil fuels.

The use of astroturfing campaigns spreading misinformation about the environmental impacts of offshore wind is well-documented (for example; [Cannane and Nguyen 2025](#); [Fernandez and James 2023](#); [Walker 2024](#)). Advance has been leading the campaign on Australian shores (see [Advance 2025](#)), with these messages then turning up in social media groups which include members linked to the Atlas Network ([Walker 2024](#)).

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

Major Australian organisations responsible for spreading climate misinformation are linked to coordinated international networks, amplifying reach and influence.

The Atlas Network is a US-based organisation made up of more than 500 conservative think tanks, across more than 100 countries. The Atlas Network and its affiliates have worked to “saturate the public sphere from multiple seemingly disparate sources with constantly repeated and co-ordinated political messaging” intended to prevent governments from acting in the public interest to prevent the worst impacts of climate change ([Walker 2024](#)). The affiliation of the CIS, Advance and IPA with the Atlas Network is deliberately difficult to trace, and they deny receiving funding from the Network. However, extensive research – including by Dr Jeremy Walker of the University of Technology Sydney – has shown that there are various links to other Atlas Network organisations and funders ([Walker 2023](#)).

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

Bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts accelerate the spread of climate mis- and disinformation, shaping the national narrative and drowning out credible information.

At the Climate Council we see first hand the role that social media plays in spreading unverified claims about energy projects. Our posts often attract a deluge of comments reflecting the narratives seeded by the actors discussed above. Bots and trolls regularly amplify misleading climate denial and anti-renewable narratives. However, bots use sophisticated techniques to avoid detection, and it is often extremely difficult to identify them. There is little to no tangible support provided by social media platforms, which has been exacerbated since the removal of fact-checking from Meta and X/Twitter.

Our team actively moderates comments to prevent the spread of mis- and disinformation via our platforms. This requires significant resources and also takes an emotional toll on staff who have to manually read and remove comments that contain mis-and

disinformation about climate change, and are also often abusive, racist, or sexist. Just a few examples of comments containing misinformation in the last week alone include:

- *"Climate change is a scam"*
- *"If you want your kids to have the same opportunities, you have to bin [net zero] targets right now"*
- *"I don't [care about climate action] as it will jeopardise our prosperity and security. Climate Council are a net threat to Australia and a dangerous activist group"*
- *"I can't find any evidence that CO2 affects the climate"*
- *"Our mining exports are the only thing stopping us from being a third world country"*
- *"[renewables] won't be so good when they age and start falling apart and all that toxic waste becomes landfill that no one knows what to do with"*
- *"The islands aren't sinking, the water isn't rising. And Australia is a major polluter? Untrue. That is a blatant manipulation of the truth"*

Research from the University of Melbourne has found that we are more likely to believe a lie if we encounter it repeatedly, meaning AI-driven bots could be extremely effective at eroding public support for climate action through sheer repetition of lies ([Jiang et al 2024](#)).

The Australian Government should identify appropriate mechanisms to better address the spread of mis and dis-information via bots. This should be informed by consultation with social media platforms and other relevant stakeholders, and learnings from existing approaches in Australia and other jurisdictions around the world.

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

For too long, combating mis-and disinformation has been left to non-government organisations. Leadership from the Australian Government is urgently needed to tackle this serious issue.

While non-government organisations have been working tirelessly to counter the spreading of mis and dis-information, they cannot compete with the scale of the campaigns backed by fossil fuels and other vested interests. The Australian Government has a responsibility to ensure integrity of information on climate change and energy. This inquiry is a welcome step in shining a light on the harmful climate mis- and disinformation tactics being employed across Australia. Our recommended measures to ensure mis and dis-information do not further delay Australia's renewable rollout are outlined below.

g) the role that could be played by media literacy education, including in the school curriculum, in combating misinformation and disinformation

Australians need transparent, accessible and reliable information on how the energy transition impacts them. They need confidence that they are voting on facts, not falsehoods; and the Government needs to tackle the dangerous spread of misinformation through bots, trolls and inauthentic social media accounts.

While media literacy education may play a role in addressing mis- and disinformation, we suggest more immediate measures to help inoculate the public against misleading campaigns, build trust in the transition, and accelerate the rollout of renewable energy that will lower bills, cut pollution, and strengthen Australia's energy security.

Recommendations

1. Establish Local Energy Hubs to provide communities with accessible, tailored, accurate information about what renewables mean for their region

The current top-down approach to planning and delivery of renewable energy projects often leaves communities feeling excluded from decision-making. This lack of agency can create distrust, fuel fears, and leave space for mis- and disinformation to spread unchecked. To address this, the Australian Government should work with state and local governments to establish [Local Energy Hubs](#) within Renewable Energy Zones (REZs). These hubs would:

- Serve as trusted, independent sources of information tailored to local contexts, ensuring communities can easily access clear and factual explanations of what renewable projects mean for their region.
- Provide a point of contact for residents seeking advice and answers, reducing the influence of misinformation circulating on social media and in local networks.
- Act as an intermediary between renewable energy developers and local communities, improving transparency, fostering dialogue, and building trust in the planning process.
- Facilitate structured opportunities for communities to give input on large-scale renewable projects, ensuring that feedback is considered early and meaningfully.

By embedding reliable, locally tailored information within communities, Energy Hubs can help prevent the spread of mis- and disinformation, build social licence for renewable projects, and ensure communities see themselves as partners rather than bystanders in Australia's energy transition. The Local Energy Hubs campaign is backed by more than 65 organisations, from community groups to peak environment and industry bodies ([RE-Alliance 2025](#)).

2. Reform political donation and advertising laws to ensure Australians can make informed decisions at the ballot box

Australians deserve a fair, transparent democracy where decisions are not distorted by vested interests or hidden money. In February this year, the biggest changes to our electoral funding laws in decades were passed in a deal between Labor and the Coalition. While [the amendments](#) include some welcome changes such as lower disclosure thresholds, they will severely limit the ability of not-for-profits like the Climate Council to advocate and counter the spread of mis- and disinformation during election periods, through a provision that prevents the use of untied or general donations for use on electoral advocacy. At the same time, the changes do little to crack down on the real threat to democracy: the influence of vested interests and big corporate donors.

The problems with Australia's electoral funding laws are compounded by the fact that there is no requirement for truth in political advertising. The [Electoral Act](#) prohibits the publication of material likely to mislead or deceive Australians only after an election has been called. An election campaign often begins well before an election is officially called, yet outside that window there is no requirement for political advertising to be factual, leaving voters exposed to unchecked misinformation. Polling by The Australia Institute shows that 89% of Australians support the introduction of truth in political advertising laws ([The Australia Institute 2025](#)).

Despite recent attempts by independents Kate Chaney, Zali Steggall and David Pocock to deliver desperately needed reforms, our laws continue to lag behind community expectations. Before the next Federal Election, due in 2028, the Australian Government should introduce – or support – legislation to restore integrity to Australia's democracy, curb the influence of vested interests, including the fossil fuel industry, and ensure voters have access to accurate information. Key reforms include:

- **Increase transparency of political donations**, including lower disclosure thresholds, caps on expenditure and real-time disclosure, so Australians can clearly see who is funding campaigns against climate action.
- **Pass truth in political advertising laws** – like those recently introduced into Parliament by [Zali Steggall MP](#) and [Senator David Pocock](#) – requiring campaign ads to be factual and empowering an independent body to undertake compliance activities.
- **Repeal restrictions that limit charities and community organisations from engaging in public debate during election periods**, ensuring non-government organisations like the Climate Council can continue to provide accurate, evidence-based information on issues of significant public interest.

3. Identify and implement appropriate mechanisms to improve regulation and management of bots, trolls and inauthentic accounts on social media

Bots and trolls regularly amplify misleading climate denial and anti-renewable narratives. Bots use sophisticated techniques to avoid detection, and it is often extremely difficult to identify them. Support from social media platforms, where it exists at all, is negligible in effect, and has deteriorated since the removal of fact-checking from Meta and X/Twitter.

Given the challenges in identifying bot accounts, any actions to address this issue should be informed by consultation with industry, and learnings from existing work in Australia and overseas, to ensure measures are practical and achievable. Existing work in Australia includes the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) [voluntary arrangements to combat mis- and disinformation](#), Australian Electoral Commission's [Disinformation Register](#) and work of the [eSafety Commissioner](#).

Action to address this issue could include developing legislation to require platforms to remove bot accounts that impersonate humans, and clearly label all legitimate bot accounts, as recommended by Senator David Pocock last year ([Parliament of Australia 2024](#)).

Conclusion

Climate mis- and disinformation in Australia is not isolated or incidental; it is systematic, well funded and increasingly coordinated across borders. For decades, fossil fuel interests and their allies have seeded false narratives to protect profits, now amplified by ostensibly "independent" groups with clear links to industry and partisan politics. These campaigns manufacture fear and division, erode trust in science, and slow the rollout of clean energy projects essential to reducing risk to Australian lives, livelihoods and ecosystems. With high-profile global figures and political leaders continuing to deny climate science, the risk is growing. Without decisive government action to strengthen information integrity and ensure communities can access evidence-based, factual information, mis- and disinformation will continue to undermine our democracy and stall the urgent clean-energy transition Australia needs to reduce climate harms and create a safer, more prosperous future.