

Submission to Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy
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Biography / Background

I am a freelance analyst / writer, based in Oslo, Norway. I work with a range of climate and energy groups to advocate for, analyse and report on major issues in this space. I'm focused on Europe, the US and Australia. I currently write for outlets like Crikey and RenewEconomy, and have previously contributed to outlets like Foreign Policy, The New Republic, The Age and the Guardian.

I contribute to The Australia Institute as a Senior Research Associate, alongside working with various Europe-based NGOs, contributing to and sharing their analytical work on climate and energy.

I am a committee member for Comms Declare, an organisation that is fighting to ensure PR and marketing are not used to worsen the climate crisis or expand fossil fuels.

I worked for six years at Infigen Energy (now, Iberdrola Australia), first in operations and data analysis (helping to set up their 'operations and control centre'), then in communications and public engagement. I have also worked at the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) on a one year contract in their communications department, and at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), in the communications department of the data science arm Data61.

I wrote a book in 2021, about the politics, data and social issues around Australia's energy transition, with the University of New South Wales press. I have also published a few papers in academic journals. After moving to Norway in 2019, I finished the book, and then in 2022 I joined a global network of climate change communicators, working on corporate accountability issues until early 2025, when I switched back to freelance writing.

Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this committee. I won't be addressing all the terms of reference, but I will be touching on several of them, particularly (a), (b), (c) and (d).

The prevalence of disinformation from mainstream media outlets and journalists

My first experience with prominent false information was after I began working at Infigen Energy in February 2010. My work entailed direct engagement with the raw data and characteristics of wind power technology in Australia's electricity grid (then: 1.5% and now 14.7%¹). The depiction of wind power in mainstream media was verging on comically wrong. Media outlets issuing glaring mistakes and absurd errors - essentially being a vector for disinformation attacking a safety upgrade to Australia's energy system - was what inspired me to start my own blog, 'Some Air'². In 2016, soon before I discontinued the site, I wrote³ about former MP Craig Kelly's false statement regarding the 'payback period' for wind power:

"Kelly's belief is 597,273 times larger than the actual figure. This would be like estimating that Malcolm Turnbull is 36,433,636 years old, or that Kanye West is 1,027,309.091 metres tall. This isn't the sort of error we make in our everyday life"

(I also include in that article an instance of former radio shock jock Alan Jones inflating the price of wind power by 20,297 times on the ABC's Q&A program).

On my blog, on my former Twitter account, and in published articles for outlets such as The Guardian, I have documented and debunked disinformation with a particular focus on disinformation from the mainstream media. Much disinformation focused on wind power, presenting it as an infeasible option for mass replacement of coal and gas fired power stations.

In my book, "Windfall: Unlocking a Fossil Free Future"⁴, I document the sequence of events around the immediate framing of the 2016 large-scale blackout that occurred in South Australia, beginning with the statements of former ABC News political editor Chris Uhlmann blaming the characteristics of wind power on the night of the blackout, and that framing bleeding into the following days, months and years. I catalogue many instances of blackouts with either diverse or entirely unrelated causes blamed by journalists on wind power or climate policy.

¹ OpenNEM -

<https://explore.openelectricity.org.au/energy/nem/?range=all-12-mth-rolling&interval=1M&view=discrete-time&group=Simplified>

² National Library of Australia Archive Joshi, Ketan. 2012, Some air.

<https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/6895496>

³ "Why clean tech inspires a new magnitude of wrongness", 31/01/2016

<https://etwasluft.blogspot.com/2016/01/why-clean-tech-inspires-new-magnitude.html>

⁴ Published by NewSouth Publishing, September 2020 <https://unsw.press/books/windfall/> - Table extract is from page 110

TABLE 3.1: Key moments from Australia's 'blame renewables' mania

Date	Event	Causes	Response
28 September 2016	State-wide blackout, South Australia	Storm, network damage, wind turbine software settings ⁴⁸	'[Windpower] wasn't working too well last night, because they had a blackout' – then deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce ⁴⁹
30 November 2016	200 000 properties lost power, and BHP's Olympic Dam mine site forced to reduce from 170 megawatts of consumption to 100 megawatts of consumption for 3 hours	In Vic, a powerline failed, resulting in flow between states stopping, and SA required demand and supply to be re-matched rapidly ⁵⁰	'BHP Billiton had its giant Olympic Dam mine shut down for the second time in 2 months by SA's dodgy wind farms' – Sky News host Andrew Bolt ⁵¹
8 February 2017	90 000 Adelaide homes lost power during a major heatwave	Higher temps and demand than forecast, a gas-fired power station unavailable, accidental tripling of load shedding due to software error ⁵²	'So the whole problem was the failure to provide sufficient wind. The only wind blowing in South Australia is the hot air of the Labor Party' – then energy minister Josh Frydenberg ⁵³
13 March 2017	One rotating stage at an Adele concert stopped rotating	The plug fell out of the wall	'[Sky News host] Chris Kenny says a blackout at Adele's Adelaide concert comes at the worst time for the SA government ... what an absolute embarrassment for South Australia and their state government' ⁵⁴
24, 25 January 2019	200 000 homes in Victoria lost power during a heatwave	The Yallourn and Loy Yang Victorian coal-fired power plants both suffered major outages, constraining supply ⁵⁵	'This started with what no one in the world is doing, shutting down its dispatchable power in the belief that it will be replaced by wind and solar. We have a renewables zealotry here' – coal owner Trevor St Baker ⁵⁶

I have recently reported on (and analysed) media and social media responses to several other significant blackouts, including a major blackout that occurred across Spain and Portugal earlier this year. I submitted a complaint to the UK's media regulator regarding one particularly egregious example⁵, which has been accepted as worthy of investigation but no conclusion has been reached.

Over the years, conservative-leaning media outlets have used fabrications, falsehoods, misunderstandings and months-long campaigns to actively attempt to stifle the deployment of non-harmful climate tech. The key voices issuing this disinformation tend to be limited purely by their imagination: I have never encountered a single piece of disinformation that resulted in consequences for its creators or disseminators. In particular, these media outlets will push back

⁵ Ketan Joshi, LinkedIn, July 2025

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ketanjoshi1_this-is-a-really-really-shocking-and-shameless-activity-7341196819403608064-z65x

against regulation on the grounds that it sets an alarming precedent for stifling ‘free speech’ for media outlets. This is absurd - freedom of speech is not freedom from consequences.

There are no regulatory consequences for causing informational harm to Australians, in Australia. There should be, at the very least for the most egregious cases.

Targeting and intimidation

On two memorable occasions, I have been targeted in formal ways by key anti-wind players.

As I cover in my book ‘Windfall’, myself and several other people received defamation threat letters in late 2015. My own threats related to me live-tweeting statements made at the 2014 Senate Select Committee on Wind Turbines⁶. In repeating an apology stated by a prominent university academic on Twitter, I received a defamation threat implying that I had repeated the original statement with ‘malice’ (as opposed to what I was clearly doing: live-tweeting the goings-on of a key inquiry). After six months of deliberation, I ended up having to post a ‘clarification’ on my blog. This period was intensely stressful, costly and time-consuming - all of which is the point of ‘strategic lawsuits against public participation’, or SLAPP suits.

Later in my career, I found myself having to explain several ‘questions on notice’ received by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency during Senate Estimates⁷, issued by Senator Chris Back. The allegations were vague (“Is ARENA aware that the above named person has repeatedly attacked reputable persons who have advocated for the Government's research into the health impact of wind turbines”), and my name was misspelt as ‘Ketan Yoshi’.

In both instances, it took close to zero effort to initiate the attacks, but the costs in dealing with them were significant, particularly the fuzzier reputational and employment issues. In no way did I have it particularly hard; there are many others who’ve copped it far worse. But I mention these to illustrate how actively fighting against disinformation can be fought using ‘dirty’ tactics, on the basis that those doing the attacks have no burden of evidence before they can cause material damage.

⁶ Senate Select Committee on Wind Turbines

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Wind_Turbines/Wind_Turbines

⁷ A screenshot of the questions-on-notice (original unavailable) -

<https://x.com/KetanJ0/status/1097379686936543232>

Community benefits, empowerment and backlash

A frustratingly consistent trend not just in Australia but in debates around clean energy infrastructure around the world is the erasure of the behaviour of corporations.

In the media, much of the focus will tend to centre on government policies incentivising renewable energy, and the reactions of the community, when there is friction at utility-scale wind, solar, battery or transmission line projects. In my direct experience, attitudinal characteristics of corporate developers, along with the developmental decisions (such as whether benefits are shared with neighbours or whether neighbours have a say in siting or planning decisions) play a major role.

I recall one specific conversation I had with a wind project developer who'd overseen a particularly successful and broadly welcomed wind power project, which included a generous benefit sharing system for local neighbours.

Over a glass of wine at a clean energy industry event some time in the early 2010s, he pointed out to me that the anti-wind groups simply didn't bother with his project, because they had no baseline community anger to foment.

This was something I examined directly. Along with Sydney University Professor Simon Chapman, I investigated media coverage of one of Infigen Energy's large-scale wind projects: the Cherry Tree Wind Farm, in Victoria. We published a paper⁸ that showed that the arrival and rhetoric of an anti-wind group known as the 'Waubra Foundation' dramatically intensified the pre-existing unhappy sentiment of the local community.

While it was a useful media analysis, we failed to take home the key message - the best tool would have prevention. The disinformation of the anti-wind group only took root because it had fertile ground to grow in. Failures in procedural justice and distributional justice trigger discontent, and anti-wind groups spot that, and move in to exploit it.

It is worth noting that in my experience, the focus on profits and 'shareholder value' from within corporate renewable energy developers can be a major impediment to the implementation of generous benefit sharing schemes. Deeper cultural change prioritising long-term thinking and stronger government support are both vital.

⁸ Chapman S, Joshi K and Fry L (2014) Fomenting sickness: nocebo priming of residents about expected wind turbine health harms. *Front. Public Health* 2:279. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2014.00279

I am confident other submissions will address the shady network of funders and dark money that invariably link many anti-wind groups back to the fossil fuel industry.

These groups are information arsonists, whose goal is to set fire to any possibility of healthy deliberation or community empowerment around large-scale energy infrastructure. They wield a shotgun blast of lies and fire wildly into the space. I genuinely disrespect them, not just because they end up supporting fossil fuels, but most importantly because they end up exploiting and disrespecting communities.

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.

In conjunction with stricter regulations and scrutiny of dark-money astroturf groups, fairer models of development will be a necessary (but insufficient on its own) part of reducing friction at the sites of large-scale energy projects. It is also a way to broadly reduce the impact of disinformation around clean energy in Australia - not as a direct counter, but as a way to cut off its fuel source, which is frustrated, angry and disenfranchised communities.