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

Peter Ridd[1]

This inquiry seems to have been motivated by the realisation that there is increasing scepticism of climate catastrophism. For example, consider the following data that indicates that support for net-zero is shallow, and ephemeral.

- A recent Pew Research poll found that concern about climate change has dropped since 2022 in every advanced country surveyed.[2]
- only 7% of Australians in total, and 9% of young Australians, are prepared to pay more than $2 a week on climate mitigation measures[3].
- Climate change does not rank in the top-ten of major issues among British voters.[4]
- 60% of Americans think "climate change has become a religion that has nothing to do with the climate, and is really about power and control."[5]
- Working-class Americans oppose, by a 30% margin, the imposition of a US$10/month climate levy (on electricity and energy).[6]
- Only 1% to 3% of air travellers, when specifically asked when booking tickets, pay for carbon offsets. [7]

Although a majority of voters, when asked in opinion polls, will state they are worried about climate change, they are clearly not particularly concerned relative to other issues that affect them They are certainly not prepared to pay for net-zero.

Any support by the public for net-zero policies depends on their continued ignorance. They mostly do not know that they are already paying, through taxation, a very high price – certainly more than $1000/year for a family of four.[8] This figure will rise dramatically as net-zero policies in Australia become more draconian under the current government.

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[1] Although Peter Ridd is an Adjunct Fellow with the IPA and Chairman of the Australian Environment Foundation, and supports any submission from those organisations, this submission contains personal reflections which are relevant to the inquiry.

[2] https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/08/19/global-climate-change-as-a-threat/

[3] https://ipa.org.au/publications-ipa/research-papers/poll-attitudes-towards-net-zero

[4] https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/immigration-tops-britons-concerns-public-divided-whether-it-acceptable-protest-outside-asylum

[5] https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/biden_administration/is_climate_change_a_false_religion

[6] https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Politics-Without-Winners-Can-Either-Party-Build-a-Majority-Coalition.pdf?x85095 page 40 and 41

[7] https://aviationbenefits.org/media/167226/fact-sheet_11_voluntary-carbon-offsetting_3.pdf

[8] Based on a government spend of $9 billion per year https://ipa.org.au/publications-ipa/media-releases/massive-increase-in-net-zero-spending-making-australians-poorer

This collapse in support for expensive and pointless climate measures is not caused by misinformation from foreign or domestic 'big oil' interests. It is a rational reaction to evidence that (a) climate change is not a catastrophe, (b) net-zero is an expensive impossibility, (c) Australia's contribution is negligible, and (d) the largest emitters around the world (China, India and USA) are not pursuing the net-zero delusion.

Scepticism is also encouraged by decades of continuous, and often ridiculous, exaggerations by 'science' institutions – every bad thing on earth now seems to be caused by climate change.[9] People can see they are being manipulated. In addition, it has become obvious that there are major government and government-subsidized institutions that have a huge vested interest in pushing the climate-catastrophe hypothesis. People are losing trust in climate-science institutions.

It is easy to blame the growth in scepticism of climate catastrophism on "big-oil' or other nefarious players. However, any financial contribution to sceptical organisations by these players is miniscule compared to the government funded climate gravy-train.[10] The cost of government programs in Australian on climate change and net-zero is in the order of $9 billion per year[11], and every organisation, company, or individual who is in receipt of those funds has a vested interest in the climate-catastrophe hypothesis continuing. Many of those organisations have well-organised media departments pumping out stories which will keep government subsidies and grants flowing.

However, funding for climate sceptics is negligible. As a well-known sceptic of the 'climate catastrophe', I can report that I have never been approached by any organisation, or individual, offering to pay me to spread misinformation on climate. I sometimes think it might be fun to be tempted by an offer of easy millions from an oil company.

I have waited patiently to be tempted by corruption, but the phone call never comes. Why would it? The oil and coal companies have no trouble selling all they produce. The world-wide net-zero delusion has made no difference to world-wide fossil fuel demand.

So, I have worked entirely unpaid since being fired by James Cook University after calling for better quality assurance of the science claiming damage to the Great Barrier Reef (from climate change and other factors). I can attest that being a sceptic of the climate catastrophe can be a career ending move and financially disastrous. And yet it is common to label sceptics of the climate catastrophe as being paid by 'big oil'. It is an allegation of corruption against individuals who, in many cases, have paid a heavy price for their scientific opinions.

It is a convenient strategy to slur opponents, and is used to avoid debating facts, which are firmly on the side of the sceptics. But even if there was significant funding by 'big oil', it would not change basic facts such as the following.

- Climate related deaths have fallen by 98% over the last century.

[9] https://www.numberwatch.co.uk/warmlist.html and
[10] See submission from Australian Environment Foundation.
[11] https://ipa.org.au/publications-ipa/media-releases/massive-increase-in-net-zero-spending-making-australians-poorer

- The Great Barrier Reef has recorded more coral in all of the last five years than for any of the previous 35 years since records began. And the coral that has exploded in area are the species most susceptible to hot-water 'bleaching'.
- A two-degree temperature increase, even if it was caused by carbon dioxide emissions, is not an existential threat – indeed for most places on earth, and Australia, it is not a threat at all.
- Carbon dioxide is a wonderful plant fertilizer, and higher concentrations are already greening arid areas of Australia and improving agricultural yields.
- Mitigation and adapting the impacts of climate, whether they are natural or anthropogenic, is far cheaper than the impossible dream of net-zero.

None of these facts would alter, even if 'big oil' were publicising them - which they do not on any significant scale.

It appears that this inquiry has been motivated by a realisation that public support for net-zero is reaching a terminal phase, and only heavy-handed government control of information can delay the inevitable.

Blaming 'big oil' for producing climate misinformation, and having an inquiry on the matter, has given us an opportunity to show how those on the side of the net-zero delusion are receiving vast sums of government money to influence the public. It also gives those of us who are opposed to net-zero a public platform to show we are mostly working completely free – but we have still had a massive impact on public opinion.

I thank those who initiated this inquiry for this opportunity.

I am generally opposed to any attempt by government to control the flow of information. But in this case, I am inclined not to discourage the government from attempting to censor climate information. Censorship will only accelerate the growth of climate scepticism. There is nothing as attractive as that deemed illegal, especially to the youth. And they have the skills to circumvent censorship measures (using VPNs and the like). I am thus ambivalent if the result of this inquiry is climate censorship. Censorship will fail and it will only accelerate the end of the net-zero delusion.

I am however greatly encouraged that this senate inquiry attempts to blame the loss of support for expensive net-zero policies on misinformation. It shows that even those wedded to the net-zero delusion realise that support for net-zero is skin deep, and collapsing around the world[12].

[12] https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2025/08/19/global-climate-change-as-a-threat/