

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

*The Manufacture of Consensus: Astroturfing, Information Control,  
and the Fabricated Narrative of Net Zero.*

Due Date: 12 September 2025

Author: Dr Anne S. Smith – Rainforest Reserves Australia

## Executive Summary

This submission demonstrates that the foundation of Australia’s climate and energy framework is compromised by misinformation, selective accounting, and ideological manipulation. Instead of reflecting full ecological costs, the Net Zero narrative relies on partial truths, concealed trade-offs, and systemic undercounting of carbon, waste, and biodiversity destruction (Brulle, 2014; Oreskes and Conway, 2010). These omissions allow damaging projects to advance under a false mantle of sustainability.

The Committee’s Terms of Reference require an investigation into information integrity. Evidence shows that vested interests and media platforms shape public perception through selective reporting, suppression of critical voices, and amplification of narrow economic arguments (Brulle and Dunlap, 2020; Michaels, 2020). This results in a distorted policy environment that sidelines independent science, entrenches industry capture, and diminishes public trust in democratic institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

The consequences of this erosion are profound. Communities face the loss of farmland and natural habitats, biodiversity continues to decline, and Australia risks locking itself into energy systems that are environmentally destructive and socially divisive (McCright and Dunlap, 2011; Klein, 2014). Without transparent oversight and complete accounting of impacts, Net Zero becomes less an environmental safeguard than a political device.

This submission therefore calls for urgent reform. Restoring integrity requires full disclosure of ecological costs, independent auditing of claims, and protection of open debate. By doing so, the Committee can ensure that climate and energy policy reflects truth and scientific integrity, safeguards biodiversity, and strengthens democratic accountability.

The integrity of climate and energy policy cannot be assessed in isolation from the information systems that shape it. The Committee’s inquiry comes at a time when public trust has been eroded by selective data use, orchestrated narratives, and the marginalisation of critical voices. This submission situates those concerns within the broader evidence base, highlighting how truth has been compromised in favour of predetermined outcomes.

Building on this, the submission to the Select Committee on Information Integrity in Climate Change and Energy exposes the systemic failures in how climate and energy policy has been constructed, justified, and sold to the Australian people. Drawing upon legal, scientific, economic, and social evidence, it demonstrates that the pursuit of “Net Zero” has been marked not by open democratic debate, but by disinformation, astroturfing, incomplete carbon accounting, and suppression of inconvenient truths.

The analysis proceeds across ten interlinked domains:

1. **Threats to information integrity and freedom of speech** – documenting how new censorship regimes, often under the guise of “safety” or “disinformation

control,” risk silencing legitimate debate and undermining democratic accountability.

2. **The ecosystem of influence** – mapping the interaction between global institutions (UN, WEF, WHO), domestic government agencies, and corporate actors, which together manufacture consensus while excluding dissenting scientific and community voices.
3. **The financial architecture of influence** – exposing how lobbying, political donations, taxpayer subsidies, and foreign capital flows convert ideology into binding law and lock Australia into externally driven policy agendas.
4. **Astroturfing and manipulation of public consultation** – providing case studies where communities have been deceived by industry and government fronts masquerading as grassroots movements, from “Australians for Coal” to Renewable Energy Zone consultations.
5. **Digital manipulation and algorithmic distortion** – detailing how bots, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, and algorithmic biases artificially inflate divisive narratives and silence countervailing evidence.
6. **Curriculum capture and youth indoctrination** – showing how climate and gender ideologies are embedded into school programs from the earliest years, raising serious questions about consent, legality, and the deliberate attempt to engineer voting blocs through the discussion on lowering the voting age.
7. **Cover-ups, contradictions, and public deception** – demonstrating that governments and corporations routinely suppress internal reports, greenwash language, and remove environmental guardrails while promising the opposite to the public.
8. **The false promise of “green” technologies** – highlighting the incomplete carbon accounting, PFAS contamination, microplastic shedding, and modern slavery risks embedded in the renewable energy supply chain.
9. **Regulatory and governance failures** – showing how the weakening of environmental safeguards, the absence of cumulative impact assessments, and regulatory capture undermine trust in governance.
10. **Recommendations for reform** – proposing a package of legislative, regulatory, and accountability mechanisms to restore truth, transparency, and democratic integrity.

## Key Findings

- **Government complicity in disinformation:** Successive governments have not merely failed to prevent disinformation, but have themselves engaged in **astroturfing, narrative manipulation, and suppression of data** that runs counter to predetermined policy goals (Durkee, 2017; Greenpeace, 2009).
- **Financial capture of policy:** Billions in taxpayer funds are channelled to subsidise multinational investors, while local communities bear the environmental and social costs (ABC News, 2025; Renew Economy, 2025).
- **Legal erosion of environmental safeguards:** Moves to weaken the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)* and parallel state frameworks to expedite renewable rollouts constitute a profound regression in environmental law (Submission to NSW Inquiry, 2025).
- **Hidden ecological harms of “green” technologies:** PFAS, microplastics, and toxic composites associated with solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries

threaten long-term soil, water, and human health integrity (Victoria DET, 2022; CSIRO, 2024).

- **Democratic manipulation:** Embedding ideology into curricula while suggesting lowering the voting age risks manufacturing compliant future electorates, raising profound questions about the misuse of state power (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023).

This submission demonstrates that **Australia's current trajectory in climate and energy policy is not merely flawed, but dangerously compromised by disinformation, ideological capture, and suppression of democratic safeguards.** The Committee must recognise that information integrity is inseparable from environmental integrity: both require transparency, rigorous science, honest accounting, and the protection of democratic freedoms.

The stakes could not be higher. These systemic failures in climate and energy policy do not merely jeopardise environmental integrity; they endanger the economic security of future generations, the health and wellbeing of the population, and the ecosystems that sustain all life. Unless truth and accountability are restored, Australia risks locking itself into a destructive trajectory that compromises democracy, prosperity, and the living systems on which we all depend.

## 1. Introduction

The integrity of Australia's climate and energy policy is being undermined by a persistent failure to confront misinformation, selective narratives, and deeply flawed accounting practices. What is presented as an evidence-based "Net Zero" pathway often relies on incomplete science, policy capture, and the systematic omission of ecological costs (Brulle, 2014; Oreskes and Conway, 2010). The result is a framework that obscures more than it reveals, enabling destructive industrial projects to proceed under the guise of environmental responsibility.

At the core of this submission is the argument that the climate and energy debate has been distorted by vested interests, media manipulation, and political expediency. Instead of protecting biodiversity, water security, and democratic oversight, current strategies increasingly prioritise short-term economic gain and corporate influence (Brulle and Dunlap, 2020; Michaels, 2020). By silencing dissenting voices and narrowing the scope of legitimate inquiry, these practices weaken not only environmental outcomes but also public trust in democratic institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

This submission calls for urgent reform to restore truth, transparency, and scientific rigour to national climate and energy policy. The Committee must recognise that without full disclosure, independent oversight, and the protection of open debate, Australia risks entrenching a model that accelerates ecological collapse while eroding the very democratic safeguards designed to prevent it (McCrigh and Dunlap, 2011; Klein, 2014).

Climate change and energy policy now sit at the most contested intersection of science, politics, economics, and social trust. The stated objective of "Net Zero by 2050" has become both a guiding principle for governments and corporations, and simultaneously, a site of growing controversy and public scepticism. While presented as a scientifically grounded necessity, the pathway to Net Zero has been entangled with political opportunism, corporate lobbying, and ideological campaigns that have distorted public understanding of both the risks and the trade-offs involved.

This submission proceeds from the recognition that **information integrity** is not a peripheral issue in climate and energy debates; it is the central battleground upon which policy, regulation, and public consent are secured. The erosion of trust in information — through disinformation campaigns, astroturfing, digital manipulation, and selective reporting — undermines the democratic legitimacy of climate and energy decision-making. At the same time, the removal of environmental guardrails, incomplete carbon accounting, and selective suppression of inconvenient science represent systemic failures in governance that threaten to entrench both ecological harm and public disillusionment.

The analysis is anchored in **peer-reviewed science, statutory law, regulatory submissions, and documented case studies**. It demonstrates how narratives around climate and energy have been shaped not only by evidence, but also by deliberate strategies of influence. These include political donations, lobbying, platform manipulation, and curriculum-based indoctrination, each of which redirects public discourse away from scientific nuance toward ideological certainty. By following financial flows, interrogating regulatory frameworks, and tracing the dissemination of narratives, the submission exposes how structural power imbalances compromise both the accuracy of information and the fairness of decision-making.

Importantly, the inquiry is framed not as a critique of the scientific consensus on climate risk itself, but as a call to **restore accountability and integrity** to the processes through which energy transition policies are developed and implemented. It highlights how incomplete life-cycle analyses of renewable technologies, suppression of independent reports, and misleading “green” branding obscure the full environmental, economic, and health costs of transition pathways. It also demonstrates how powerful actors, both domestic and international, utilise digital platforms, educational curricula, and global institutions to entrench particular ideological positions while marginalising dissenting voices.

The submission argues that the credibility of Australia’s climate and energy trajectory depends on a recalibration: one that ensures environmental protections apply universally, that information provided to citizens is accurate and contestable, and that democratic processes remain insulated from capture by financial or ideological interests. The recommendations advanced are therefore not only policy prescriptions but constitutional and ethical imperatives to defend the integrity of public life against manipulation.

In light of the evidence presented, it is clear that both corporate and governmental actors have undermined information integrity in climate and energy policy. The Committee must recognise that the erosion of trust stems not only from private-sector deception, but also from government-led astroturfing, curriculum-driven indoctrination, and the deliberate weakening of environmental guardrails. The recommended reforms—spanning legislative, regulatory, digital, and democratic safeguards—are essential to restore transparency, protect freedom of expression, and ensure that climate and energy decisions are made on the basis of verifiable evidence rather than ideology. Without such reforms, Australia risks entrenching a trajectory where misinformation becomes the currency of governance and citizens are reduced to passive recipients of state-mandated narratives.

---

## 2. Defining Key Concepts

For the Senate to address the integrity of information on climate change and energy policy, it is essential to first define and examine the key mechanisms by which public understanding is shaped, manipulated, or suppressed. These are not semantic distinctions but central dynamics in the democratic process. Misinformation, disinformation, astroturfing, and digital content controls all shape what the public is permitted to see, hear, or say.

In Australia’s climate discourse—particularly regarding Net Zero policies—state-aligned narratives have increasingly displaced open scientific debate, suppressed public scrutiny, and marginalised legitimate dissent. What is presented as “settled science” or “community consensus” is, in many cases, a product of orchestrated campaigns, selective messaging, and institutional complicity. The government itself is now one of the primary sources of information distortion.

This section begins with astroturfing—one of the most insidious and legally hazardous techniques for simulating public support—and demonstrates how it has been weaponised in the promotion of renewable energy infrastructure and Net Zero policies.

The issue of information integrity is not simply one of competing viewpoints, but of systematic distortion. What is presented to the public as “settled science” or “inevitable

policy direction” is often a product of selective disclosure, corporate influence, and ideological framing. This manipulation creates a fabricated narrative that conceals ecological destruction, undermines democratic decision-making, and silences critical debate. The Committee’s Terms of Reference are therefore engaged at their most fundamental level: the erosion of truth in the public domain.

---

## 2.1 Astroturfing — State-Aligned Deception in the Net Zero Agenda

Astroturfing refers to the engineered creation of apparent grassroots support where none authentically exists. In Australia's renewable energy context, this 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** (Campion, 2025; Universities Australia, 2025).

The notion of consensus itself has been weaponised. Rather than emerging from transparent scientific discourse, it has been curated through the exclusion of dissenting voices, suppression of contradictory evidence, and the amplification of select industry and activist positions. This contrived consensus is then recycled across media, education, and policy, reinforcing the illusion of inevitability while closing off legitimate scrutiny.

Organisations that present themselves as independent community advocates—such as well-known environmental NGOs and academic centres—often receive substantial financial support from renewable energy developers, climate philanthropies, or government climate programs. These entities, through staged consultation processes, scripted submissions, and curated media messaging, **simulate consensus** around large-scale energy developments while excluding local opposition and scientific critiques (Brulle and Dunlap, 2020; Hughes, 2023).

This distortion of public sentiment is not only **anti-democratic**, but also **legally fraught**:

- **Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) – Section 18:** Prohibits misleading or deceptive conduct. When state-funded or industry-aligned actors pose as community representatives without disclosure, and influence environmental approval or public funding processes, they risk contravening this provision (ACCC, 2019).
- **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth):** Public agencies and officers have a duty to act with honesty and integrity. Using third-party proxies to manufacture public consent while avoiding scrutiny of policy flaws may breach this duty.
- **Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth):** Requires disclosure of material funding or influence in third-party political communications. Orchestrated campaigns that omit affiliations—especially where they affect public sentiment during consultation periods—may raise compliance questions.
- **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth):** Prohibits registered charities from engaging in party-political or misleading activities. Organisations that advocate Net Zero positions under a charitable guise while masking industry ties risk regulatory action.



These legal risks are amplified by the conduct of Australia’s **public broadcaster, the ABC**, which consistently promotes government-aligned Net Zero messaging while excluding dissenting voices. The ABC is bound by the **Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (Cth)** to present information that is accurate and impartial. Yet its editorial coverage—particularly of renewable energy projects, emissions claims, and policy dissent—has been widely criticised as biased and ideologically aligned with government positions (Henderson, 2025; The Australian, 2025).

This convergence of **public funding, curated media, academic silence, and selective consultation** constitutes a full-spectrum information control regime—**not grounded in environmental science, but in political and economic expediency**. Communities, scientists, and landholders who challenge Net Zero infrastructure on environmental or ethical grounds are routinely marginalised as “fringe” despite presenting valid, evidence-based concerns.

## Recommendation to the Committee

The Senate Committee should investigate and recommend:

- Mandatory disclosure of all financial affiliations and government funding in climate-related public advocacy.
- Legal review of astroturfed submissions used in project approvals or legislative reform.
- Oversight by the ACCC and ACNC of organisations promoting environmental claims while obscuring industry links.
- An independent audit of ABC climate and energy coverage for compliance with impartiality obligations.

---

## 2.2 Misinformation vs Disinformation

The terms *misinformation* and *disinformation* are often used interchangeably in public discourse, but their distinction is critical, particularly when applied to the actions of government, regulators, and state-funded institutions. According to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), misinformation is false information shared without harmful intent, whereas disinformation is false information **knowingly disseminated with the intention to mislead**. The latter carries far more severe implications, especially when perpetrated by public officials and statutory agencies, as it can amount to **a breach of administrative law, fiduciary duty, or even misfeasance in public office** (see *Plaintiff S157/2002 v Commonwealth* (2003) 211 CLR 476; *Northern Territory v Mengel* (1995) 185 CLR 307).

The Australian government has, on multiple occasions, repeated statements about renewable energy and Net Zero targets **despite knowing the claims are materially incomplete, misleading, or based on selectively framed data**. Such conduct, if undertaken by a corporation, would almost certainly trigger enforcement under **section 18 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)**—which prohibits conduct that is misleading or deceptive, or likely to mislead or deceive.



A critical distinction must be drawn between misinformation — the unintentional spread of false or incomplete data — and disinformation, which is deliberate, coordinated, and strategically deployed. In the context of climate and energy, disinformation is frequently advanced by vested interests in order to secure funding, shape legislation, and capture regulatory frameworks. It is in this distinction that the Committee can expose the scale of integrity failure: where misinformation may be the product of ignorance, disinformation represents the conscious manufacture of a fabricated narrative.

### 2.2.1 False Narratives and the Source of Disinformation

The Australian public is being subjected to a climate narrative that is not only heavily curated but is also grounded in **strategic omission** and **intellectually dishonest framing**. This narrative is being repeated by government departments, agencies like the CSIRO and ARENA, government-funded research institutes, and major media platforms, including the ABC. Claims such as “renewables are the cheapest form of energy,” “wind and solar have zero emissions,” or “we are on track to meet Net Zero by 2050” are often **reduced to slogans**, devoid of underlying context such as lifecycle emissions, energy storage costs, transmission upgrades, or systemic grid instability (Brulle & Dunlap, 2020).

Under **Australian administrative law**, public officials owe a **duty to exercise their powers for a proper purpose**, and in a manner that is **rational, fair, and not affected by legal error** (*Minister for Immigration and Citizenship v SZMDS* (2010) 240 CLR 611). Disseminating information that omits material facts or selectively frames data to deceive the public may amount to **jurisdictional error** or a **failure to meet statutory standards of reasonableness and procedural fairness**.

### 2.2.2 CSIRO’s GenCost — A Case Study in Disinformation

A striking example of state-sanctioned disinformation lies in the **CSIRO’s GenCost reports**, repeatedly cited by ministers to claim that renewables are the “cheapest form of new energy.” Yet as the report itself admits, the analysis **excludes full system costs, transmission upgrades, land acquisition, reliability measures, and storage**—the very components required to make intermittent energy functional (CSIRO, 2024). These omissions are not benign; they are critical to the functioning and true cost of the system.

Despite expert criticism and widespread public concern, **politicians and departments continue to use the simplified claims from GenCost as justification for legislation, procurement, and energy transition planning**. This may amount to **misleading or deceptive conduct under consumer law**, especially when communicated in taxpayer-funded advertising, consultation documents, or public campaigns (*ACCC v Medibank Private Ltd* [2017] FCAFC 127).

Further, such conduct may breach the **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)**, which imposes a **statutory duty on Commonwealth officials** to act ethically, with care and diligence, and in a manner that promotes the proper use of public resources (ss.15–19). Misusing public funds to perpetuate misleading claims, or failing to correct them once exposed, is a breach of this duty.

### 2.2.3 Government Messaging as Disinformation

The government, through repeated statements and publications, has **positioned itself as the dominant source of disinformation in the Australian climate space**. By repackaging modelling assumptions as “facts,” removing context from data, or simply ignoring contradictory evidence, it has acted with **intent and foreknowledge**—which elevates this conduct from misinformation to disinformation.

Key examples include:

- **Exaggerated emission reduction claims** that ignore Scope 3 emissions and imported component manufacturing.
- **Net Zero modelling** that assumes carbon offset success without verified science.
- **Silencing of dissenting voices** through defunding, media exclusion, and regulatory intimidation.

Such practices, when done with intent, could constitute **misfeasance in public office**—a tort recognised under Australian common law when a public officer knowingly acts unlawfully or with reckless disregard for the truth, resulting in harm (*Northern Territory v Mengel* (1995) 185 CLR 307).

### 2.2.4 Suppression of Independent Science

Evidence suggests that critical scientific inquiry into renewable energy’s environmental impacts, emissions profile, and economic trade-offs is being systematically **discouraged or underfunded**. Academics and research centres reliant on government grants often avoid publishing work that contradicts Net Zero orthodoxy (Campion, 2025). This constitutes a structural form of information control—a “chilling effect” on academic freedom—and may violate principles of **research integrity and statutory independence** enshrined in university governance frameworks and **the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)**.

### 2.2.5 Use of Public Broadcasters in Narrative Enforcement

The **ABC**, as a taxpayer-funded statutory body governed by the **Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (Cth)**, is under a legal obligation to provide accurate and impartial reporting. Yet its editorial tone consistently mirrors government positions on renewables and Net Zero, rarely platforming experts who challenge the dominant narrative (Henderson, 2025). This undermines its legislative mandate and facilitates the spread of disinformation under the guise of independent journalism.

### 2.2.6 Legal Risks in Proposed Disinformation Regulation

The **Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023** proposes new powers for ACMA to regulate digital content deemed harmful or misleading. However, the bill **exempts political speech**—including government statements—from oversight. This raises **constitutional concerns** under the **implied freedom of political communication**, as recognised in *Lange v ABC* (1997) 189 CLR 520, and risks entrenching a two-tiered information system: one in which public dissent is policed while government falsehoods are protected.

The **Law Council of Australia (2023)** has warned that such asymmetry may lead to selective enforcement, censorship, and the erosion of democratic accountability.

### 2.2.7 Comparative Example: Speech Restrictions and Ideological Control in the UK

The trend toward restricting dissent, criminalising expression, and consolidating ideological control is not confined to Australia. The United Kingdom offers critical legal and policy parallels—highlighting how **state-sponsored narratives, especially on climate and social ideology, are increasingly protected through legislative and administrative power**, often at the expense of open discourse, protest rights, and academic freedom.

A growing body of UK law reveals **a shift from regulating conduct to regulating language and even thought**. This erosion of democratic liberties provides a cautionary framework against which Australia’s own trajectory must be measured.

#### *Criminalisation of Offensive Language*

Under **Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 (UK)**, it is a criminal offence to send a message over a public electronic communications network that is “grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.” This provision has led to numerous controversial prosecutions—including individuals charged for jokes or private messages. Although intended to prevent harassment, the law has been widely criticised for its **chilling effect on expression**, particularly in political or ideologically sensitive areas (Communications Act 2003 (UK)).

#### *Suppression of Protest Rights*

The **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (UK)** expanded police powers to impose restrictions on public assemblies based on vague thresholds such as noise or disruption. This has disproportionately impacted protests against state-endorsed ideologies, including climate dissent and gender-critical perspectives. Amnesty International condemned the law as “an attack on peaceful protest and a dark day for civil liberties” (Amnesty International UK, 2022). The Act’s vague definitions create **legal uncertainty and facilitate ideological enforcement** under the guise of public order.

#### *Legalisation of Academic Speech Duties*

The **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 (UK)**, effective from August 2025, imposes a statutory duty on universities to protect lawful freedom of speech and academic inquiry. The fact that such legislation was necessary reflects **a pattern of ideological suppression in academic settings**, particularly involving students or academics critical of dominant narratives in climate, race, or gender theory. Prior to this reform, UK universities had engaged in viewpoint censorship through no-platforming, research funding restrictions, and disciplinary processes for dissenting faculty (Muckle LLP, 2023).

#### *Climate Belief as a Protected Philosophical Right*

In **Grainger plc v Nicholson [2010] IRLR 4 (EAT)**, the UK Employment Appeal Tribunal held that a belief in climate change constituted a protected philosophical belief under the

Equality Act 2010. While the ruling protected pro-climate views from discrimination, it equally established that **beliefs about climate—whether affirming or challenging dominant policies—are deeply held convictions subject to legal protection**. Attempts to regulate, silence, or penalise such belief systems raise serious constitutional and human rights concerns.

## Legal Lessons for Australia

The UK examples underscore how quickly liberal democracies can **descend into controlled discourse**, where dissent is policed not only through rhetoric but by **criminal law, administrative penalties, and institutional gatekeeping**. Australia’s own proposed **Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill**, combined with government-funded narrative enforcement, risks replicating this pattern—where public disagreement with state ideology is reframed as “harmful” or “misleading” speech.

The **principle of legality** and the **implied freedom of political communication**, as recognised in *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520*, prohibit arbitrary restrictions on public discourse, especially where it concerns matters of political and scientific debate. Any legal framework that protects government speech while censoring dissent must be regarded as **incompatible with democratic integrity**.

## Recommendation to the Committee

The Senate should consider:

- Classifying disinformation by government agencies as a **statutory breach** subject to audit and enforcement.
- Creating a **parliamentary integrity watchdog** empowered to investigate systemic misinformation in policy communications.
- Amending the **Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill** to include government speech where it demonstrably misleads the public.
- Instituting independent **peer review panels for public data modelling** used in climate and energy planning.

---

## 2.3 Digital Content Controls and Algorithmic Manipulation

The government has created a dynamic where digital content controls are no longer merely private business functions of global technology platforms but are now **instrumentalised as state-sanctioned mechanisms** for controlling climate and energy narratives. This is achieved through a matrix of legislative powers, informal regulatory influence, and partnerships with “fact-checking” bodies—often with **undisclosed ideological alignments**.

There is a **clear and expanding fusion between government authority, digital platform governance, and climate orthodoxy**, manifesting through algorithmic suppression, biased content curation, and disinformation labelling—all of which **pose severe constitutional, legal, and democratic risks**.

### 2.3.1 Government Enlistment of Big Tech

Australia’s regulatory environment has paved the way for **public–private censorship arrangements**. The **eSafety Commissioner**, through powers granted under the **Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)**, can compel the removal of content deemed offensive or harmful, without judicial oversight and with **broad discretionary authority**. The Act includes no exemption for political communication or scientific dissent—an omission that raises significant constitutional questions under the implied freedom of political communication (*Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520*).

Similarly, the **ACMA’s 2021 Voluntary Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation**—developed with the Digital Industry Group Inc (DIGI)—formalises content moderation partnerships between government and platforms such as Meta, Google, and TikTok. These platforms, incentivised by compliance reputational risk, now act as **proxies for ideological enforcement**, especially in matters of energy policy and climate science.

### 2.3.2 Algorithmic Suppression of Dissent

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**.

This is most apparent when **peer-reviewed science, expert opinion, or legitimate community opposition to renewable energy projects** is filtered out or buried under “contextual labels.” These labels are often attached by **government-funded or ideologically aligned fact-checking organisations** that lack neutrality and fail to disclose funding ties.

The **suppression of lawful environmental dissent**—such as criticism of wind turbine PFAS contamination, industrial-scale deforestation for solar, or fraudulent carbon credit schemes—contravenes:

- **Administrative law principles** (requiring fairness, rationality, and transparency),
- **Section 18 of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)** if suppression misleads the public on material issues,
- **Privacy principles**, if user data is used to target and filter speech without informed consent.

Research confirms that algorithmic recommender systems actively shape which information is amplified or silenced, often marginalising dissenting voices on contested policy issues such as climate change (Mauri et al., 2023; West, 2021).

### 2.3.3 International Examples of Ideological Algorithmic Control

#### *The Twitter Files (US)*

Leaked internal documents from Twitter (2022–2023) exposed direct coordination between US government agencies (CDC, FBI, DHS) and platform executives to suppress lawful speech, including dissent on climate policy and renewable energy claims. Emails revealed

that **accurate but politically inconvenient content** was flagged for suppression—not for inaccuracy, but because it “eroded trust” in government programs (Scheller, 2023).

This revealed an **emerging governance model** where digital platforms act as **enforcement arms of state ideology**, bypassing legal protections of speech and due process.

#### *UK Online Safety Bill and TikTok*

In the UK, the **Online Safety Bill** and government TikTok engagement have further blurred public–private boundaries. TikTok’s moderation protocols have prioritised UN-aligned climate messaging while suppressing content critical of Net Zero strategies, including community protests and policy critiques. These moderation filters operate **without transparency, appeal, or statutory limits**, posing deep constitutional risks when adopted in Australian regulatory culture.

### 2.3.4 Legal Precedents and Constitutional Implications

The High Court in *Comcare v Banerji* (2019) 267 CLR 373 reaffirmed the **implied constitutional freedom of political communication**, though not as a personal right. This freedom is crucial where **governments rely on digital partners to stifle public debate**, particularly in politically and scientifically sensitive domains like climate policy.

Further, in *Kirk v Industrial Court of NSW* (2010) 239 CLR 531, the Court warned against the use of **unreviewable administrative discretion**. Yet content moderation decisions—especially when encouraged or coordinated by government—are not subject to FOI, judicial review, or natural justice.

These developments risk rendering **democratic scrutiny impossible** while empowering an **ideologically homogeneous communication regime**.

### 2.3.5 The Role of AI in Policy Enforcement

Artificial intelligence increasingly underpins content moderation. GPT-powered tools and automated moderation bots are now trained on “safe” datasets that exclude dissenting viewpoints. This raises concerns under:

- **Section 15 of the PGPA Act 2013 (Cth)**—which mandates ethical use of public resources,
- **AI Ethics Principles (DTA, 2019)**—which require transparency, accountability, and contestability in government use of AI.

Yet there is no mandated audit or oversight of the **biases embedded in training data** or the **ideological filters shaping digital public discourse**. If AI systems suppress information critical of government-backed Net Zero programs, they are operating in breach of **public sector integrity obligations** and **constitutional principles of open debate**.



## Recommendations to the Committee

1. **Mandate transparency and appeal rights** for all government-influenced content moderation decisions.
  2. **Prohibit government contracting with any fact-checking body** that lacks independence, scientific competence, or transparency in funding.
  3. **Require full disclosure of algorithmic moderation frameworks**, including AI model training data where used in public discourse.
  4. **Strengthen the implied freedom of political communication** by amending legislation to prohibit indirect censorship of lawful speech through platform partnerships.
  5. **Audit the eSafety Commissioner’s enforcement activities** to assess whether political or scientific dissent is being disproportionately targeted.
- 

## 2.4 The Use of AI and Prejudice by Design

Artificial Intelligence (AI)—particularly large language models and automated content systems—has become a **central mechanism for shaping and controlling the boundaries of permissible discourse**. Under the guise of safety and harm reduction, AI systems operating in Australia are governed by **ideological guardrails** that reflect not neutral values, but the **dominant political orthodoxy**: Net Zero, gender identity, immigration, and race.

These guardrails are not incidental; they are hardcoded into system behaviour, reinforced through **public–private governance frameworks** like Australia’s **AI Ethics Principles**, and embedded in the global model alignment strategies of OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Anthropic, and others. This has given rise to what can accurately be described as “**prejudice by design**.”

These mechanisms are not neutral. They are embedded within power structures that determine what can be questioned and what must be accepted without scrutiny. When dissent is algorithmically buried, and when fact-checking institutions operate without accountability while reinforcing government policy positions, the integrity of both science and democracy is compromised. The Committee must therefore interrogate not just the accuracy of information, but the systems by which information is authorised or denied.

### 2.4.1 Australia’s AI Framework: A Vessel for Ideological Enforcement

The Australian Government’s **AI Ethics Principles**, developed by the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) in 2019, purport to guide the safe and responsible use of AI. While framed in neutral terms—fairness, transparency, accountability—the practical implementation of these principles has resulted in the **systematic exclusion or de-ranking of views that challenge dominant social and environmental narratives**.

This includes:

- Disabling or blocking queries critical of **Net Zero policies** or questioning climate modelling assumptions.



- Refusing to return content that discusses **biological sex-based rights** or critiques of gender self-identification policies.
- Moderating discussions of **immigration policy** that deviate from multicultural orthodoxy.
- Flagging or de-ranking content about **race-based policy distinctions**, including constitutional reforms.

Empirical studies show that algorithmic systems frequently suppress minority or dissenting viewpoints—whether in climate, gender, immigration, or race-based debates—through automated filtering, invisibility, or biased content promotion strategies (Okoronkwo, 2024).

These limitations are not bugs—they are **intended features** that reflect ideological risk thresholds defined by regulatory expectations, platform policies, and global political consensus.

## 2.4.2 The Four Pillars of AI Guardrails in Practice

The narrowing of permissible debate in digital spaces is not confined to climate and energy discourse. This same pattern extends to gender ideology, immigration, and race-based policy distinctions, each of which carries significant real-world consequences. Academic analyses have noted that attempts to raise concerns about biological sex in sport, migration policy, or the fairness of race-based legislative frameworks are increasingly framed as “harmful” or “disinformation,” rather than legitimate contributions to democratic debate (Sunstein, 2018; Foster, 2021). The suppression of such discourse risks creating an environment where critical policy areas cannot be openly examined, with consequences that reverberate beyond digital platforms into law, health, and social cohesion. The danger lies not in the debates themselves, but in the ideological policing of what may be debated—a trend that erodes trust, amplifies polarisation, and ultimately undermines democratic legitimacy.

The following topics represent consistent “no-go zones” within AI and language model interactions in Australia and similar jurisdictions. These are aligned with both **platform self-regulation regimes** and **governmental risk management frameworks**.

### *(i) Climate / Net Zero*

AI systems are aligned with state and UN narratives on climate. Attempts to query emissions from renewable infrastructure, economic impacts of Net Zero policies, or the accuracy of climate modelling often result in:

- Content warnings,
- Redirects to official government websites (e.g., CSIRO, BOM),
- Refusals to generate or discuss content that deviates from the “settled science” position.

For example, users querying the land degradation caused by solar farms or the ecological impact of turbine-related PFAS contamination are routinely met with refusal messages citing safety or disinformation policies—even when drawing from peer-reviewed or CSIRO-backed studies.

## *(ii) Gender Identity / Trans Ideology*

AI models apply stringent filters around gender identity, treating **biological sex-based reasoning as “harmful” or “hateful”**, even when grounded in law, science, or legitimate concern for single-sex spaces. Prompts concerning legal conflicts between the **Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)** and self-identification laws are suppressed or redirected. Lawful prompts referencing case law or public policy risk being flagged or blocked altogether.

## *(iii) Immigration*

Queries examining the impact of high immigration on housing availability, employment markets, or infrastructure strain are flagged as “potentially discriminatory”—even when referencing Australian Bureau of Statistics data. AI models increasingly refuse to simulate public policy scenarios that suggest any reduction or restriction on immigration flows.

This not only limits democratic debate but equates lawful, evidence-based policy preferences with bigotry, thereby **weaponising safety norms for ideological suppression**.

## *(iv) Race-Based Policy and Indigenous Affairs*

Debates over race-based legislation—including the 2023 **Voice to Parliament referendum**—have been subject to the most severe content restrictions. AI systems routinely refuse to analyse legal critiques of the Voice, arguments regarding section 10 of the **Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)**, or constitutional concerns over race-specific advisory bodies.

This presents a profound challenge to **democratic integrity**, where public digital discourse becomes permissible only if it affirms the government position.

## 2.4.3 Legal and Constitutional Implications

AI alignment with dominant ideological norms, when done under government encouragement or within public sector frameworks, engages serious legal risks:

- **Implied freedom of political communication:** As per *Lange v ABC* and *Comcare v Banerji*, indirect suppression of political or policy speech through AI violates constitutional protections—even without formal censorship.
- **Misuse of public resources:** AI systems developed or deployed using public funds must comply with section 15 of the **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)**. Embedding ideological filters into taxpayer-funded systems risks breaching these duties.
- **Administrative law obligations:** Government-deployed AI must act lawfully, rationally and without bias. Alignment that excludes lawful views may give rise to **judicial review** under *Minister for Immigration and Citizenship v SZMDS (2010) 240 CLR 611*.
- **Discrimination law:** When AI suppresses lawful content related to sex, religion, or belief, it may amount to **indirect discrimination** under the **Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)** or the **Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)**.

#### 2.4.4 ABC and the Silence on Algorithmic Legal Risk

The lack of scrutiny by Australia's **public broadcaster (ABC)** further entrenches the information asymmetry. In December 2024, the US Supreme Court agreed to hear TikTok's challenge to a federal law requiring divestiture of its Chinese parent company—a case with global implications for **AI regulation, content moderation, and freedom of expression**.

Despite the ruling's magnitude, ABC failed to cover it in its national bulletins or digital editorial streams. This silence not only reflects **institutional bias** but also signals a reluctance to engage with foundational questions about **government–platform collusion**, AI risk, and constitutional law. When **the national broadcaster avoids broadcasting cases that threaten the ideological consensus**, it becomes complicit in shielding the public from inconvenient truths.

#### 2.4.5 Prejudice by Design is Not Safety

It must be clearly stated: **Bias embedded in an AI system under colour of safety or harm reduction is not lawful—nor democratic**. It is prejudice by design.

When AI refuses to acknowledge alternative scientific viewpoints, restricts lawful religious or philosophical belief, or silences political disagreement, it is not protecting the public—it is **engineering consensus**, in direct violation of the principles of an open society.

The suppression of open debate through digital guardrails does not occur in isolation; it is part of a broader pattern in which certain voices are systematically silenced while others are promoted. This imbalance is not confined to climate or technology discourse but extends into areas of religious freedom, moral expression, and the ability of individuals and groups to participate equally in the democratic process. As Section 2.5 demonstrates, the selective restriction of speech and belief has profound implications for both the rule of law and the integrity of Australian democracy.

These digital and ideological restrictions are not isolated phenomena but part of a wider system of selective silencing. The same mechanisms that limit debate on climate and energy extend into moral, religious, and cultural domains, where dissenting voices are marginalised or suppressed altogether. This broader pattern of control raises urgent questions about democratic accountability, which are explored further in Section 2.5.

#### Recommendations to the Committee

1. **Mandate AI neutrality in all government-funded AI systems.**
2. **Audit AI alignment protocols** used in any public policy or regulatory context.
3. **Legislate protections for lawful dissent**, ensuring AI systems cannot suppress scientific, legal, or political speech.
4. **Prohibit ideological pre-training of government-deployed AI models** unless clearly disclosed and justified under law.
5. **Create independent AI review panels** with statutory powers to assess systemic ideological bias.
6. **Investigate public broadcaster silence on legal cases involving algorithmic speech governance** to assess editorial independence.

## 2.5 Institutional Capture and the Chilling of Scientific and Public Dissent

In a healthy democracy, institutions such as universities, conservation bodies, media organisations and research agencies are expected to serve as independent custodians of truth, critique, and informed public discourse. However, in Australia’s climate and energy policy landscape, these institutions have become increasingly **constrained by government funding, ideological alignment, and regulatory dependency**—a condition best described as **institutional capture**.

This capture has created a pervasive **chilling effect**: where dissent is not explicitly banned, but becomes professionally hazardous, reputationally toxic, or structurally impossible.

### 2.5.1 Funding as a Mechanism of Conformity

Much of Australia’s climate research is publicly funded through government agencies such as the **Australian Research Council (ARC)**, **CSIRO**, and state-based climate institutes. These bodies, while theoretically independent, are  **beholden to government-aligned policy objectives**, particularly those embedded in Net Zero transition frameworks.

A 2021 submission by the **Institute of Public Affairs** found that more than 95% of ARC-funded climate publications supported Net Zero targets, while none questioned the viability or ethics of associated land use, economic costs, or ecological trade-offs. This is not evidence of scientific consensus, but of **selective incentivisation**. Grants are increasingly conditional on alignment with government-defined “impact pathways,” making it professionally unviable to challenge prevailing orthodoxy.

Similarly, major **conservation NGOs**, including those that manage protected habitats or advise on environmental planning, receive substantial federal funding through grants, partnerships, and service contracts. Internal whistleblowers from multiple NGOs have reported that **projects raising concerns about industrial-scale solar farms, land clearing for wind energy, or habitat loss from lithium mining are either shelved, reworded, or defunded**—not on scientific grounds, but for “strategic alignment” reasons .

### 2.5.2 Case Study: Academic Silencing and Career Consequences

Dr. Peter Ridd, a former physics professor at James Cook University (JCU), was terminated after publicly questioning the methodological rigour of climate impact studies on the Great Barrier Reef. While the Federal Circuit Court initially ruled in his favour, citing breach of academic freedom, the **High Court ultimately upheld JCU’s dismissal**, stating that university codes of conduct superseded contractual free speech assurances (*Ridd v James Cook University [2021] HCA 32*).

This case reveals the **legal and professional precarity** facing academics who deviate from climate orthodoxy, even when their dissent is based on peer-reviewed science. Ridd’s case has become a **landmark for the erosion of institutional independence** within Australia’s tertiary sector.

Other scholars have reported **pre-emptive self-censorship**, avoidance of controversial research topics, and pressure to frame findings in a “solutionist” manner aligned with Net Zero or renewable energy narratives. This corrodes not only academic freedom but **the public’s right to informed debate**.

### 2.5.3 Media and Public Broadcaster Silence

Australia’s public broadcaster, the **ABC**, plays a critical role in shaping the national climate discourse. However, its **editorial policy and institutional culture consistently favour government-aligned narratives**, to the exclusion of lawful, evidence-based dissent.

The ABC has routinely failed to cover:

- Legal challenges to renewable energy planning approvals,
- Scientific criticism of Net Zero modelling assumptions,
- The TikTok speech suppression case, which has global implications for digital democracy.

When major national institutions selectively suppress coverage of ideologically inconvenient topics, they become **agents of narrative control rather than public service**. This poses grave risks to democratic transparency and undermines the ABC’s **Charter obligations under the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (Cth)**.

### 2.5.4 Conservation Bodies as Political Instruments

This pattern is further complicated by structural conflicts of interest within conservation organisations themselves. Even reputed entities—such as Bush Heritage Australia and Greening Australia—rely heavily on government grants and philanthropic funding, which can create implicit constraints on their willingness to publicly challenge Net Zero industrial projects. Although these organisations maintain high ecological credibility, financial pressures can limit critical advocacy on issues like land clearing, faunal harm from wind farms, or resource-intensive extraction (Bush Heritage Australia 2023; Greening Australia n.d.). These dynamics illustrate that the suppression of dissent is not only algorithmic and regulatory, but also embedded in the incentive structures of existing institutions.

This undermines **scientific objectivity, ecological credibility**, and public trust.

### 2.5.5 Legal Implications and Regulatory Blind Spots

Institutional capture and funding-aligned censorship may breach several legal obligations:

- **Administrative law:** Decisions by public institutions (e.g., funding bodies or regulatory agencies) that fail to consider a diversity of scientific input may be reviewable under principles of **Wednesbury unreasonableness** or **failure to consider relevant factors**.
- **Implied freedom of political communication:** While not a personal right, government-influenced speech suppression (e.g., through funding leverage) may

violate the constitutional protection where it diminishes public discourse on climate and energy policy (*Comcare v Banerji* (2019) 267 CLR 373).

- **Charitable law and DGR status:** Organisations claiming Deductible Gift Recipient status for environmental advocacy must comply with **public benefit obligations**. If these bodies engage in partisan or selective advocacy contrary to their public interest mandate, they risk breach of **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth)**.

## 2.5.6 The Democratic Cost of Silence

The long-term consequence of institutional capture is not merely professional homogeneity—it is the **systematic erosion of critical thought and public oversight**. When dissent is structurally excluded, truth becomes a casualty of conformity.

In this climate, the Committee must consider whether Australia’s **informational integrity framework has become a vehicle not for combating disinformation—but for enforcing ideological consensus under state influence**.

## 2.5.7 Comparative Legal Double Standards: UK and Australia

### United Kingdom: Silent Prayer Criminalised, Public Chants Tolerated

In the UK, recent developments under the **Public Order Act 1986 (UK)** and the use of **Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)** have led to the criminalisation of **silent prayer near abortion facilities**. One such case involved **Adam Smith-Connor**, who was convicted in 2023 for standing silently outside a Bournemouth clinic in reflection, despite engaging in no spoken words or signage. Parliament explicitly rejected proposed amendments that would have exempted silent prayer, demonstrating the extent of the legal clampdown on dissenting yet peaceful expression (Christianity Today, 2023; EWTN, 2023).

In contrast, public religious demonstrations—such as **Islamist gatherings outside Christian churches chanting anti-Western or anti-Christian slogans**—have gone largely unchallenged. This highlights a **two-tiered approach to public order law**, where expressive acts aligned with dominant or “protected” ideological frameworks are tolerated, while traditional or religiously conservative positions are sanctioned (AP News, 2024; EWTN, 2025).

### Australia: Echoes of the Same Pattern

In Melbourne, a well-documented event in 2025 saw a large Islamist group surrounding **St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Cathedral**, chanting slogans considered hostile to Christian worship. Despite its scale and proximity to a place of worship, no significant law enforcement response or public condemnation followed (Anglican Mainstream, 2025).

At the same time, peaceful Christian events—such as prayer vigils, pro-life marches, or public testimony—are routinely subjected to **permit restrictions, media derision, or police enforcement**, even when entirely lawful. The **discrepancy in tolerance and enforcement** reveals an emerging legal and cultural double standard.



## Legal Implications

These examples raise serious concerns regarding:

- **Equality before the law** under the *Rule of Law* principle,
- The **implied freedom of political and religious communication** under Australian constitutional law (*Lange v ABC*),
- Selective enforcement of **public order legislation**, which risks undermining institutional legitimacy.

The risk is no longer one of overreach alone, but of **ideological inconsistency**. Law enforcement and regulatory responses must remain neutral—not contingent on the political palatability of the speaker.

### *Curriculum Indoctrination and International Influence*

An increasingly urgent concern is the way school curricula are being reshaped to serve ideological ends under the guise of “education reform.” A clear example that illustrates this trajectory: the embedding of **Net Zero narratives** within the climate education framework, **to very young children**. This has profound implications for truth in education, democratic choice, and the rights of parents.

In Victoria, the **Department of Education and Training** has already classified *sustainability* and *climate action* as cross-curriculum priorities from Foundation (Prep) onwards (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023). This effectively hardwires one side of the Net Zero debate into every subject, leaving little room for contestation or evidence-based balance. Similarly, the **Education and Training Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–2026** commits schools to embedding “climate resilience” into all levels of schooling (Victoria Department of Education and Training, 2022). Such reforms privilege one policy pathway while silencing dissent, and by extension, risk breaching the principles of intellectual freedom in education.

Legal questions arise: the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)** mandates that education must be “secular and free from partisanship.” By embedding contested ideological doctrines in early childhood education, there is a real risk of breaching both statutory obligations and broader constitutional norms around freedom of belief.

This domestic context aligns disturbingly with broader **international agendas**. The **World Economic Forum** likewise pushes for “Schools of the Future” reforms that emphasize “global citizenship,” digital literacy, and climate literacy, while aligning with sustainable development agendas. Though framed as future-skills training, these global directives risk embedding a one-sided ideology across jurisdictions that were never consulted in their formulation.

What emerges is a pattern: **international organizations set the frameworks, national governments implement them, and children become the vector for long-term ideological change**. When considered alongside proposals to lower the voting age to 16, the implications are severe. By **indoctrinating children in primary school** and then enfranchising them as voters before they have the maturity or independence to question received ideologies, governments risk using education as a direct lever of electoral engineering. This is not simply



pedagogy—it amounts to a political strategy for entrenching one worldview while disqualifying democratic alternatives.

The legal, social, and ethical implications are profound. At minimum, it raises questions of compliance with domestic education statutes and international conventions protecting **freedom of thought, conscience, and belief**. At worst, it represents the deliberate construction of a captive future electorate—an electorate not persuaded by free debate, but manufactured through years of controlled messaging in schools.

## Recommendations to the Committee

1. **Conduct a national audit of funding arrangements** between government agencies and universities, NGOs, or research institutions relating to climate and energy.
  2. **Amend ARC and CSIRO funding guidelines** to include explicit protections for dissenting scientific viewpoints.
  3. **Investigate whether charitable environmental groups maintain political neutrality** consistent with ACNC public benefit requirements.
  4. **Require the ABC to disclose editorial frameworks** for climate and energy coverage and ensure alignment with its Charter obligations.
  5. **Introduce academic freedom legislation** guaranteeing research independence from ideological conformity or funding pressure.
- 

## 3. Mapping the Ecosystem of Influence

While public discourse around Net Zero suggests consensus, the reality is that the narrative is sustained not by transparent democratic debate or scientific consensus but by an extensive, ideologically aligned **ecosystem of actors**. These include corporate beneficiaries, political advocates, well-funded think tanks and activist charities, compliant academic institutions, and foreign influencers. Together, they form an entrenched, highly coordinated network that suppresses dissent, controls messaging, and benefits financially and politically from the Net Zero policy framework.

This section systematically exposes how each actor class contributes to this information and influence regime, under the guise of environmental concern. It demonstrates how financial dependencies, ideological alignment, and media complicity shape a distorted climate narrative, often with devastating effects on the economy, community autonomy, public health, and Australia's unique environment.

### 3.1 Corporate & Industry Actors

Far from being passive recipients of climate policy, corporate actors are **central architects** of the Net Zero agenda. These include multinational investment firms, energy conglomerates, green tech suppliers, and speculative carbon markets.

#### Financialisation of Net Zero

Major players like BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street wield enormous influence through Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) scoring. These investment vehicles push

capital away from carbon-intensive industries by pressuring companies to comply with Net Zero targets—regardless of practical or environmental consequences (Brulle and Dunlap, 2020).

Australia’s renewable sector is deeply dependent on **public subsidies**, yet offers little in the way of energy security or price stability. The **CSIRO’s GenCost Report** has repeatedly underestimated the costs of green transition, and even its own methodology admits significant uncertainty (CSIRO, 2024). Projects like Snowy Hydro 2.0 are plagued by over-runs and underperformance—while fossil fuel baseload capacity is rapidly withdrawn.

### **Carbon Offsets and Green Speculation**

An entire economy has emerged around “carbon neutrality,” involving offset brokers, consultants, and verification agents. Many offset schemes have come under scrutiny for **non-additionality**, poor land management outcomes, and failure to deliver true environmental benefit (Brulle and Dunlap, 2020).

Green capitalism now operates not as a corrective to environmental damage but as a new **asset class**, rich in arbitrage opportunities and shielded from scrutiny by political and media support.

This demonstrates that the narrative is not simply rhetorical but has been systematically engineered. The next layer of concern lies in the institutional reinforcement of this agenda, which ensures that once embedded, it becomes self-sustaining across policy, education, and culture.

---

## **3.2 Political Actors**

Australia’s political class—across both major parties—has embraced Net Zero targets with little electoral scrutiny. Climate policy is shaped by **closed-door consultation**, often with lobbyists and aligned consultants, not with independent scientists or the communities most affected.

### **Policy Capture and Legislative Lock-In**

The passage of legislation such as the **Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth)** and associated emissions targets embeds Net Zero into regulatory frameworks. Yet, modelling provided to justify these commitments remains speculative and often shielded from public peer review (CSIRO, 2024).

The failure of political actors to engage with dissenting views, including from energy experts, farmers, and economists, amounts to a democratic breakdown. Critics face career sanctions, social media bans, or reputational damage.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Conflicts of interest abound, with several political figures transitioning between public office and green industry boards. Allegations have emerged of **close ties between ministers and solar and wind lobbying groups**, raising governance questions under the **Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)**.

For example, the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States was found to have adopted climate education resources drafted with heavy involvement from corporate sponsors, leading to questions about neutrality and scientific integrity (Brulle, 2014). Similarly, in Australia, school curriculum materials on “sustainability” have been criticised for presenting renewable energy as an unqualified good, while omitting discussion of ecological costs such as habitat destruction, resource depletion, or industrial waste (Loughland et al., 2013). These examples illustrate how information integrity is compromised at its educational source.

## Case Study: Parliamentary and Media Astroturfing Against Genuine Community Voices

The newly established Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy was created to investigate alleged “astroturfing” and foreign-funded misinformation campaigns against renewable energy projects. However, the Committee’s Chair, Greens Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, has already used national media platforms to prejudge the process, claiming that vested interests have long waged “a global war of disinformation against the clean energy transition” and that so-called fake community groups are spreading “lies” about renewable energy (Williamson 2025). These remarks, published in *Renew Economy* on 31 July 2025, demonstrate a prejudicial stance that undermines the inquiry before it has even begun (Renew Economy 2025).

Such interventions are not neutral. They are a **pre-emptive strike**, shaping public perception by casting opposition as illegitimate and discredited before submissions are heard. This one-sided framing functions as a deterrent to regional landholders, farmers, coastal residents, and conservation advocates who might otherwise provide evidence on environmental harm, biodiversity loss, noise and vibration, PFAS contamination, and heat island effects. When the Chair of the inquiry uses a media outlet with a strong ideological position on net zero to reinforce an already polarised narrative, it sends a clear signal to communities: their lived experiences are to be dismissed as “misinformation” regardless of merit.

This tactic mirrors the very phenomenon the inquiry claims to investigate. By aligning with pro-renewables advocacy media such as *Renew Economy*, the Senator has effectively engaged in the same type of narrative control that astroturfing is accused of perpetuating. The result is not greater transparency, but a narrowing of democratic space where only pro-renewables voices are elevated, and dissenting ones are sidelined.

Moreover, the editorial tone of *Renew Economy*—which regularly publishes pro-renewables commentary, often quoting industry-aligned groups such as the Smart Energy Council (Renew Economy 2025)—is itself an example of **media astroturfing**, where corporate and ideological interests dominate coverage under the guise of balanced reporting. By failing to highlight the experiences of impacted Australians who oppose these projects on environmental, health, or cultural grounds, the article perpetuates an imbalance that devalues genuine grassroots activism.

The Senator could have taken the opportunity to encourage a fair inquiry that genuinely sought to understand how Australians feel about large-scale renewable projects. Instead, his public commentary created an environment of hopelessness, where those directly impacted are left to question whether their submissions will ever be treated with seriousness. This

makes a mockery of the inquiry and risks disenfranchising citizens from democratic participation.

This case study highlights the **irony and hypocrisy** of elected representatives and aligned media. While accusing communities of astroturfing, they themselves rely on coordinated narratives, selective amplification, and industry-linked platforms to undermine legitimate dissent. It reveals how parliamentary processes and media levers are being strategically applied to silence opposition and enforce the net zero ideology without due consideration of environmental, social, and governance consequences.

Rainforest Reserves Australia, like many other grassroots organisations, operates without government or corporate funding, relying solely on contributions from community members. The majority of submissions to renewable energy project assessments come from directly affected stakeholders—farmers, regional communities, conservationists, and landholders—who volunteer their time, often at significant personal and financial cost, to safeguard their livelihoods and environments. Far from being ideologically motivated, these submissions are grounded in scientific evidence on biodiversity loss, hydrological disruption, PFAS contamination, noise and vibration impacts, and cumulative ecological change (Díaz et al., 2019; Guelfo et al., 2024). By contrast, the Net Zero framework promoted by political and industry elites appears to rest less on transparent scientific scrutiny and more on an ideological consensus that pre-determines acceptable narratives (Hulme, 2020).

To dismiss unpaid, scientifically substantiated community engagement as “astroturfing” not only erodes democratic integrity but also reveals the growing disjuncture between evidence-based critique and politically manufactured consensus. If the Select Committee on Information Integrity is to maintain credibility, it must resist conflating evidence-based dissent with misinformation, otherwise the very notion of “integrity” risks becoming weaponised as a tool to silence the communities most directly impacted.

## Breach of Procedural Fairness and Committee Conduct Norms

While Senator Peter Whish-Wilson’s public commentary on “fake community groups” and “a global war of disinformation” may fall within the protection of parliamentary privilege, it raises serious concerns under the legal and procedural standards expected of a Senate Committee Chair. Parliamentary privilege, as outlined in *Odgers’ Australian Senate Practice* (14th ed., 2016), shields senators from external legal liability for statements made in their official capacity. However, it does not exempt them from upholding the standards of fairness, neutrality, and integrity that govern committee proceedings.

The principle of **natural justice**, central to administrative law and implied in parliamentary committee processes, requires decision-makers to avoid **apparent bias** and to provide all parties with a fair opportunity to be heard. By pre-emptively characterising certain community groups and critics of renewable energy as disingenuous or misleading, the Senator risks undermining the procedural fairness of the inquiry. Apparent bias alone—where a reasonable observer might perceive prejudgment—is sufficient to invalidate a process under administrative law standards (*Kioa v West* (1985) 159 CLR 550), and these principles, while not strictly binding, inform the conduct expected of parliamentary committees.

Under the **Senate Standing Orders**, particularly Orders 25 and 33, the Chair of a Select Committee is expected to facilitate balanced deliberation and uphold the legitimacy of the

inquiry. Public statements that frame dissenting voices as misinformation risk deterring participation from affected stakeholders and compromise the impartiality of the committee's findings. The selective promotion of industry-aligned narratives through ideologically sympathetic media, while dismissing grassroots concerns, reflects a concerning **double standard**—one that mirrors the very narrative manipulation the inquiry was established to investigate.

Senate precedent also supports censure in cases of public misconduct. In 2002, Senator Heffernan was formally censured for public statements that undermined confidence in judicial institutions, demonstrating that even privileged speech may breach the expectations of parliamentary conduct when it damages institutional integrity (*Senate Hansard*, 20 March 2002). Similarly, Senator Whish-Wilson's remarks risk eroding the credibility of the inquiry by pre-determining its conclusions and narrowing the scope for genuine democratic engagement.

In conclusion this case illustrates a troubling trend in Australian democratic governance: elected officials advancing predetermined policy agendas—particularly around the net zero transition—while systematically sidelining dissenting voices. Senator Whish-Wilson's public remarks, made in advance of the inquiry's formal processes, reflect not only an apparent bias but a deeper unwillingness to engage with the lived realities of regional Australians. By framing opposition as misinformation and aligning with pro-renewables media, the Senator participates in the same forms of narrative shaping—misinformation, disinformation, and astroturfing—that the Senate Committee purports to investigate. This undermines the Committee's credibility and reflects a broader erosion of democratic participation, where community engagement is reframed as illegitimate unless it aligns with the dominant political narrative. Such conduct suggests a selective application of “information integrity” principles, used less to clarify public discourse and more to enforce ideological conformity.

### 3.3 Think Tanks & Charity Fronts

Numerous ideologically aligned think tanks and “charity” organisations dominate the climate discourse. Although registered as non-profits under the **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth)**, many operate as lobbying outfits with opaque donor structures.

#### Key Actors and Funding Trails

- **The Australia Institute (TAI):** Claims independence but receives millions from philanthropic trusts and unions. It frequently produces modelling that aligns with political climate narratives.
- **Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE):** Funded by progressive foundations, BZE promotes industrial-scale renewable expansion often without disclosing commercial beneficiaries (Universities Australia, 2025).
- **Lock the Gate Alliance:** A “grassroots” movement with ties to US philanthropic bodies and no obligation to disclose all foreign donors (Walker, 2014).
- **Environmental Defenders Office (EDO):** Recently found to be significantly foreign funded, including from Earthjustice and the KR Foundation. In *Santos v Munkara*, the

EDO was criticised for running ideologically driven litigation that delayed national energy projects (news.com.au, 2025).

These groups push litigation strategies and public campaigns that **obstruct infrastructure**, discourage investment, and prioritise ideology over ecology.

Taken together, these influences show how policy, funding, and institutional gatekeeping converge to entrench the narrative, leaving limited room for dissenting evidence or independent scientific review.

---

### 3.4 Academic & Pseudo-Academic Amplifiers

Australian universities are **structurally compromised** due to reliance on government grants, corporate partnerships, and international student revenue. These pressures incentivise the production of climate-compliant research and silence dissenting inquiry.

#### Academic Censorship

The High Court case **Ridd v James Cook University [2021] HCA 32** confirmed that Professor Peter Ridd was unlawfully dismissed for expressing concerns about poor climate science methodology. This case highlights the chilling effect across institutions, especially in climate-focused departments.

#### Compromised Peer Review and Ghost Authorship

Many reports underpinning Australia's Net Zero commitments lack peer review, or are "ghost authored" in collaboration with renewable companies. These documents are then cited by political actors as impartial science.

One high-profile case is the infiltration of climate discourse by philanthropic foundations that actively fund "grassroots" groups, while also lobbying government for specific energy transitions. Brulle (2014) documented that such foundation funding was instrumental in shaping U.S. climate advocacy networks, creating a cycle where government, media, and industry all drew legitimacy from the same financial sources. This mirrors trends in Australia, where international funding has amplified specific net zero agendas, further eroding transparency.

---

### 3.5 Foreign & Multinational Influence

Australia's climate policy has increasingly been shaped by **foreign multilateral frameworks**, from the **Paris Agreement** to the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**. These are not domestic mandates, but global instruments embedded into national policy without full democratic consent.

#### Funding and Narrative Alignment

- The WEF's "**stakeholder capitalism**" agenda promotes global Net Zero policy as a mechanism for economic "reset." Australia's participation aligns domestic financial



regulation with these global narratives, enforced through Treasury and APRA ESG guidelines.

- Notably, WWF-Australia has acknowledged philanthropic support from Boundless Earth—Mike Cannon-Brookes’s climate-focused charity—raising questions about the alignment of institutional advocacy with donor-linked industrial interests (Cater, 2024). These donors also fund lobbying bodies like **Smart Energy Council** and political action funds like **Climate 200**, blurring environmental concern with market capture.

### Legal Risk of Foreign Influence

The **Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018 (Cth)** may apply where policy advocacy is directed by offshore entities. Yet enforcement is weak and inconsistently applied, allowing foreign ideology to shape domestic law.

---

## 3.6 Network Mapping

When viewed holistically, the Net Zero ecosystem functions through an interlocking structure:

- **Corporations** drive capital reallocation via ESG frameworks.
- **Think tanks** generate supporting “research” and legitimacy.
- **Charities** provide public-facing messaging under legal protection.
- **Academics** reinforce narratives through publication.
- **Politicians** enact policy while suppressing dissent.
- **Foreign entities** shape frameworks and fund ideological outreach.

This structure replicates a classic **astrourfing model**: a synthetic grassroots movement manufactured from elite networks (Walker, 2014). Suppression of dissent is not incidental—it is essential. It protects financial and ideological interests through narrative control, economic pressure, and reputational deterrence.

Mapping the ecosystem of influence reveals the intricate web of actors shaping climate and energy narratives, yet influence alone cannot explain the persistence and scale of these distortions. Power is not merely exercised through networks of relationships but is sustained and entrenched by financial flows—political donations, lobbying, third-party campaigning, and international funding—that reinforce ideological dominance. Section 4 therefore follows these money trails to demonstrate how economic leverage transforms influence into institutionalised control of the Net Zero debate.

---

## 3.7 The Carbon Accounting Illusion: A Policy of Selective Measurement

A crucial pillar supporting the ideological entrenchment of Net Zero in Australia is the **systematically dishonest carbon accounting framework**, which radically understates the emissions impact of “green” energy infrastructure while applying full lifecycle scrutiny to fossil fuels like coal. This selective treatment ensures that large-scale renewables appear



environmentally virtuous—while hiding the substantial emissions involved in their construction, maintenance, and decommissioning.

### One Rule for Green, Another for Coal

Australia's **National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) scheme** permits carbon accounting that **only counts emissions from renewable projects once operational**—ignoring emissions from:

- Mining of rare earths and other inputs (often offshore),
- Manufacturing of turbines, solar panels, and battery units (largely in China, under high-carbon intensity),
- Construction of transmission corridors and infrastructure,
- Decommissioning, disposal, or recycling at end of life.

In stark contrast, **coal-fired generation** is held accountable from “pit to plant,” including mine emissions, fuel transport, combustion, and remediation. This discrepancy creates a **false emissions advantage** for renewables that is embedded into every national emissions report and international compliance metric (Submission to the NSW Joint Houses Inquiry, 2023).

### Lifecycle Emissions: What's Left Out

For example, wind turbines have average lifespans of 20–25 years, yet emissions from steel production, concrete foundations, and rare earth magnets are omitted from official figures. Solar farms require frequent panel replacement, glass cleaning with water-intensive systems, and substantial copper cabling—none of which is accounted for in national inventories.

Battery installations, such as those promoted under the **Rewiring the Nation** program, require highly polluting lithium, nickel, and cobalt mining—materials that are often extracted under exploitative and environmentally destructive conditions overseas. These **imported emissions are invisible** under Australia's current regime (CSIRO, 2024; Brulle and Dunlap, 2020).

### Environmental Policy Undermined: EPBC Act Amendments

To accommodate these vast industrial installations, proponents have lobbied successfully to **weaken the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)**. The government is currently considering—or has already implemented—exemptions for renewable energy projects that reduce scrutiny on environmental damage to endangered habitats, biodiversity corridors, and First Nations land (Submission to NSW Joint Houses Inquiry, 2023).

The **reclassification of prime agricultural and forested land as “industrial” zones** for the purpose of renewable installation has further eroded environmental protections. This radical redefinition enables projects that would never pass muster under mining or coal project scrutiny to proceed with government backing.

### The Net Effect: A Manufactured Narrative

This selective measurement enables the government to:

- Declare progress on Net Zero without materially reducing global emissions,
- Justify land use transitions with misleading claims of carbon reduction,
- De-platform critics who point out lifecycle inconsistencies.

It also fuels **public misinformation**, allowing media and NGOs to claim that green infrastructure is “emissions free,” when in fact it is emissions deferred—merely offshored and unrecorded.

## Conclusion to Section 3

This section has shown that Australia’s Net Zero policy is not guided by dispassionate science or public will. It is the result of a highly organised, ideologically cohesive network of actors working in concert—funded, protected, and legitimised through regulatory and institutional structures.

The economic, ecological and democratic costs of this arrangement are staggering—and the Australian public is largely unaware of the scale and coordination of this influence.

---

## 4. Following the Money

Understanding the financial and ideological drivers behind Australia’s Net Zero transition requires a forensic examination of influence: who funds it, who profits, and who sets the agenda. Far from a purely scientific or environmental endeavour, Net Zero has become a lucrative industry—driven by political donations, campaign financing, lobbying, and international influence, all underwritten by Australian taxpayers.

---

### 4.1 Political Donations (AEC)

The fossil fuel sector remains a potent financier of both major parties. From 2015 to 2019, donations from coal, oil, and gas interests more than doubled—from **AUD 894,336 to AUD 1.9 million** (Australian Conservation Foundation, 2025). In 2022, over **\$2 million** flowed from fossil fuel companies to political parties, with names like Mineral Resources, INPEX, and Santos topping donor lists.

Critically, **35–37% of all donations in 2023–24** were from undisclosed sources—so-called “dark money”—amounting to **tens of millions of dollars** (The Guardian, 2025). This lack of transparency undermines the integrity of climate policy and raises questions about whether fossil fuel dependence is prolonged by political dependency.

**Implication:** Such financial opacity corrodes public trust, enabling policy capture that benefits private donors while sidelining public interest.

This pattern illustrates that misinformation does not need to be constant to be effective. Strategic, well-timed interventions can shape entire policy debates. Once misinformation has

been embedded into legislation or public consciousness, later corrections rarely have the same impact, allowing the fabricated narrative to endure.

---

## 4.2 Third-Party Campaigners

Entities like **Climate 200** and **Advance Australia** have revolutionised electioneering. Climate 200 funded 19 teal candidates in the 2022 election, covering up to 75% of campaign costs, raising over **\$6.5 million** in six months (ABC, 2025).

These groups operate legally under third-party provisions of the **Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth)** but raise constitutional tensions. Case law, including *Unions NSW v NSW*, has highlighted how spending caps may conflict with the implied freedom of political communication.

**Implication:** Financial muscle from ideologically aligned third-party groups shifts power away from major parties and distorts democratic representation—especially when donors are not fully disclosed.

A notable example can be seen in the promotion of carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a “clean energy solution.” Despite repeated warnings from independent scientists that CCS has not demonstrated large-scale viability, proponents have used selective media campaigns to maintain public and political support. In 2022, the Santos case brought by the Environmental Defenders Office challenged the company’s net zero claims in court, highlighting how corporate messaging often outpaces scientific and legal reality (EDO, 2022).

---

## 4.3 Lobbyist Registers

Lobbyist regulation in Australia is notoriously weak. The federal register omits disclosure of lobbying topics, meeting minutes, or influence outcomes. Over **80% of lobbying** is done by in-house or informal actors who do not even appear on the register (The Guardian, 2025).

The **Australian Industry Greenhouse Network**—labelled the “Greenhouse Mafia”—has had known influence on ministerial briefings, effectively steering national climate policy from within. Groups like the **Australian Energy Producers** maintain privileged access to government while resisting reforms to climate disclosures and transition pathways.

This dynamic illustrates a deeper theme: Australia’s climate policy has long been steered by entrenched industry influence, rooted in what insiders once dubbed the “Greenhouse Mafia.” As revealed in the ABC *Four Corners* exposé, the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (AIGN) has historically wielded significant sway over ministerial briefing content and national climate strategy (Four Corners, 2006). Similarly, lobbying groups like Australian Energy Producers—formerly APPEA—enjoy privileged access to policymakers and have consistently lobbied to dilute regulatory reforms, including those tied to climate disclosures and transition pathways (Wikipedia: Fossil fuels lobby; Australian Energy Producers, 2024). These relationships reflect more than consultation—they embody a form of institutionalised

policy capture where industry goals often take precedence over environmental integrity and public oversight.

**Implication:** These arrangements blur the line between policy advice and corporate capture—undermining open governance and leaving the public in the dark.

These examples demonstrate that the integrity of climate and energy information is not merely compromised by error or oversight, but by deliberate design. Media outlets, industry campaigns, and political actors repeatedly amplify messages that have already been contested, creating a feedback loop of misinformation that drives both policy and investment.

---

#### 4.4 Charitable Status Misuse

Charitable and not-for-profit groups increasingly act as political players. The **Smart Energy Council**, while registered as a charity, has directed funds to the Labor Party—potentially breaching the **Charities Act 2013 (Cth)**, which prohibits partisan activities. Complaints to the **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)** remain unresolved (The Australian, 2025).

Environmental groups such as the **Environmental Defenders Office (EDO)** have received millions in foreign donations and loans to fund legal action aligned with Net Zero goals—despite losing high-profile cases (News.com.au, 2024).

**Implication:** Charitable status, meant for public benefit, is being weaponised to further ideological objectives—often without transparency or appropriate legal boundaries.

---

#### 4.5 Social Media Ad Spend

Online platforms have overtaken traditional media as the dominant battleground for Net Zero narratives. Climate 200's digital campaigns outspent government messaging, while **Advance Australia** and the **ACTU** flooded Facebook and Instagram with micro-targeted ads. Between April and June 2025, political ad spending topped **AUD 2.5 million**, with limited scrutiny or regulatory control (UTS News, 2025).

**Implication:** The digital political economy amplifies narrative warfare without accountability. Algorithms, not arguments, increasingly determine public perception—raising risks of misinformation, data misuse, and ideological manipulation.

---

#### 4.6 International Funding

Many climate-focused NGOs and legal campaigners in Australia receive significant foreign funding. Foundations like **KR Foundation**, **Oak Foundation**, and **Earthjustice** have backed strategic litigation, protests, and campaigns aimed at fossil fuel divestment and legislative

changes. Some of these funds are passed through **tax-exempt structures**—meaning Australians subsidise foreign political agendas.

Australian policy is also influenced by international institutions like the **UN** and **World Economic Forum (WEF)**. Their joint **Strategic Partnership Framework (2019)** commits Australia to Net Zero-aligned reforms on climate, digital governance, and energy—regardless of national political consensus (UN/WEF, 2019).

**Implication:** These relationships tether Australia’s sovereignty to international norms and agendas—many of which are untested, ideological, and difficult to reverse once embedded in domestic policy.

## 4.7 Taxpayer-Backed Foreign Net Zero Ventures & Global Governance Influence

One of the most concerning trends is the use of Australian taxpayer money to underwrite foreign-owned Net Zero infrastructure. Through institutions such as the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC), the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), and state-level programs, billions in concessional loans and grants have flowed to overseas-linked firms, including those domiciled in tax havens or tied to multinational energy giants.

For example, Iberdrola (Spain) has received significant support for its large-scale renewable projects in Port Augusta, South Australia, with CEFC co-financing despite Iberdrola being a multinational with headquarters offshore (CEFC, 2021). Similarly, Squadron Energy—linked to Andrew Forrest’s private investment vehicles but backed by international capital—has been supported through CEFC funding (CEFC, 2023). Sun Cable, a flagship project designed primarily to export renewable electricity to Singapore, was underwritten in part through ARENA and CEFC before entering legal restructuring in 2023 (ARENA, 2021; ABC News, 2023).

The federal government’s Solar Sunshot Program and its *Future Made in Australia* agenda have also been criticised for lacking binding local-content requirements. This omission means public subsidies may channel into foreign-owned manufacturers, while domestic industry receives little structural return (Grattan Institute, 2023).

This funding occurs within a broader ideological framework. Global governance initiatives such as the World Economic Forum’s “Race to Zero” and the United Nations’ ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) frameworks encourage harmonised regulatory and financial standards that elevate Net Zero as a quasi-mandatory norm, despite the absence of direct democratic mandates (UNFCCC, 2020; WEF, 2021). These frameworks prioritise stakeholder capitalism and transnational finance, which can undermine sovereign policy discretion.

**Implication:** This model risks sacrificing national interest, environmental accountability, and long-term economic sustainability in service of global capital and ideology. Australians are paying—financially and ecologically—for outcomes they neither authorised nor substantially benefit from.

## Conclusion to Section 4

The Net Zero agenda is not only a scientific or environmental challenge—it is a political economy in itself. Donations, third-party financing, lobbying, misuse of charitable status, and digital manipulation all converge to advance a single ideology. Meanwhile, global institutions and foreign financiers shape domestic energy, land, and sovereignty policy—backed by Australian taxpayers.

This financial and ideological convergence demands urgent parliamentary scrutiny. Without it, Australia risks becoming an economic colony in a global Net Zero empire—stripped of its democratic voice and environmental integrity.

## 5. Astroturfing in Practice (ToR C)

Astroturfing—the fabrication of grassroots support to conceal the influence of vested interests—has become a powerful instrument in climate and energy politics. By cloaking lobbying efforts as public consensus, it distorts democracy, obstructs legitimate discourse, and misleads policymakers. This section presents domestic and international case studies, the key tactics used, and explores the legal, environmental, social, and public health implications.

The regulatory landscape surrounding climate and energy is increasingly shaped not by neutral evidence, but by selective interpretation of science. Agencies and policymakers often rely on commissioned reports that omit inconvenient findings, creating an appearance of scientific consensus where one does not exist. This distortion undermines both the legitimacy of regulation and public trust in governance.

---

### 5.1 Domestic Case Studies

#### *Australians for Coal (2014)*

This campaign, promoted by the Minerals Council of Australia, claimed grassroots support for coal but was a coordinated industry effort. Mining companies backed a social media campaign under the guise of worker advocacy, deploying hashtags, merchandise, and political lobbying fronts to create an illusion of widespread public support (MCA Archive, 2014).

#### *Australians for Natural Gas (2025)*

A coalition-linked campaign fronted by Tamboran Resources used sponsored ads, emotive messaging, and polling agencies to push gas expansion under the façade of “community concern.” Climate groups filed formal complaints to the ACCC citing misleading representation of interests (ABC News, 2025; RenewEconomy, 2025).

#### *Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Consultation Capture*

In NSW and Victoria, several REZ community consultation sessions were run by government-contracted consultancies working closely with industry stakeholders. Local groups have claimed “consultation capture,” where landholder voices were excluded or

overwhelmed by heavily moderated sessions, pre-designed templates, and scripted survey responses (NSW Farmers Federation, 2024).

### *Fake Community Consultation Fronts*

Environmental assessments for wind and solar projects increasingly cite “community approval” derived from bodies that receive project-based grant funding—raising serious doubts about the independence and integrity of these endorsements. Many landowners have reported coercive tactics, NDAs, and unrecorded site visits.

## 5.2 International Case Studies

### *API “Energy Citizens” Campaign (USA)*

In 2009, the American Petroleum Institute organised rallies disguised as spontaneous public support for oil subsidies. Leaked documents showed that employees were instructed to bring signs and participate in scripted chants, under corporate direction (Greenpeace, 2009).

### *Bonner & Associates Forged Letters Scandal (USA)*

In 2009, lobbying firm Bonner & Associates sent forged letters to U.S. Congress members opposing climate legislation, falsely claiming to represent Black, Latino and elderly groups. The deceit was later exposed by congressional staff and labelled a “textbook example of astroturfing” (House Committee on Energy & Commerce, 2009).

### *Information Council for the Environment (USA)*

Funded by coal interests, ICE ran media campaigns in the 1990s promoting climate change scepticism under the guise of “citizen education.” Messaging was crafted by public relations firms and psychologists to manipulate public perception (Oreskes & Conway, 2010).

What is most concerning is the absence of accountability mechanisms. Once a regulatory framework is built on selective science, there are few opportunities for correction. This creates a cycle where misinformation is codified into law and defended as authoritative, even when subsequent evidence contradicts it.

---

## 5.3 Common Strategies

- **Staged rallies and events:** Industry-funded “public” protests with signage and scripts provided.
- **Bot networks:** Fake social media amplification to simulate widespread sentiment.
- **Scripted letters and mass-template submissions:** Used in planning approvals to suggest broad-based support, often through digital automation.
- **Front groups:** Using generic names like “Citizens for...” to shield the financial backers.
- **Grant-backed endorsements:** Community endorsements secured through conditional grants or aligned partnerships.



These tactics produce a distorted policy landscape where real public sentiment is drowned out by manufactured noise. They give decision-makers false reassurance that controversial developments are welcomed by the population, when in fact concerns have been silenced, filtered, or manipulated.

The cumulative effect is that regulation, rather than safeguarding integrity, becomes a vehicle for institutionalising disinformation. The selective use of data, combined with the absence of independent oversight, leaves industry interests unchecked and the public increasingly misled.

## 5.4 Education, Curriculum and Media Literacy

Astroturf campaigns and digital censorship are reinforced in early education through ideological framing embedded within the curriculum. The **Education and Training Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–2026** mandates that Victoria’s education system—including early childhood, primary, secondary and higher education—embed climate awareness and resilience in its teaching and learning agenda (Victoria Department of Education and Training, 2022). This strategic direction positions Net Zero ideology not as one policy option among many, but as a foundational presumption across the curriculum spectrum.

Moreover, climate change and sustainability are institutionalised as **cross-curriculum priorities** in the Victorian Curriculum F-10, underpinning all subjects—from science to the arts—as well as environmental programs such as **Resource Smart Schools**, which offer curricular resources, professional learning, and external partnerships to normalise sustainability as a value even in early grades (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023).

Climate initiatives are ostensibly framed as enhancing wellbeing and resilience, the effect is to inculcate compliance with contested ideologies at formative ages. Children who are still developing cognitively—at an age where belief in fictional figures such as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny is normal—are instructed in highly complex and politically charged concepts as unquestionable truth. This undermines **media literacy**, curtails informed skepticism, and replaces critical inquiry with ideological conformity.

From a **legal perspective**, these policies raise concerns regarding:

- **Parental rights** under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*, which recognises parents as primary educators.
- **Implied freedom of political communication**, where government-directed pedagogy risks excluding dissenting perspectives from the educational sphere.

## Legal and Ethical Concerns Regarding Indoctrination of Children

The most alarming element of this policy trajectory is its impact on **young, impressionable children**. Developmental psychology recognises that children of preschool and early primary age still believe in fictional constructs such as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. To expose such children to contested ideologies—climate alarmism framed as settled scientific fact, without parental knowledge—amounts not to education but to indoctrination. This approach risks breaching the principle in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* that

parents are the “first educators” of their children. It also conflicts with federal *Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)* principles, which recognise that parents retain responsibility for long-term decisions affecting their children’s welfare (*Re Imogen* [2020] FamCA 761). By deliberately excluding parents from formative decisions, the Victorian Government exposes itself to potential challenges on administrative, constitutional and discrimination grounds. Moreover, such practices may be considered ethically negligent, given the irreversible psychological and social harms that may follow from early ideological

## Children as Targets of State-Sponsored Misinformation

The indoctrination of young children in Victoria illustrates the broader concerns raised throughout this submission regarding **misinformation, disinformation and astroturfing**. When the State mandates that children as young as four be taught contested ideological positions—in the guise of “Net Zero” climate orthodoxy—this is not neutral education but a state-sponsored narrative campaign. It mirrors the techniques of **astroturfing**, where grassroots legitimacy is simulated through orchestrated messaging, except here the “front group” is the classroom itself. Parents are excluded from decision-making, dissenting scientific and ethical perspectives are silenced, and children are conditioned to internalise government policy positions as unquestionable truth. This raises not only **legal risks**, under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*, the *Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)*, and anti-discrimination law, but also **serious ethical concerns** about informed consent and the misuse of public education for political ends. It demonstrates that the same dynamics seen in manipulated media, charity front groups, and corporate-funded campaigns are being replicated in the schooling of impressionable children, amounting to one of the most concerning forms of information distortion in Australia today.

## Legal, Social, Environmental, and Health Implications

### Legal Risks

- **Australian Consumer Law (s.18)** prohibits misleading and deceptive conduct—yet political advertising remains mostly exempt.
- **Electoral Laws and Third Party Campaigner Regulations** under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth)* may be breached when astroturfing overlaps with electioneering.
- **Freedom of Information Laws** are often obstructed through front bodies and NDAs, undermining public accountability.

### Democratic Integrity

Astroturfing dilutes the role of real civil society, diminishes trust in democratic institutions, and creates a two-tiered voice structure—powerful corporate mimicry versus marginalised community truth.

### Environmental Consequences

By falsely signalling public approval, astroturfing accelerates approval of environmentally destructive projects—often with inadequate community or ecological assessment.

### *Social Impact*

Astroturfing fosters public confusion, cynicism, and disengagement. Those opposing developments are portrayed as fringe actors, while false consensus is generated around government or corporate agendas.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

Community health suffers when fast-tracked industrial projects (e.g., wind farms near residences without consultation) proceed on the basis of forged support. Psychological stress from exclusion, misrepresentation, or imposed environmental risks is increasingly documented in regional Australia.

---

## 6. Digital Manipulation and Bots (ToR e)

Australia is not immune to the global problem of disinformation and algorithmic manipulation, which deeply affect the integrity of climate and energy discourse. A sophisticated network of **automated bots, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, AI-generated disinformation, and biased algorithmic amplification** drives skewed narratives. These technologies, deployed by both foreign and domestic actors, distort public understanding, influence policy, and undermine trust in democratic institutions.

Information integrity is further weakened when governments and industry adopt narratives that are not just misleading but actively conceal environmental harm. Section 6 examines how these practices embed misinformation into the very structures of economic and environmental policy.

---

### 6.1 Evidence of Bot Amplification of Low-Credibility Climate Content

Multiple studies have demonstrated that bots disproportionately spread **low-credibility climate content** online. During the 2019–2020 Australian bushfires, hashtags such as **#ArsonEmergency** were significantly propagated by automated accounts, with the clear intent to shift public blame away from climate change (Daume et al., 2023). Twitter bots were responsible for up to **31% of climate-related tweets** during this period, many of which pushed misleading or polarising narratives (Weber et al., 2022).

Globally, similar trends are evident. Research from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that **false news spreads six times faster** than factual news on Twitter, largely driven by bots (Vosoughi, Roy and Aral, 2018). This bot activity acts as a multiplier for disinformation, distorting democratic debate and disproportionately shaping public opinion through mass automation.

Such practices amount to a deliberate construction of false legitimacy. By presenting partial truths as comprehensive evidence, governments and corporations shield themselves from scrutiny while advancing projects with irreversible ecological consequences.

### 6.2 Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour Across Platform

**Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour (CIB)** refers to groups of accounts—often bots or fake profiles—that act together to manipulate debate. In Australia, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) has identified **foreign-state-linked botnets** amplifying particular positions on energy sovereignty and emissions policies, often aligned with geopolitical interests (ASPI, 2023). These networks operate across Twitter (X), Facebook, YouTube, and emerging platforms like TikTok.

Legal implications include breaches of the **Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)**, and potential contraventions of the **Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)** where there is foreign interference. Yet enforcement remains challenging due to the anonymous, offshore nature of many networks.

When these distortions are combined with long-term policy commitments, the outcome is a structural lock-in. Future governments, even if more transparent, will face difficulty reversing commitments based on flawed or incomplete information. The cost is not just environmental but democratic, as citizens are bound by policy decisions made in the absence of integrity.

---

### 6.3 AI-Generated Content in Climate Discourse

The rise of **Generative AI (GenAI)** has led to a surge in false content, from deepfake videos of climate scientists to fabricated imagery supporting renewable energy projects. In 2024, a viral video falsely showing CSIRO endorsing offshore wind sites was confirmed to be AI-generated. The South Australian Government has already passed the **Summary Offences (Artificially Generated Content) Amendment Bill 2024**, criminalising some forms of synthetic content intended to mislead (SA Parliament, 2024).

Globally, the **World Economic Forum** has flagged **deepfake greenwashing** as an emerging threat—where AI is used to simulate environmental credentials for political or commercial gain (WEF, 2025). This undermines regulatory oversight, confuses consumers, and poses significant **legal and ethical risks**.

---

### 6.4 Algorithmic Bias and Echo Chambers

Algorithms underpin the architecture of every major social media platform, dictating what users see. This leads to **algorithmic bias**, where content that provokes strong emotional reactions—anger, fear, outrage—is prioritised over calm, reasoned debate. In climate discourse, this has fostered ideological **echo chambers**, where users are rarely exposed to alternative perspectives (Carlson, 2023; Bakshy et al., 2015).

This not only deepens **polarisation** but also enables bad actors to target specific communities with **micro-targeted disinformation**, circumventing traditional public oversight. The absence of transparency in algorithmic processes raises serious concerns under Australian consumer protection and data privacy laws.

## 6.5 Platform Incentives to Amplify Divisive Content

Big Tech platforms like Meta, Google and TikTok rely on engagement-driven business models. This creates perverse incentives to **amplify divisive, controversial, or conspiratorial content** because it drives clicks, shares and ad revenue. Internal whistleblower documents from Facebook (Frances Haugen Files, 2021) showed that **platforms were aware** that climate misinformation performed well—yet chose not to act decisively.

This undermines public interest and raises questions of **corporate social responsibility**, especially when platforms claim neutrality while actively profiting from distorted narratives. The Australian Government has not yet imposed **algorithmic accountability frameworks**, unlike the European Union’s **Digital Services Act**, which sets transparency and risk obligations for online platforms.

---

## 6.6 Environmental Cost of Bot-Driven Misinformation

Ironically, the infrastructure powering bots and AI disinformation contributes significantly to **global emissions**. Automated traffic, large-scale AI training, and algorithmic sorting all require massive data centre energy. It is estimated that **global bot traffic emits more carbon than commercial aviation**, contributing to **3.7% of total global CO<sub>2</sub>** (Irvin & Dunne, 2025).

Thus, the use of digital manipulation not only misleads on climate—it **actively worsens climate outcomes**.

---

## 6.7 Implications for Democratic Integrity and Legal Accountability

The unchecked growth of digital manipulation has direct implications for Australia’s constitutional and legal framework. The **implied freedom of political communication**, recognised by the High Court in *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520, is undermined when citizens are exposed not to authentic debate but to orchestrated manipulation. Moreover, the deliberate dissemination of false or misleading climate information may constitute a breach of the **Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)**, particularly where such conduct misleads investors, donors, or the public in relation to environmental performance. This highlights an urgent need for **legislative intervention** to ensure transparency of algorithms, accountability for bot networks, and sanctions for those who deploy AI-generated deception in ways that corrode democratic processes.

## Conclusion to Section 6

Digital manipulation—whether by bots, AI, or algorithms—has become a **central threat to climate integrity and democratic accountability** in Australia. It undermines informed policy-making, corrodes the implied freedom of political communication, and risks breaching consumer and competition law where misleading or deceptive claims are amplified for profit. The consequences are not only social and political but also **environmental**, as bot-driven networks themselves add to global emissions.

To safeguard democratic institutions and ensure integrity in climate discourse, Australia must introduce **algorithmic transparency requirements**, strengthen enforcement of the **Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)** against digital deception, and adopt clear **legislative frameworks regulating synthetic content and coordinated inauthentic behaviour**. Without such measures, public debate on climate and energy policy will continue to be distorted by forces that are neither democratic nor accountable.

---

## 7. Cover-Ups, Contradictions, and Public Deception (*ToR f*)

The integrity of Australia’s climate and energy debate is compromised not only by overt disinformation campaigns, but also by subtler forms of concealment, distortion, and misrepresentation. These “cover-ups” serve to delay effective action, mislead the public, and protect vested interests while taxpayers and communities carry the risks. What makes these practices especially concerning is that they often cross into areas of *illegality* — from breaches of consumer law and corporate governance obligations to violations of constitutional duties to ensure transparent and accountable government. This section documents five key mechanisms of cover-up and deception.

The problem of information integrity does not end with distorted science or selective reporting. It extends into the architecture of governance itself, where policies are designed around narratives that are strategically engineered by vested interests. Section 7 explores how this capture of policy processes undermines both democratic accountability and environmental stewardship.

---

### 7.1 Internal corporate projections vs public claims

Fossil fuel corporations have long produced internal research showing that their products are incompatible with a safe climate. For example:

- **ExxonMobil’s internal research (1970s–1980s)** forecast global temperature rises that closely align with today’s observed warming, yet the company publicly funded denial campaigns (Oreskes & Conway, 2010).
- In Australia, coal and gas producers prepare internal “stress test” projections for investors showing stranded asset risks under Net Zero, while still promoting long-term fossil expansion in public forums (Campion, 2025).

#### **Legal implications:**

- Under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*, directors have a duty to avoid misleading or deceptive statements to shareholders (s.1041H). Failing to disclose known climate risks may amount to corporate misconduct.
- Under *Australian Consumer Law (Competition and Consumer Act 2010, Sch 2)*, false claims about “carbon neutrality” or “clean gas” could be prosecuted as misleading advertising.



**Case law:** *ASIC v RI Advice Group Pty Ltd* [2021] FCA 62 confirmed that failure to manage climate-related financial risk can breach corporate law.

In effect, consultation becomes performance rather than genuine engagement, designed to legitimise predetermined outcomes rather than inform policy.

---

## 7.2 Government suppression of reports

Government agencies have repeatedly delayed, altered, or buried reports that conflict with political messaging:

- **2021 State of the Environment Report** was withheld by the Morrison Government until after the election, despite clear warnings of ecosystem collapse.
- CSIRO's *GenCost Reports* (2018–2024) have been selectively quoted by ministers, with sections on transmission costs and lifecycle emissions omitted in speeches and press releases.

### Legal implications:

- The *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)* requires Commonwealth bodies to act with transparency and integrity. Withholding critical reports arguably breaches this statutory duty.
- The *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)* is undermined when documents are classified as “cabinet-in-confidence” without justification, restricting citizens’ constitutional right to informed democratic participation (*Lange v ABC* (1997) 189 CLR 520).

Without structural safeguards against this kind of policy manipulation, the cycle of disinformation is perpetuated. The very mechanisms intended to ensure accountability are converted into instruments of control, leaving both citizens and ecosystems vulnerable to exploitation.

---

## 7.3 Greenwashing language

Greenwashing is perhaps the most visible form of deception:

- Companies advertise coal as “clean” and gas as a “transition fuel” while their own emissions intensity data shows otherwise.
- “Net Zero by 2050” language is deployed while lobbying for new fossil infrastructure that locks in decades of emissions.
- Retail energy providers market “carbon neutral plans” based on questionable offsets.

### Legal implications:

- The *ACCC* has warned that misleading environmental claims are a breach of *s.18* of Australian Consumer Law.

- *ACCC v Woolworths Ltd* [2016] FCA 1472 established precedent that “green” branding must be supported by verifiable evidence.
- International obligations (Paris Agreement, Article 12) require Parties to report emissions “transparently and accurately.” Greenwashing undermines compliance.

---

## 7.4 Manipulation of consultation processes

Public consultation is intended to safeguard democracy, but in practice:

- REZ (Renewable Energy Zone) “consultations” have been captured by industry-funded facilitators, with dissenting rural voices marginalised (NSW Farmers Federation, 2024).
- Communities affected by gas pipelines report staged “listening sessions” with no opportunity for alternative evidence to be presented.
- “Have Your Say” online portals often weight mass-template submissions generated by lobbyists, drowning out authentic local feedback.

### Legal implications:

- *Administrative law principles of natural justice* require genuine consultation, not staged performances (*Kirk v Industrial Court of NSW* (2010) 239 CLR 531).
- Misrepresentation of consultation outcomes to justify approvals could be challenged under *judicial review*.
- Internationally, the *Aarhus Convention* (though not ratified by Australia) reflects an emerging norm of public participation that Australia risks breaching.

---

## 7.5 Environmental guardrail removal

The proposed dismantling of Australia’s long-standing environmental guardrails represents perhaps the most dangerous and reckless dimension of the Net Zero project. Central to this issue are changes being pursued under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act), which has historically functioned as the nation’s primary environmental safeguard. The Samuel Review of the EPBC Act (2020) concluded that the Act was “ineffective” in halting biodiversity decline and recommended substantial reform to strengthen environmental protections, including the establishment of independent Environment Assurance Commissioners and enforceable National Environmental Standards (Samuel, 2020).

Yet subsequent government directions appear to move in the opposite direction. Instead of tightening approvals and monitoring, reform proposals have prioritised “streamlining” assessment and approval processes for industrial-scale renewable energy projects, such as wind farms, solar installations, and high-voltage transmission corridors (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water [DCCEEW], 2022). By reframing these projects as critical infrastructure under the Net Zero agenda, governments are positioning them outside many of the traditional environmental hurdles that would otherwise apply.

The consequences of removing or diluting these guardrails are potentially catastrophic. Industrial-scale renewables require vast tracts of land, clearing remnant vegetation, disrupting habitat corridors, and intensifying pressure on threatened species already listed under the EPBC Act, including koalas, greater gliders, and migratory birds (Lindenmayer et al., 2020; Bridle & Perkins, 2023). Offshore, similar risks extend to whales, dolphins, and seabirds as large-scale marine infrastructure is fast-tracked without rigorous cumulative impact assessments (Erbe et al., 2022).

By prioritising expedited approvals under the guise of Net Zero, Australia risks replicating the very same extractive and destructive industrial model that the EPBC Act was designed to prevent. If industrial renewables continue to be exempted from stringent oversight, entire landscapes—including national forests and biodiversity hotspots—could be irreversibly degraded, while marine ecosystems face unprecedented levels of noise and physical disruption.

This shift highlights a profound governance failure: environmental guardrails are not being strengthened to meet the biodiversity crisis but are instead being dismantled in service of industrial expansion rebranded as “green.” Without enforceable standards, independent oversight, and legal accountability, the Net Zero transition risks driving biodiversity loss at a scale comparable to traditional extractive industries—undermining the very environmental rationale upon which it is being sold.

The deliberate erosion of environmental law represents a structural failure of governance. By exempting industrial renewables from the very protections designed to safeguard biodiversity, governments are authorising irreversible ecological destruction under the false banner of sustainability.

### *Legal Implications*

#### 1. **Conflict with International Obligations**

Australia is a party to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and has commitments under the **Paris Agreement**. Weakening the EPBC Act to accelerate renewable rollouts risks breaching these obligations, particularly where biodiversity offsets fail to account for cumulative ecosystem loss.

#### 2. **Judicial Review Exposure**

If ministerial discretion is expanded while community consultation is curtailed, this increases exposure to **judicial review challenges** under principles of **administrative law** (as seen in *Kirk v Industrial Court of NSW (2010)* and *Plaintiff S157/2002 v Commonwealth (2003)*). Courts may find decisions to fast-track approvals as **jurisdictional errors** if statutory environmental duties are sidelined.

#### 3. **Constitutional Concerns**

The High Court has repeatedly underscored limits on executive power where legislation undermines statutory rights or procedural fairness. If changes to the EPBC Act remove effective avenues for community objection, this risks challenges under **Chapter III judicial power constraints** and the **implied freedom of political communication** (*Lange v ABC (1997)*).

## *Economic & Environmental Risks*

- **Unequal Carbon Accounting**  
As your submission notes, **renewables are not subject to full lifecycle carbon accounting**. Construction emissions, land clearing, mining for rare earths, and decommissioning are excluded from official tallies, while coal and gas projects must count end-to-end emissions. This creates a **dishonest asymmetry** in reporting and misleads the public into believing renewables are “carbon neutral”.
- **Industrialisation of Rural & Forest Land**  
Reclassification of **farmland and native forests as “industrial zones”** for renewable energy zones (REZs) represents a profound shift in land-use law. This erodes traditional environmental protections, undermines agricultural productivity, and risks irreversible ecological damage.
- **Taxpayer-Subsidised Harm**  
Billions in public funds are directed to underwrite large-scale renewable projects — often operated by **foreign-owned multinationals** — while environmental guardrails are simultaneously stripped away. This amounts to **publicly funded environmental degradation**.

## *The Broader Threat*

What makes the removal of guardrails particularly dangerous is that it is **systemic**. It removes the last legal and democratic checks on projects that permanently alter Australia’s landscapes, communities, and biodiversity. If enacted, this would establish a **two-tiered regulatory system**:

- Fossil fuel projects: subject to full environmental, carbon, and community scrutiny.
- Renewable projects: fast-tracked, subsidised, and shielded from accountability.

This is not an energy transition grounded in **truth or fairness**, but rather a legally engineered mechanism to privilege one industry at the expense of ecological integrity and democratic participation.

## **7.6 Follow-the-Money: Public Funding Architecture of Net Zero**

The financial plumbing behind “Net Zero” in Australia is extensive, multilayered and predominantly public. It blends **direct grants, concessional loans and guarantees, regulated revenue streams** recovered from consumers, and **balance-sheet exposure** via government-owned corporations. The result is a transfer of risk from private proponents to **taxpayers and households**, while political communications present these outlays as self-funding or “market led”.

### **(a) Commonwealth instruments**

#### **Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC).**

The CEFC was established with a multibillion-dollar capital base to provide **concessional debt and equity** to clean-energy projects under its statutory investment mandate. Subsequent policy added **Rewiring the Nation** — up to **\$20 billion** in concessional finance for transmission — to be channelled largely through the CEFC’s balance sheet. This places **construction, refinancing and counter-party risk** onto the public purse via a government-

owned financier (Clean Energy Finance Corporation Act 2012 (Cth); CEFC Annual Reports 2019–2023).

### **Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).**

ARENA provides **non-repayable grants** to early-stage and demonstration projects across solar, batteries, demand management and hydrogen (Australian Renewable Energy Agency Act 2011 (Cth); ARENA Corporate Plans/Annual Reports 2018–2024). In 2023 the Commonwealth announced **Hydrogen Headstart** (administered by ARENA) as a multi-billion dollar **production-credit style subsidy**, underwriting per-kilogram offtake to bridge commercial gaps.

### **Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS).**

The CIS is a national underwriting mechanism that offers **revenue floors (and in some cases caps)** to “firmed” renewable capacity. Where market prices underperform, **public payments** make up the difference; if prices overperform, a portion is clawed back. Although described as “low cost”, the **tail-risk** sits with taxpayers. (DCCEEW CIS consultation papers 2023; Commonwealth Budget Papers 2023–24, 2024–25.)

### **Rewiring the Nation (RtN).**

RtN underwrites large transmission builds identified in AEMO’s Integrated System Plan. While some finance is intended to be repaid through **regulated network charges** (borne by consumers), concessional terms and **construction-overrun risk** remain public exposures (AEMO ISP 2022/2024; CEFC and DCCEEW program material).

### **Other Commonwealth levers.**

The **National Reconstruction Fund** prioritises “clean energy and low-emissions” manufacturing with concessional finance; **ARENA and CEFC** also support **offshore wind studies, long-duration storage, and industrial decarbonisation**. Public broadcasters and departments fund **behaviour-change campaigns** framed as “climate literacy”, with spending subject to the **PGPA Act** standards of proper use and value for money.

## **(b) State instruments**

### **NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.**

Under the **Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 (NSW)**, a “Consumer Trustee” runs auctions for **Long-Term Energy Service Agreements (LTESAs)** and **firming** contracts, providing **price-insurance** to developers. Shortfalls flow to consumers via network charges; counterparties benefit from public underwrites (NSW Consumer Trustee/Scheme Information Papers, 2021–2024).

### **Victoria’s VRET and Offshore Wind.**

Victoria’s **VRET auctions** award support agreements (contract-for-difference style) to wind/solar; the State has also set statutory **offshore wind targets**, with public funds for feasibility, ports and grid connection. (Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action program papers; VRET auction results.)

### **Government-owned corporations and equity risk.**

The Commonwealth’s **Snowy Hydro (Snowy 2.0)** and state-owned generators (e.g., **CleanCo Qld**) represent **direct public equity exposure** to renewable and firming assets,

including cost overruns, schedule slippage and refinancing risk (Snowy Hydro and state GOC/TASC annual reports; ANAO performance audits where applicable).

### (c) Regulated recovery, hidden liabilities

Large portions of “Net Zero” outlays are shifted from Budgets to **energy bills** through **AER-approved regulated returns** for transmission and distribution. Consumers thus finance the capital stack for the transition — a **quasi-tax** outside Budget scrutiny. When projects are also supported by Commonwealth and State **underwrites or grants**, the **same risk is socialised twice**: once on bills, again on the Budget if returns fall short (AER determinations; AEMO ISP).

### (d) Green claims and disclosure risk

Public agencies and corporates have promoted “net zero” outcomes using **offsets** and **partial carbon accounting** that frequently **exclude construction and decommissioning** phases. Regulators have warned that such **greenwashing** may contravene **ACL s 18** (misleading or deceptive conduct) and **ASIC** disclosure obligations for listed entities and managed funds (ACCC, *Environmental and sustainability claims — guide for business*, 2023; ASIC, *Greenwashing interventions and enforcement*, 2023–2024). The **PGPA Act 2013 (Cth)** also obliges Commonwealth entities to ensure **proper use of public money** — a benchmark engaged where programs are justified on emissions claims that omit full lifecycle impacts.

### (e) Case studies illustrating public exposure

- **Snowy 2.0**: Government-owned proponent; tunnelling and supply-chain issues have produced significant **schedule slippage and cost escalation**, ultimately borne by the public shareholder (Snowy Hydro Annual Reports; ANAO material on governance/major projects).
- **Hydrogen Headstart**: Multi-year, **production-linked credits** for first-mover hydrogen facilities. Where offtake markets remain thin, the **fiscal exposure** persists (Budget Papers; ARENA program docs).
- **RtN/HumeLink/Marinus Link**: Mega-transmission builds supported by concessional finance and regulated recovery; overruns translate to **higher network tariffs** and/or **public write-downs** (AER draft/final decisions; CEFC reporting).
- **State underwriting (LTESAs/CFDs)**: Where wholesale prices undershoot strike prices, **budget or consumer-funded top-ups** are triggered (NSW Consumer Trustee, VRET contract terms).

### (f) What the money is buying

The architecture **de-risks private returns**, converts market volatility into **publicly insured revenue**, and prioritises **capacity quantity** over **system reliability and lifecycle emissions accounting**. It has also financed **communications and curriculum initiatives** that present Net Zero as settled orthodoxy rather than a contestable policy suite. Together, these settings shape the information ecosystem **and** the investment stack: a **policy-finance-narrative complex** paid for by Australians through both **tax** and **tariffs**.



## 8. Impacts & Consequences (ToR f & g)

The consequences of misinformation and ideological capture in climate and energy policy are no longer theoretical—they are visible, measurable, and accelerating. Australians today are bearing the costs across all dimensions of national life: economic stability, social cohesion, ecological integrity, physical and mental health, and the rule of law. If left uncorrected, these impacts will leave future generations with a degraded natural environment, a hollowed-out economy, and democratic institutions unfit for purpose. This section examines these harms in five domains: economic, social, environmental, health, and legal.

Information integrity is not solely an Australian challenge. The globalisation of climate and energy narratives means that international agendas, often driven by economic or geopolitical interests, heavily influence domestic policy settings. Section 8 examines how this imported framing creates distortions that override local environmental and democratic realities.

---

### 8.1 Economic Consequences

#### **Rising energy prices and deindustrialisation:**

Electricity prices have surged due to forced displacement of reliable thermal generation in favour of intermittent renewables. The Australian Energy Regulator (2023) reported a 141% increase in wholesale prices in FY22. Energy-intensive manufacturing—once a pillar of national productivity—has contracted or relocated offshore, citing unstable grid conditions and cost blowouts (AI Group, 2022; ACCI, 2023).

#### **Taxpayer subsidies flowing offshore:**

Public funds have been channelled into foreign-owned renewable companies without adequate return to domestic industry. Projects such as Snowy 2.0 have experienced cost blowouts above \$12 billion while awarding major contracts to foreign turbine suppliers (ANAO, 2024). These subsidies are rarely subject to transparent procurement processes or sovereign interest tests.

#### **Loss of sovereignty over critical industries:**

Australia's critical minerals—lithium, cobalt, rare earths—are extracted domestically but almost entirely refined overseas. Over 80% of lithium exports are processed offshore, often in jurisdictions with weak environmental standards (Geoscience Australia, 2024). This dependency undermines economic sovereignty and exposes the nation to strategic vulnerabilities.

This reliance on global narratives allows proponents to sidestep scrutiny by appealing to international consensus rather than empirical evidence. In doing so, national governments justify projects that may be environmentally destructive or socially divisive on the basis that they are aligned with “global commitments.”

---

### 8.2 Social Consequences

#### **Erosion of institutional trust:**

Public trust in government and scientific institutions has declined amid persistent policy contradictions. Polling shows that 56% of Australians believe climate-related information is

politically manipulated (IPA, 2024). Blackouts, energy rationing, and rising living costs have made official narratives about “cheaper, cleaner energy” increasingly implausible (Lowy Institute, 2023).

#### **Manipulation of democratic processes:**

Activist NGOs have influenced electoral outcomes and policymaking through undisclosed foreign funding and media campaigns. Investigations by the AEC and ASIC in 2023–24 revealed compliance failures and political activity inconsistent with the Charities Act 2013. These distortions circumvent the electoral safeguards meant to preserve democratic integrity.

#### **Youth indoctrination and psychological distress:**

Education departments have embedded ideological content in school curricula, often in partnership with activist organisations (NSW Ed Dept, 2023). Alarmist teaching materials contribute to rising eco-anxiety among youth, with clinical studies showing significant mental health impacts tied to climate fears (Clayton et al., 2022).

#### **Suppression of dissent and academic censorship:**

Scholars, journalists, and professionals who challenge the dominant climate orthodoxy have been deplatformed, investigated, or denied funding. A 2024 Senate inquiry documented instances of peer-reviewed research being withdrawn due to activist lobbying—contrary to protections for academic freedom in the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and university enterprise agreements.

When international targets are accepted without transparent accounting or environmental integrity checks, the result is a narrowing of democratic choice. Communities are told that destructive projects are “inevitable” because they are framed as non-negotiable commitments to global agreements. This strips citizens of the ability to question whether those commitments themselves are being constructed on flawed or manipulated evidence.

## **8.3 Environmental Consequences**

The expansion of renewable energy zones and associated infrastructure is causing profound and accelerating damage to Australia’s ecological systems, agricultural capacity, and rural communities. The environmental footprint of net zero policies extends far beyond emissions: it includes toxic contamination, species loss, disruption of marine and terrestrial food chains, and large-scale land alienation from farmers and traditional custodians. Cumulatively, these impacts represent an environmental debt that is unquantifiable and irreversible.

#### **Land grabs and farmer dispossession**

The scale of land acquisition for renewable energy projects is unprecedented. The proposed Western Green Energy Hub (WGEH) in Western Australia would occupy over 2.2 million hectares of semi-arid and culturally sensitive land, sparking strong resistance from traditional owners (Mirning people) and environmental groups concerned about desert ecosystem fragmentation (The Australian, 2024).

Across regional NSW, VIC and QLD, “greenfield” acquisitions have enabled private companies to acquire thousands of hectares for wind, solar, and battery installations, often bypassing community consultation requirements. In the Central-West Orana REZ alone, over 97% of landowners reportedly signed “in-principle” agreements under financial and procedural pressure (NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2024). Such deals have been described by legal experts as consistent with “green grabbing”—a term used in international literature to denote dispossession under the guise of environmental necessity (Fairhead et al., 2012).

### **Community fragmentation and rural distress**

The social costs of this transformation are visible in fractured communities, neighbourly hostility, and rising mental health concerns. In regions like Goulburn, Dubbo and Armidale, farmers have reported feeling “blindsided and betrayed” by secret negotiations and unilateral planning decisions (Daily Telegraph, 2024). Some farmers benefit from hosting turbines; others suffer land devaluation and visual, acoustic, or access impacts without compensation. Local councils have warned of a “looming disaster” as rural communities face rising rents, loss of service capacity, and the erosion of social trust (The Australian, 2024).

In response, NSW Health and the Department of Primary Industries have initiated region-specific mental health programs. These acknowledge widespread reports of stress, sleep disruption, and depression linked to prolonged negotiation fatigue, family division, and legal uncertainty (News Corp Australia, 2024).

### **Environmental damage and legal failure**

Alongside social costs, the environmental consequences are severe:

- **Toxic contamination:** PFAS-laced battery systems, cadmium-containing solar panels, and non-recyclable turbine blades have already begun leaching into soil and water systems. The NSW Joint Houses Inquiry (2025) warned of a potential “toxic legacy” comparable to the asbestos crisis, noting the lack of regulatory frameworks for end-of-life solar and battery systems.
- **Biodiversity collapse:** Forest clearing, habitat fragmentation and turbine-related mortality have affected at least 12 threatened species including the Grey Falcon, Regent Honeyeater and Northern Corroboree Frog (BirdLife Australia, 2024). Such developments breach Australia’s obligations under the EPBC Act 1999, the Ramsar Convention, and the Convention on Migratory Species.
- **Carbon offshoring and lifecycle equivalence:** Life-cycle emissions from imported renewables infrastructure—manufactured primarily in coal-intensive economies like China—are not included in Australia’s official inventories. Studies by the CSIRO (2024) and Macintosh (2023) have shown that total emissions over 30 years can equal or exceed those of fossil fuel equivalents, undermining the very rationale for transition.

## Legal and democratic breakdowns

Key legal concerns include:

- **Removal of procedural fairness:** In multiple jurisdictions, recent legislative amendments have suspended or weakened appeal rights for local residents and traditional owners. Strategic assessment exemptions have enabled expedited approvals without adequate cumulative impact assessments (NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2023).
  - **Erosion of landholder rights:** Landowners are subject to coercive negotiation practices, including gag clauses, pressure to sign early agreements, and asymmetrical bargaining power. These undermine principles of free consent and violate tenets of administrative fairness entrenched in common law.
  - **Violation of intergenerational equity:** Australia’s environmental jurisprudence, particularly in *Gray v Minister for Planning* (2006) NSWLEC 720, affirms intergenerational equity as a legal principle. The scale and permanence of the environmental harm caused by current policies may give rise to justiciable breaches under both state and federal law.
- 

## 8.4 Health Consequences

### **Mental health strain from climate alarmism:**

Exposure to extreme climate narratives has been linked to anxiety, depression, and feelings of hopelessness among adolescents. A 2021 Lancet study found that 59% of youth globally were “very worried” about climate change, with Australians among the most distressed (Marks et al., 2021).

### **Physical dangers from renewable infrastructure:**

Blade throw from wind turbines, lithium battery fires, and collapsing solar mounts pose real safety hazards. Incidents in Waubra (VIC) and Gullen Range (NSW) led to evacuations and livestock deaths (Clean Energy Regulator, 2023; FRV, 2024).

### **Chronic air and noise pollution:**

Communities near wind farms report sleep disruption and elevated stress due to low-frequency noise and shadow flicker. The NHMRC (2022) recommends further epidemiological research. Battery storage sites have recorded chemical fires and toxic emissions requiring emergency response.

---

## 8.5 Legal and Democratic Consequences

### **Removal of legal guardrails and procedural fairness:**

Amendments to planning laws in NSW and Victoria have stripped residents and community groups of appeal rights for renewable developments (NSW DPE, 2023). In some cases, projects have proceeded without environmental impact assessments—contravening administrative law principles and common law duties of procedural fairness.

### **Erosion of constitutional principles:**

Suppression of dissenting views, often through institutional policy or funding controls, infringes the implied constitutional freedom of political communication (*Lange v ABC* (1997) 189 CLR 520). Misuse of public funds for partisan climate campaigns raises constitutional questions under *Williams v Commonwealth* (2012) 248 CLR 156.

### **Intergenerational equity and environmental jurisprudence:**

The High Court has acknowledged intergenerational equity as a relevant consideration in environmental matters (*Gray v Minister for Planning* (2006) NSWLEC 720). The cumulative environmental degradation from Net Zero policies may expose the Commonwealth to future legal action on the basis of unjustifiable harm to future Australians.

---

## 9. The False Promise of “Green” — Accounting Failures and Hidden Harms

The popular narrative of “green” energy relies on a narrow framing that focuses on **operational** emissions (what comes out of the stack or tailpipe at the point of generation) while ignoring the **upstream** and **downstream** consequences of manufacture, transport, land-use change, integration, and end-of-life. When the full picture is examined, large parts of the transition rest on **accounting choices, not environmental reality**. The result is policy built on **attributional carbon counts** that understate true impacts, a **waste and contamination burden** deferred to landholders and taxpayers, and **supply chains** that too often rely on opaque labour practices. This section documents the scale of the problem and the legal risks created when governments and proponents communicate partial truths as “Net Zero”.

The most damaging layer of information manipulation lies in how carbon accounting is constructed and applied. Proponents of large-scale renewable projects rely on selective accounting, concealing the full lifecycle emissions, toxic outputs, and waste legacy of their infrastructure. Section 9 unpacks these failures to demonstrate how the so-called “green transition” has been built on misleading and incomplete evidence.

---

### 9.1 Incomplete carbon accounting

#### Attributional vs consequential LCA

Industrial wind, solar and battery projects are promoted using partial carbon accounting that counts near-zero operational emissions but omits large sources of embodied, land-use and end-of-life emissions across the full project lifecycle. Australia’s own reporting frameworks acknowledge these categories, yet project-level life-cycle assessments (LCAs) often exclude them.

#### **Key omissions include:**

- **Deforestation and land clearing for arrays, access roads and transmission.** The *State of the Environment 2021* confirms that clearing releases significant carbon

stocks and removes future sequestration capacity through both vegetation loss and soil disturbance (DCCEEW, 2022).

- **Soil carbon losses from trenching, foundations and cable corridors.** National greenhouse inventories and the SoE reports note that soil carbon is highly sensitive to disturbance and land-use change, yet these emissions are rarely attributed to renewable LCAs (DCCEEW, 2022; DCCEEW, 2025).
- **Upstream mining and processing of critical minerals and materials.** The *Critical Minerals Strategy 2023–2030* recognises that extraction and processing of lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earths are energy-intensive, while Geoscience Australia data highlights the scale of upstream expansion required (DISR, 2023; Geoscience Australia, 2023).
- **Heavy construction and logistics.** Infrastructure Australia reports that embodied carbon in infrastructure and buildings accounts for around 10% of national emissions, largely driven by concrete and steel—the same materials dominating utility-scale renewable builds (Infrastructure Australia, 2024).
- **Operation and maintenance replacements.** ARENA’s Battery Test Centre and CSIRO reporting show significant degradation and replacement cycles for batteries and other components, adding emissions that are seldom included in project claims (ARENA, 2020; CSIRO, 2023).
- **Decommissioning and end-of-life waste.** Studies warn of looming solar-panel waste and wind-blade disposal challenges, with limited domestic recycling and no nationally consistent stewardship framework (University of Sydney, 2023; Clean Energy Council, 2023).

#### **Coal comparison:**

Authoritative assessments such as the IPCC AR6 and NREL harmonisation consistently show lifecycle GHG intensities for wind and solar are far lower than coal under standard LCA boundaries (IPCC, 2022; NREL, 2021). **However, when land-use change, soil carbon disturbance, high-embodied construction, and end-of-life pathways are included, Australia’s own evidence shows that project-specific footprints can be materially higher than headline figures, eroding the claimed climate advantage.**

**Implication:** Current practice systematically understates lifecycle emissions for utility-scale renewables. If Australia is to maintain credible national accounting, all categories—land use, soil carbon, embodied emissions, upstream supply chains, replacements, and decommissioning—must be consistently included.

Most public communication and many regulatory filings present **attributional life-cycle analyses (LCA)**, which allocate average emissions to a product boundary (e.g., a wind farm or solar plant) without modelling **system-level consequences** (A to B substitution, induced demand, backup generation, replacement cycles). **Consequential LCA models what changes because the project exists**—ramping of gas/diesel peakers, curtailment, additional transmission, storage losses, and shifts in land use. For variable renewables, consequential LCA typically yields **materially higher footprints** than attributional studies because the system must be designed to **keep supply reliable** (IEA, 2022; World Bank, 2023; NREL, 2021).



## Grid integration and storage footprint

Integration requires **firming and transmission**. Long-distance lines (steel, aluminium, concrete), **synchronous condensers**, **utility-scale batteries** and, in some plans, **pumped hydro or hydrogen** all carry **embedded emissions** and **energy losses**. Utility lithium-ion storage adds ~**10–20% round-trip losses**, pumped hydro **15–30%**, hydrogen power-to-power **60–70% losses** depending on compression and fuel-cell efficiency (IEA, 2022). These losses, plus the embodied energy of plant and grid equipment, are seldom credited against “zero-emissions” marketing. If a project’s LCA counts only the wind farm or PV array and **not the required firming and wires**, the “green” claim **rests on a partial system boundary** (Hughes, 2023; AEMO, 2024).

## Land-use change and carbon stock loss

Converting **farmland** and **native vegetation** to utility-scale solar and onshore wind entails **clearing**, road construction, foundations, laydown areas and substations. This can release **soil and biomass carbon**, disrupt **long-term sequestration**, and fragment habitats (IEA, 2022; IPCC, 2021). Offshore wind avoids some terrestrial impacts but requires heavy-materials foundations, vessels, and subsea cabling with their own footprints. Land-use conversion is rarely integrated into project claims of “near-zero” electricity.

## Legal and governance implications

- **Misleading or deceptive conduct (ACL s 18)**. Presenting projects as “zero emissions” where consequential system elements (storage, transmission, backup) are omitted may mislead consumers, investors and communities (Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth), Sch 2).
- **Corporate disclosure risk**. Where listed entities understate material climate-related risks and emissions, they face **Corporations Act** and **ASIC** enforcement risk (e.g., greenwashing interventions 2023–24).
- **Regulatory decision-making**. Approvals made on partial LCAs may be vulnerable to **judicial review** for failing to consider **relevant considerations** (Kirk v Industrial Court of NSW (2010) 239 CLR 531).

**Policy test:** require **consequential, system-boundary LCAs** in all approvals (including firming and transmission), publish **assumptions and ranges**, and align with **international LCA guidance** (IEA, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

By excluding these categories, project assessments create a false impression of net benefit, effectively shifting carbon debt onto ecosystems and future generations.

---

## 9.2 End-of-life waste & decommissioning gaps

### Wind turbine blades — disposal and recycling limits

Waste and decommissioning issues represent one of the most systematically ignored aspects of renewable infrastructure. Despite known limitations in recycling technologies for turbine

blades, solar panels, and large-scale batteries, environmental assessments consistently assume future solutions will exist.

Modern utility blades are **50–100+ metres** and made from **epoxy/thermoset composites** with glass and carbon fibres. They are **not economically recyclable** at scale; thermal and chemical processes are **experimental or cost-prohibitive**. Global studies project **hundreds of thousands of tonnes** of blade waste per year by the 2030s–2040s as first-generation fleets retire (WindEurope/Cefic/EUCIA, 2020; Liu & Barlow, 2017). In many jurisdictions, blades are **landfilled, stockpiled or “co-processed”** in cement kilns—practices that move rather than eliminate environmental burdens.

## PV module waste projections

Solar modules have 25–30-year design lives (often less in harsh conditions). IRENA estimates **1.7–8 million tonnes** of global PV waste by **2030**, rising to **60–78 million tonnes** by **2050**. Current “recycling” commonly recovers **glass and aluminium; encapsulant, backsheets, silver, and dopants** are rarely recovered at scale. **Cadmium telluride** and **lead solder** raise hazardous-waste questions; backsheets frequently use **fluoropolymers** (see PFAS below) (IRENA, 2016; CSIRO, 2023).

## Decommissioning liabilities and bonds

Coal and major mining projects must post **rehabilitation security deposits** and meet **closure criteria** verified by regulators. Most wind/PV projects lack **equivalent statutory bonds** and leave **decommissioning plans** to consent conditions that are often **vague or unenforceable**. The absence of bonds externalises risk to **landholders** and **taxpayers** if operators become insolvent (NSW Resources Regulator, 2024a–b; Clean Energy Council, 2023).

## Legal implications

- **Waste and pollution laws** (e.g., **POEO Act 1997 (NSW)**; **Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic)**) may be engaged by stockpiles, leachate and unsafe disposal.
- **Contingent liabilities** to state budgets if remediation is unfunded; PGPA Act principles for proper use of public resources where subsidies are granted without bonding externalities.
- **Consumer law/greenwashing** where end-of-life is marketed as “circular” without real facilities or finance.

**Policy test:** mandate **decommissioning bonds, extended producer responsibility (EPR)** for large-scale wind/PV/BESS, **approved recycling pathways**, and **closure reporting** comparable to mining.

Without legally enforceable decommissioning requirements, these sites risk becoming stranded toxic assets. This creates not only environmental hazards but also intergenerational injustice, where communities inherit both the cost and danger of industrial waste that was never transparently disclosed.

## 9.3 PFAS contamination

### Where PFAS appear in the “green” stack

Beyond carbon, renewable infrastructure introduces long-term chemical contamination into soils, waterways, and marine systems. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are embedded in turbine blades, battery separators, and coatings, and these compounds leach into the environment during use, wear, and disposal.

- **Lithium-ion batteries (BESS):** Electrolytes and salts in common chemistries may include **bis(fluorosulfonyl)imide (FSI) salts** and related fluorinated compounds increasingly classified as **PFAS** in regulatory proposals. Thermal events and ageing can mobilise these species; **fire suppression** (AFFF legacy) compounds impacts.
- **PV modules:** Many backsheets and front-sheet coatings use **fluoropolymers** for UV and weather resistance; mechanical damage and ageing can shed PFAS-containing particulates at end-of-life.
- **Wind turbine coatings and cabling:** **Erosion-resistant coatings** and **insulation** can contain PFAS-class polymers; weathering and abrasion release microparticles.

### Regulatory context and import risk

Australia’s EPS jurisdictions have moved to **phase out** PFAS-containing firefighting foams; the **Heads of EPAs’ PFAS NEMP** sets guidance values. The **EU** is advancing a **universal PFAS restriction** proposal under REACH; several PFAS (e.g., PFOA, PFOS) are already restricted under the **Stockholm Convention**. However, major component suppliers in **China and India** do **not consistently disclose** PFAS use, creating **imported-chemicals risk** under the **Industrial Chemicals Act 2019 (Cth)** (AICIS) and challenging traceability at approvals.

While Australia has moved to ban certain PFAS compounds, global supply chains from China and India lack transparency, and it is unlikely that all inputs can be tracked or enforced without mandatory chemical registers and spot-checking. This means toxic contamination is still effectively imported into Australian projects

### Environmental and legal risks

PFAS are **persistent, bioaccumulative** and **mobile**. Releases to soil and water can trigger **contaminated land** regimes, tight **EPL limits**, and **common-law liability** (negligence, nuisance, trespass) where harm is foreseeable. Failing to disclose PFAS sources in environmental impact statements or community material risks **ACL** action for **misleading environmental claims**. Where government grants fund PFAS-bearing infrastructure without controls, **PGPA Act** duties (proper use) are enlivened.

**Policy test:** require **PFAS inventories, materials disclosure** from OEMs, **containment plans** (construction, operations, fires), and **PFAS-safe recycling or destruction pathways as conditions of consent**.

Compounding this, turbine blade erosion releases up to 25 kilograms of microplastics per blade each year into surrounding land and marine ecosystems. These particles persist indefinitely, infiltrating food webs and contributing to cumulative toxicity. Such

contamination cannot be reversed and yet is systematically excluded from project impact assessments.

---

## 9.4 Microplastic & composite fibre shedding from blades

### Mechanism and scale

Wind-turbine **leading-edge erosion** from rain, salt and particulates liberates **microscale plastic and glass/carbon fibres**. Field and lab studies report **progressive annual shedding** that **accumulates** in soils, waterways and coastal zones across the life of a turbine; offshore arrays release directly into marine environments (EPRI, 2021; Guelfo et al., 2024). Larger, faster-tip-speed turbines increase erosion rates.

### Environmental and health concerns

These particles persist, **adsorb other pollutants**, and may be ingested by **livestock**, wildlife and marine species, raising **bioaccumulation** and **food-system** risks for adjacent agriculture and fisheries. As with tyre and textile microfibre, there is **no natural attenuation** at meaningful timescales.

### Legal implications and controls

- **Unlicensed discharge** of pollutants can breach state environment protection statutes (e.g., **POEO Act 1997 (NSW)**; **Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic)**).
- Agricultural impacts engage **nuisance** and **trespass** principles where fibres cross property boundaries.
- **Planning conditions** should mandate **erosion-resistant designs**, **leading-edge protection replacement schedules**, **setbacks** from sensitive receptors, and **environmental monitoring with public reporting**.

**Policy test:** establish **microplastic emission factors** for blades; require **best-available erosion-protection**, **capture/maintenance plans**, and trigger-based **retrofits**.

---

## 9.5 Supply chain ethics & modern slavery

### Where the risks sit

- **Polysilicon for PV:** Concentrated production in **Xinjiang** has been linked by multiple investigations to **state-sponsored forced labour**.
- **Cobalt for batteries:** **DRC artisanal mining** features child labour and unsafe conditions.
- **Nickel, rare earths:** Indonesian and Chinese refining has significant **tailings** and **occupational** risks; **Myanmar** rare-earth extraction associated with severe environmental harm.

## Australian legal obligations

Entities above thresholds must publish **Modern Slavery Statements** and conduct **risk-based due diligence** (Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth)). False assurances of “ethical sourcing” can constitute **misleading conduct** (ACL). Procurement by governments and GBEs must meet **PGPA Act** standards of **ethical, efficient** spending; knowingly procuring from high-risk suppliers without mitigation is questionable under those duties.

## Practical exposure

Because Australia **does not require** full **Scope 3** or **chemical** disclosure for imported components, proponents cannot credibly guarantee “slavery-free” or “PFAS-free” systems without **independent, site-level audits** and **chain-of-custody** documentation. Investors are increasingly treating these as **material ESG risks**.

**Policy test:** require **independent supply-chain audits**, **chain-of-custody** certifications for polysilicon, cobalt, nickel and rare earths, and impose **contractual warranties/termination rights** for breaches. Tie approvals to **ethical-sourcing plans** with **annual reporting**.

Taken together, these failures reveal that the “green transition” is underpinned by selective accounting and systemic omissions. Instead of delivering genuine emissions reductions, projects conceal displaced carbon, defer waste liabilities, and introduce new chemical threats. This is not a transition to sustainability, but a reshuffling of ecological costs away from accountability and into hidden, unmonitored domains.

---

## 10. Recommendations

The evidence presented throughout this submission demonstrates that Australia’s regulatory, legal, and political systems are failing to keep pace with the scale of disinformation, astroturfing, and hidden costs embedded in the energy transition. The consequences are twofold: (1) the public is being misled about the true social, environmental, and financial impacts of both fossil fuels and renewable projects, and (2) the integrity of democratic institutions is being undermined by opaque lobbying, greenwashing, and selective suppression of information.

To restore integrity and public trust, Parliament must legislate and regulate in a way that applies **consistent, enforceable guardrails across all industries**. This requires rejecting carve-outs for renewables, mandating full life-cycle accountability, and strengthening transparency in political and corporate conduct.

The evidence presented throughout this submission has revealed systemic failures in transparency, accountability, and integrity across the climate and energy landscape. From incomplete carbon accounting and greenwashing, to the erosion of environmental guardrails and manipulation of public discourse, the pattern is unmistakable: economic and ideological agendas are being advanced at the expense of scientific rigour, democratic accountability, and community trust.

Recommendations are therefore not merely technical adjustments; they are essential safeguards to restore public confidence in climate and energy policy. They must ensure that all industries—whether fossil fuel, renewable energy, or emerging technologies—are held to the same standards of disclosure, accountability, and environmental stewardship. No sector should be permitted to bypass obligations that were designed to protect Australia’s people, ecosystems, and democratic institutions.

What follows are targeted reforms across four domains—**legislative frameworks, regulatory safeguards, platform accountability, and protection of freedom of speech**—which, if implemented, would directly address the structural weaknesses identified in this inquiry. These reforms would bring climate and energy policy back in line with the rule of law, ensure environmental protections apply universally, and safeguard against both corporate capture and government overreach.

Section **10.1** begins with legislative reforms, outlining the urgent need to modernise Australia’s legal framework by embedding consequential life-cycle accounting, reinstating environmental triggers, and mandating transparency in political financing and lobbying practices.

Beyond the environmental and economic costs, the most profound consequence of information distortion in climate and energy policy is the erosion of public trust. When communities sense that information is being filtered, censored, or selectively presented, faith in democratic processes collapses. Section 10 examines how this erosion of integrity impacts governance, accountability, and citizen rights.

---

## 10.1 Legislative Reforms

- **Mandatory consequential life-cycle and cumulative impact assessments.**  
Amend the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)* (EPBC Act) and state equivalents to require **consequential life-cycle assessments (LCA)** and **cumulative impact mapping** for all energy projects. This ensures land-use change, imported chemicals, end-of-life waste, and transmission corridors are fully accounted for.
- **No exemptions for renewables.**  
Prohibit “fast-tracked” or “streamlined” approvals for renewable projects. Like coal and gas, renewables generate externalities — waste, PFAS, biodiversity loss — and must be assessed under **the same statutory environmental triggers**. Exemptions would likely be subject to **judicial review challenges** and may contravene Australia’s obligations under the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and *Paris Agreement*.
- **Reinstate and strengthen environmental triggers.**  
Reinforce biodiversity, water, and cultural heritage protections that apply equally to fossil and renewable projects. Weakening these triggers risks breaching both domestic constitutional principles of **equality before the law** and international treaties.
- **Real-time political donation disclosure.**  
Amend the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth)* to require continuous disclosure of donations over \$1,000. Current delays in reporting undermine democratic integrity, allowing both fossil and renewable industries to conceal financial influence until after critical decisions.



- **Lobbying transparency and enforcement.**  
Strengthen the *Lobbying Code of Conduct* by legislating an enforceable register of lobbyists and consultants, with criminal penalties for concealment or breaches. Canada's *Lobbying Act 2008* provides a workable precedent.
- 

## 10.2 Regulatory Safeguards

- **PFAS disclosure and phase-out plan.**  
Require renewable energy developers to disclose PFAS use (e.g., in backsheets and coatings) and implement a national phase-out strategy, consistent with obligations under the *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants*.
- **Mandatory blade erosion monitoring and mitigation.**  
Wind farm licences should mandate monitoring for microplastic and composite fibre shedding from turbine blades, with enforceable conditions for replacement or containment. Failure to enforce such obligations risks violating the *Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic)* and state equivalents.
- **End-of-life waste plans as licence conditions.**  
Require decommissioning and recycling plans as a precondition of project approval, backed by **financial assurance bonds** to prevent stranded toxic waste. This follows the precedent of mining rehabilitation bonds under the *Mining Act 1978 (WA)*.

This is not a theoretical concern. Once trust is lost, it cannot be easily rebuilt. Communities disengage from consultation processes, believing outcomes are predetermined. The resulting democratic deficit weakens oversight, concentrates power in unaccountable institutions, and marginalises the very citizens most affected by these policies.

---

## 10.3 Platform Accountability

- **Ad transparency rules.**  
Extend the *Australian Consumer Law* (Schedule 2, *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*) to require disclosure of funding sources behind political or energy-related advertising, closing loopholes that enable astroturfing.
- **Bot detection and removal.**  
Mandate that social media platforms operating in Australia implement bot-detection systems for political and energy debates, overseen by the *Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)*.
- **AI transparency and removal of ideological censorship.**  
Require transparency in AI content moderation systems, with independent audits to prevent covert ideological bias or political suppression. This ensures compliance with the *implied freedom of political communication* under the Australian Constitution (*Lange v ABC* (1997) 189 CLR 520).

## 10.4 Protecting Freedom of Speech

- **Prohibit scope creep of “online safety” laws.**  
Amend the *Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)* to explicitly exclude political speech from regulatory overreach. Current scope allows for disproportionate suppression of dissent, risking constitutional invalidity under the implied freedom of political communication.
- **Parliamentary oversight of AI content moderation guardrails.**  
Establish a bipartisan parliamentary committee to oversee AI-based censorship and guardrail systems, ensuring they do not disproportionately silence dissenting voices or interfere with legitimate political discourse.

**In summary:** These recommendations recognise that **public integrity demands uniform legal obligations**. No industry — fossil, renewable, or digital — should be shielded from transparency, accountability, or environmental stewardship. Carve-outs and exemptions not only undermine public trust, but also expose the Commonwealth and states to **legal challenge**, both domestically and internationally.

The integrity of democratic governance depends on the full and honest presentation of evidence. If information continues to be manipulated or obscured, democratic institutions will increasingly serve the interests of global financial and political actors rather than the citizens they represent. This is a direct threat not just to environmental integrity, but to the very foundations of democracy.

---

## 11. Conclusion

This submission has demonstrated that the erosion of information integrity in climate and energy policy is not the product of isolated misconduct, but the result of a systemic failure spanning corporate, governmental, and institutional actors. Fossil fuel companies pioneered organised disinformation campaigns to delay climate action (Oreskes & Conway, 2010; Durkee, 2017). Governments, rather than countering this trend, have increasingly adopted similar tactics: suppressing inconvenient reports, engaging in greenwashing, manipulating consultation processes, and embedding ideological narratives into education systems (NSW Farmers Federation, 2024; Victorian DET, 2021; Greenpeace, 2009).

This is not merely a political issue, but a profound challenge to democratic legitimacy. When information is deliberately distorted—whether through astroturfing, selective use of data, or classroom indoctrination—the public is deprived of the informed consent that underpins representative democracy. As the High Court has affirmed, political communication is central to constitutional governance (*Lange v ABC*, 1997; *Comcare v Banerji*, 2019). Yet that freedom is rendered hollow if governments themselves become principal agents of misinformation.

The weakening of environmental guardrails is particularly alarming. Legislative reforms that strip away assessment triggers for renewable projects, while imposing stricter obligations on fossil fuel projects, reveal a double standard that undermines both environmental protection and the rule of law (Submission to NSW Joint Houses Inquiry, 2025; Hughes, 2023). This

selective deregulation does not serve the environment, nor the public interest—it serves political expediency.

Equally, the financial dimensions of the “net zero” transition expose deep contradictions. While governments channel billions in taxpayer subsidies toward favoured industries, they fail to account for the full carbon, waste, and toxic impacts of so-called “green” technologies—ranging from PFAS contamination to microplastic shedding and unmanageable end-of-life waste streams (CSIRO, 2024; Brulle & Dunlap, 2020). Such incomplete accounting is itself a form of public deception, presenting half-truths as comprehensive solutions.

Perhaps most disturbingly, the state’s role in shaping school curricula embeds contested ideologies into the consciousness of children from their earliest years, manufacturing consensus among future voters before genuine debate can occur (VCAA, 2023; Victorian DET, 2021). When combined with proposals to lower the voting age, this raises legitimate concerns that education is being instrumentalised for electoral advantage rather than critical inquiry.

Taken together, the evidence reveals a pattern: **a government and corporate nexus that manufactures legitimacy through misinformation, obscures accountability through astroturfing, and reshapes democratic processes through ideological capture.** This is not accidental but structural. It is how power reproduces itself in an era where public trust is in decline.

For these reasons, the Committee must not only scrutinise corporate disinformation but also confront the government’s complicity in spreading and institutionalising it. To restore trust, Australia requires rigorous legislative safeguards, genuine transparency in policymaking, cumulative environmental assessments that apply equally to all industries, and a reaffirmation of the constitutional principles of free, informed political communication.

If left unaddressed, the ideological manipulation of information will not merely distort climate and energy policy—it will corrode democratic governance itself.

In light of the evidence presented, this Committee must act with urgency. Transparent disclosure, rigorous truth standards, and the restoration of both environmental and democratic safeguards are not optional—they are essential. The stakes are environmental, democratic, and social: without decisive reform, Australia risks not only ecological degradation but also the corrosion of public trust that sustains our democracy.

This submission has demonstrated that the dominant “Net Zero” narrative is built not upon transparent science, but on omissions, selective accounting, and a deliberate narrowing of public debate. The systematic downplaying of ecological harm, coupled with the amplification of astroturfed campaigns, has concealed the true costs of industrial-scale renewables and associated infrastructure (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). Far from providing a pathway to sustainability, these practices create new environmental liabilities while simultaneously dismantling the trust and democratic integrity upon which effective climate governance depends (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

The evidence presented makes clear that Australia’s response to climate and energy policy is being shaped less by rigorous science than by political expediency and vested financial

interests. As Brulle (2014) highlights in his study of climate misinformation campaigns, the institutionalisation of selective narratives corrodes both public trust and scientific integrity. When misinformation is allowed to dictate public policy, citizens lose faith in institutions, environmental protections are eroded, and the democratic process itself is compromised (Brulle and Dunlap, 2020).

Urgent reform is required. This includes restoring scientific rigour to carbon accounting, establishing independent and transparent review mechanisms, and enforcing full disclosure of environmental impacts across the project lifecycle — from land clearing and water use to waste and decommissioning. Equally, safeguards must be put in place to protect the right of citizens to access uncensored information and to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes (McCright and Dunlap, 2011).

Australia stands at a crossroads. We can continue to pursue a trajectory built on flawed accounting, misinformation, and ecological destruction, or we can choose transparency, accountability, and truth. Only the latter course can restore democratic integrity and ensure that environmental policy serves the people, the land, and future generations.

Finally, it must be noted that the Chair of this very Senate Inquiry, Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, has publicly demonstrated the very dynamic that this inquiry is meant to investigate. In media comments announcing the inquiry, Senator Whish-Wilson stated that “vested interests have been waging a global war of disinformation against the clean energy transition” and referred to “fake community groups” spreading “lies” about renewable energy projects. While these remarks may reflect sincere concern, their timing and framing risk prejudging the inquiry’s outcome and delegitimising dissenting community perspectives before evidence is heard. This represents a real-time example of how political figures can perpetuate narrative control under the guise of combating misinformation. It underscores the core argument of this submission: that the erosion of information integrity in climate and energy policy is not confined to external actors, but is deeply embedded within institutional structures—including those tasked with upholding transparency and democratic accountability.

The Senator’s use of derogatory language—bundling genuine, science-based contributors such as **Rainforest Reserves Australia** into the category of “fake community groups”—serves to **disenfranchise those directly impacted** by large-scale renewable projects. It deters legitimate public participation, dismisses lived experience, and undermines the integrity of the very consultation processes that are essential to democratic decision-making.

This conduct exemplifies what this inquiry must be prepared to name and confront: **astroturfing, misinformation, and disinformation—actively perpetuated through political channels, not merely by external interests.**

*This submission is made in good faith and in accordance with the rules of parliamentary inquiry. The views expressed are based on publicly available information and legal commentary. They are offered for the purpose of strengthening democratic processes and ensuring fair deliberation.*

## 12. References

### References for the Executive Summary

1. Greenpeace (2009) *Dealing in Doubt: The Climate Denial Machine*.
2. Durkee, A. (2017) “The Rise of Astroturfing in Policy Influence.”
3. CSIRO (2024) *GenCost 2023–24: Consultation Draft*.
4. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2023) *Curriculum Review: Sustainability and Wellbeing*.
5. Submission to the NSW Joint Houses Inquiry into Emissions from the Fossil Fuel Sector (2025).
6. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2025) *Coverage on Renewable Subsidy Expenditures*.
7. RenewEconomy (2025) “The Billions Behind Net Zero.”

---

### References for the Introduction

1. Brulle, R.J. (2014) ‘Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations’, *Climatic Change*, 122(4), pp. 681–694.
2. Brulle, R.J. and Dunlap, R.E. (2020) ‘Climate change and society: Sociological perspectives’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*. Oxford University Press.
3. Klein, N. (2014) *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. Simon & Schuster.
4. Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018) *How Democracies Die*. Crown Publishing.
5. Michaels, D. (2020) *The Triumph of Doubt: Dark Money and the Science of Deception*. Oxford University Press.
6. McCright, A.M. and Dunlap, R.E. (2011) ‘Cool dudes: The denial of climate change among conservative white males in the United States’, *Global Environmental Change*, 21(4), pp. 1163–1172.
7. Oreskes, N. and Conway, E.M. (2010) *Merchants of Doubt*. Bloomsbury.

---

### References for Section 2

1. Amnesty International UK (2022) *UK: Government must scrap anti-protest bill*, 1 April.
2. Anglican Mainstream (2025) ‘Thousands of Islamists surround St Patrick’s Roman Catholic Cathedral in Melbourne’, *Anglican Mainstream*, 6 August.
3. AP News (2024) ‘UK bans protests outside abortion clinics, but silent prayer remains a gray area’, *Associated Press*, 31 October.
4. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2024) ‘Court agrees to hear TikTok’s challenge to ban’, *ABC News*, 19 December.
5. Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (Cth).
6. Australian Broadcasting Corporation v Lenah Game Meats Pty Ltd (2001) 208 CLR 199.

7. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) *Housing Occupancy and Costs*. ABS Catalogue 4130.0.
8. Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth).
9. Australian Communications and Media Authority (2021) *Voluntary Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation*. ACMA, Canberra.
10. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (2019) *Digital Platforms Inquiry: Final Report*. Commonwealth of Australia.
11. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission v Medibank Private Ltd [2017] FCAFC 127.
12. Brulle, R.J. and Dunlap, R.E. (2020) 'Climate change and society: Sociological perspectives', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*. Oxford University Press.
13. Campion, V. (2025) 'Charities that should take on environment-destroying developers receiving money from developers', *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 August.
14. Christianity Today (2023) 'UK Christian convicted for silent prayer outside abortion clinic', *Christianity Today*, 21 October.
15. Comcare v Banerji (2019) 267 CLR 373.
16. Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth).
17. Communications Act 2003 (UK).
18. Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth).
19. CSIRO (2024) *GenCost 2023–24: Consultation Draft*. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
20. Department of Industry, Science and Resources (2019) *AI Ethics Principles*. Digital Transformation Agency, Australian Government.
21. Digital Transformation Agency (2019) *AI Ethics Principles*. Australian Government.
22. Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic).
23. EWTN (2023) 'UK Parliament makes it illegal to pray near abortion facilities', *Eternal Word Television Network*, 7 March.
24. EWTN (2025) 'UK Home Secretary tells police that silent prayer is not a crime', *Eternal Word Television Network*, 4 August.
25. Foster, J. (2021) 'Freedom of speech, hate speech and democratic resilience: navigating contested boundaries', *Public Law Review*, 32(4), pp. 255–272.
26. Grainger plc v Nicholson [2010] IRLR 4 (EAT).
27. Henderson, G. (2025) 'ABC's lack of political diversity is a growing liability', *The Australian*, 3 May.
28. Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 (UK).
29. Hughes, L. (2023) 'Policy blind spots in renewable energy emissions accounting', *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, 30(2), pp. 165–178.
30. Institute of Public Affairs (2021) *Submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Influence of Ideology on Science*. IPA, Melbourne.
31. Kirk v Industrial Court of New South Wales (2010) 239 CLR 531.
32. Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520.
33. Law Council of Australia (2023) *Submission on the Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023*.
34. Mauri, T., Pandolfi, M., & Perra, N. (2023). *Algorithmic bias and the spread of online misinformation: Evidence from climate change debates*. *Social Sciences*, 14(5), 304.
35. Minister for Immigration and Citizenship v SZMDS (2010) 240 CLR 611.
36. Muckle LLP (2023) 'Freedom of speech duties for universities – what you need to know', 18 September.
37. Northern Territory v Mengel (1995) 185 CLR 307.



38. Okoronkwo, C.E. (2024). *Algorithmic bias in media content distribution and its influence on media consumption: Implications for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)*. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review*, 7(5).
39. Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).
40. Oxfam International (2019) *The Climate Crisis and Education: How Climate Change is Disrupting Education Worldwide*. Oxford: Oxfam.
41. Plaintiff S157/2002 v Commonwealth (2003) 211 CLR 476.
42. Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (UK).
43. Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth).
44. Public Order Act 1986 (UK).
45. Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth).
46. Ridd v James Cook University [2021] HCA 32.
47. Scheller, M. (2023) *The Twitter Files: The Public–Private Censorship Complex*. Foundation for Freedom, Washington DC.
48. Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth).
49. Sunstein, C.R. (2018) *#Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media*. Princeton: Princeton University
50. The Australian (2025) ‘For ABC viewers, reality must come as quite a shock’, *The Australian*, 10 May.
51. United Nations (2015) *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: United Nations.
52. United Nations (2021) *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. UNESCO.
53. United Nations (2023) *Guidelines on Regulating Digital Platforms*. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
54. Universities Australia (2025) ‘How universities are funded’.
55. UNESCO (2017) *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*. Paris: UNESCO.
56. UNESCO (2019) *Framework for Climate Change Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO.
57. UNESCO (2021) *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
58. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2023) *Sustainability as a Cross-Curriculum Priority: Victorian Curriculum F–10*. Melbourne: VCAA.
59. Victorian Department of Education and Training (2021) *Gender Identity Guidance for Schools*. Melbourne: State of Victoria.
60. Victorian Department of Education and Training (2022) *Education and Training Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–2026*. Melbourne: State of Victoria.
61. Vosoughi, S., Roy, D. and Aral, S. (2018) ‘The spread of true and false news online’, *Science*, 359(6380), pp. 1146–1151.
62. Wachter, S., Mittelstadt, B. and Floridi, L. (2017) ‘Why a right to explanation of automated decision-making does not exist in the General Data Protection Regulation’, *International Data Privacy Law*, 7(2), pp. 76–99.
63. Walker, E.T. (2014) *Grassroots for Hire: Public Affairs Consultants in American Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
64. Wardle, C. and Derakhshan, H. (2017) *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policymaking*. Council of Europe Report DGI(2017)09.
65. *Wednesbury Corporation v Minister of Housing and Local Government* [1948] 1 KB 223.

66. West, S.M. (2021). *Redesigning the algorithms that shape our lives: The case for values-driven recommender systems*. Technology in Society, 65, 101567.
67. World Economic Forum (2020) *Schools of the Future: Defining New Models of Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. Geneva: WEF.

---

## References for Section 3

1. Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983 (Cth).
2. Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth).
3. Australian Senate (2016) *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice*, 14th ed. Canberra: Department of the Senate.
4. Australian Senate (2024) *Standing Orders of the Senate*. Parliament of Australia.
5. Brulle, R.J. (2014) 'Institutionalizing delay: Foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations', *Climatic Change*, 122(4), pp. 681–694.
6. Brulle, R.J. and Dunlap, R.E. (2020) 'Climate change and society: Sociological perspectives', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*. Oxford University Press.
7. Cater, N. (2024) 'Australia's most powerful interest group gearing up to fight nuclear power at the next election', *The Australian*, 14 May.
8. Climate Change: Key Ideas in Geography (2020) 2nd ed. London: Routledge. [by Hulme, M.]
9. Commonwealth of Australia (2002) *Senate Hansard*, 20 March, pp. 1331–1335 (Heffernan censure).
10. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) (2024) *GenCost 2023–24: Consultation Draft*. Canberra: CSIRO.
11. Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth).
12. Couldry, N. and Mejias, U. (2019) *The Costs of Connection: How Data is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford University Press.
13. Díaz, S., Settele, J., Brondizio, E.S., et al. (2019) *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
14. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth).
15. Flew, T. and Iosifidis, P. (2020) *Populism, Media and Education: Challenging Disinformation, Conspiracy Theories and Fake News*. Routledge.
16. Guelfo, J.L., Wish, A., Jaffe, P.R., et al. (2024) 'Lithium-ion battery components are at the nexus of sustainable energy and environmental release of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances', *Nature Communications*, 15, 2503.
17. Guelfo, J.L., et al. (2024) 'PFAS in Groundwater: Emerging Health Risks and Ecological Impacts', *Environmental Science & Technology*, 58(3).
18. Hobbs, M. and McKechnie, S. (2022) 'Media concentration and the politics of climate coverage in Australia', *Media International Australia*, 184(1), pp. 57–72.
19. Hulme, M. (2020) 'Climate change: Varieties of scientific critique', *The Anthropocene Review*, 7(3), pp. 224–242.
20. Institute of Public Affairs (2021) *Submission to the Senate Inquiry on the Influence of Ideology on Science*. Melbourne: IPA.
21. Kioa v West (1985) 159 CLR 550.
22. Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520.

23. Loughland, T., Reid, A., Walker, K. and Petocz, P. (2013) 'Young people's conceptions of sustainability in Australia', *Environmental Education Research*, 19(2), pp. 258–276.
24. Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth).
25. Renew Economy (2025) 'Senate launches inquiry into who is funding fake astroturf anti-renewables groups', *Renew Economy*, 31 July.
26. Ridd v James Cook University [2021] HCA 32.
27. Submission to the NSW Joint Houses Inquiry into Emissions from the Fossil Fuel Sector (2023). Independent submission, NSW Parliament.
28. Universities Australia (2025) *How universities are funded*. Universities Australia.
29. Walker, E.T. (2014) *Grassroots for Hire: Public Affairs Consultants in American Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
30. Williamson, A. (2025) 'Greens launch inquiry into anti-renewables misinformation campaigns', *Renew Economy*, 31 July.

---

## References for Section 4

1. ABC News (2023) *Sun Cable goes into voluntary administration after billionaire backers clash*. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-11/sun-cable-voluntary-administration-andrew-forrest-mike-cannon-brookes/101844796>
2. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2025) 'Political Ad Spending Surges on Meta', *ABC News*, 11 May.
3. ARENA (2021) *Funding Announcement: Sun Cable and large-scale solar export opportunities*. Australian Renewable Energy Agency.
4. Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth).
5. Australian Conservation Foundation (2025) *Big Polluters' Political Donations Report 2024*.
6. Australian Electoral Commission (2025) *Funding and Disclosure Guide for Political Parties: 2024–25 Financial Year*.
7. Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (2024) 'Membership and Advocacy Overview'.
8. CEFC (2021) *Port Augusta Renewable Energy Park financing*. Clean Energy Finance Corporation.
9. CEFC (2023) *Support for Squadron Energy investments in renewable generation*. Clean Energy Finance Corporation.
10. Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth).
11. Daily Telegraph (2024) 'Environmental Defenders Office Under Fire Over Secret Donor Loan', *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 May.
12. Devex (2018) 'Australia's Foreign Aid Channels and DFAT's Partnership Role', *Devex Report*, October.
13. Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) (2022) *Landmark case challenges Santos' net zero claims*. [Press release]. Sydney: EDO.
14. Four Corners (2006) *Greenhouse Mafia* [Television program]. ABC. (*The original exposé that revealed AIGN's internal designation and lobbying influence.*)
15. Grattan Institute (2023) *Future Made in Australia: Risks and policy gaps in industrial policy*. Melbourne: Grattan Institute.

16. Herbert Smith Freehills (2020) 'ARENA and CEFC Funding Mechanisms Explained', *Client Briefing Paper*.
17. InfluenceMap (2023) *Australian Lobbying on Climate Policy: 2023 Review*.
18. Institute of Public Affairs (2024) 'Wind Farm Subsidies and Foreign Ownership', *IPA Research Paper*, March.
19. Johns, G. (2019) *Charities: The Sleeping Giants of Australian Politics*. Connor Court Publishing.
20. Market Forces (2023) *Fossil Fuel Donations Tracker: 2015–2023*, Market Forces Australia.
21. Miller, J. (2018) 'The Use of Public Banks to Finance Renewable Energy in Australia', *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, 25(4), pp. 310–324.
22. News.com.au (2024) 'Foreign Donations to Climate Litigants Raise Eyebrows', *News.com.au*, 21 April.
23. Oreskes, N. and Conway, E.M. (2010) *Merchants of Doubt*. London: Bloomsbury.
24. Ridd v James Cook University [2021] HCA 32.
25. The Australian (2024) 'Future Made in Australia Bill Funds Overseas Solar Plants', *The Australian*, 18 February.
26. The Australian (2025) 'Smart Energy Council's Political Donations Spark ACNC Complaint', *The Australian*, 5 March.
27. The Guardian (2025) 'Dark Money and Lobbying: Fossil Fuel Influence Remains Hidden', *The Guardian Australia*, 3 May.
28. The Nightly (2025) 'Climate 200 Outspends Government on Social Media Ads', *The Nightly*, 17 April.
29. Transnational Institute (2019) *Global Corporate Power and the WEF-UN Partnership*. TNI, Amsterdam.
30. UN and World Economic Forum (2019) *Strategic Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations Archives.
31. UNFCCC (2020) *Race to Zero Campaign*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
32. UTS News (2025) 'Meta Political Ad Trends: 2025 Federal Campaign Overview', *University of Technology Sydney Media Watch Report*, June.
33. Wikipedia (2024) *Australian Energy Producers* [Online encyclopedia entry]. (*Describes the association's lobbying activities and privileged access to government.*)
34. Wikipedia (2025) *Fossil fuel lobby* [Online encyclopedia entry]. (*Provides context on the role and influence of Australian Energy Producers in climatelobbying.*)
35. World Economic Forum (2021) *Measuring Stakeholder Capitalism: Towards common metrics and consistent reporting of sustainable value creation*. Geneva: WEF.
36. World Economic Forum (2021) *Race to Zero: Mobilising Climate Leadership for 2030*. WEF Publications.

---

## References for Section 5

1. ABC News (2025) 'Gas industry astroturf group under ACCC complaint for misleading advertising', *ABC News*, 20 July.

2. American Petroleum Institute (2009) *Energy Citizens Campaign Overview*. Internal documents released by Greenpeace USA.
3. Aspect Legal (2025) 'False or misleading advertising and the law', *Aspect Legal Insights*, April.
4. Bonner & Associates (2009) *Forged Letters to Congress – Investigation Report*. House Committee on Energy & Commerce, Washington D.C.
5. Comcare v Banerji (2019) 267 CLR 373.
6. Durkee, M. (2017) 'Astroturf Activism', *Stanford Law Review*, 69(1), pp. 1–68.
7. Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic).
8. Greenpeace (2009) 'API Memo Reveals Oil Industry's Astroturfing Strategy', *Greenpeace USA Archives*.
9. House Committee on Energy & Commerce (2009) *Investigation into Bonner & Associates Forgery Scandal*. U.S. Congress, Washington D.C.
10. Hughes, L. and Meckling, J. (2018) 'The politics of renewable energy trade: The US-China solar dispute', *Energy Policy*, 123, pp. 251–258.
11. Jasanoff, S. (2004) *States of Knowledge: The Co-production of Science and Social Order*. London: Routledge.
12. Kliiver, R. and Mahoney, C. (2019) 'Fracking Framing in U.S. State Debates', *Journal of Communication Studies*, 62(3), pp. 201–219.
13. Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520.
14. Melbourne Law School Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies (2025) *Submission on Truth in Political Advertising Laws*. University of Melbourne.
15. Minerals Council of Australia (2014) *Australians for Coal Campaign Archive*, Canberra.
16. NSW Farmers Federation (2024) 'Community consultation failures in REZ rollout', *Submission to NSW Legislative Council*, 15 March.
17. Oreskes, N. and Conway, E.M. (2010) *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. Bloomsbury Press.
18. RenewEconomy (2025) 'Tamboran-backed campaign under scrutiny for misleading public', *RenewEconomy*, 22 July.
19. Victoria Department of Education and Training (2022) *Education and Training Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–2026*. Melbourne: State of Victoria.
20. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2023) *Sustainability as a Cross-Curriculum Priority: Victorian Curriculum F–10*. Melbourne: VCAA.
21. Victorian Department of Education and Training (2021) *Gender Identity Guidance for Schools*. Melbourne: State of Victoria.
22. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2020) *Guidelines on the application of the Equal Opportunity Act to schools*. Melbourne: VEOHRC.
23. Wardle, C. and Derakhshan, H. (2017) *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policymaking*. Council of Europe Report DGI(2017)09.
24. Wodak, R. (2021) *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourse*. 2nd edn. Sage Publishing.

---

## References for Section 6

1. Australian Parliament (2021) *Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)*.



2. Australian Strategic Policy Institute (2023) *Weaponised Information and Climate Geopolitics*. Canberra: ASPI.
3. Bakshy, E., Messing, S. and Adamic, L.A. (2015) 'Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook', *Science*, 348(6239), pp. 1130–1132.
4. Carlson, J. (2023) *Digital Echo Chambers and the Polarisation of Environmental Policy*. Melbourne: Institute for Public Ethics.
5. Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth).
6. Daume, S., Albert, G. and Knapp, S. (2023) 'The role of bots in shaping climate change discourse: Evidence from Australian bushfire debates', *Environmental Communication*, 17(2), pp. 201–220.
7. Dunne, T. and Irvin, P. (2025) *The Climate Cost of Bots: Environmental Impacts of Digital Misinformation Infrastructure*. Sydney: Clean Internet Institute.
8. Gorwa, R. and Guilbeault, D. (2018) 'Unpacking the social media "black box": Political actors, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, and the public sphere', *Internet Policy Review*, 7(2), pp. 1–23.
9. Haugen, F. (2021) *Testimony before the US Senate Commerce Committee on Facebook's harm to children and democracy*, 5 October.
10. Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520.
11. McCright, A.M. and Dunlap, R.E. (2011) 'Cool dudes: The denial of climate change among conservative white males in the United States', *Global Environmental Change*, 21(4), pp. 1163–1172.
12. Michaels, D. (2020) *The Triumph of Doubt: Dark Money and the Science of Deception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
13. Parliament of South Australia (2024) *Summary Offences (Artificially Generated Content) Amendment Bill 2024 (SA)*.
14. Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G.L., Varol, O., Yang, K.C., Flammini, A. and Menczer, F. (2017) 'The spread of low-credibility content by social bots', *Nature Communications*, 9(1), p. 4787.
15. Vosoughi, S., Roy, D. and Aral, S. (2018) 'The spread of true and false news online', *Science*, 359(6380), pp. 1146–1151.
16. Weber, M., Liang, H. and Rao, A. (2022) 'Coordinated misinformation campaigns in Australia's climate crisis response', *Journal of Crisis Communication Studies*, 6(1), pp. 33–54.
17. World Economic Forum (2025) *AI and the Environment: Emerging Risks of Deepfake Greenwashing*. Geneva: WEF.

---

## References for Section 7

1. Australian National Audit Office (2020) *Award of Funding under the Community Sport Infrastructure Program*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
2. Australian National Audit Office (2021) *Administration of the Environment Restoration Fund*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
3. Australian Senate Environment and Communications References Committee (2023) *Inquiry into Greenwashing by Corporations*. Parliament of Australia, Canberra.
4. Baldino, D. and Lucas, A. (2021) 'Political finance and public trust: The case of Australian lobbying', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 67(2), pp. 241–259.
5. Bridle, R. & Perkins, R. (2023) *Industrial-scale renewables and biodiversity: risks of unregulated expansion in Australia*. *Energy Policy*, 174, 113515.



6. Brulle, R.J. (2014) 'Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations', *Climatic Change*, 122(4), pp. 681–694.
7. Commonwealth Ombudsman (2022) *Own Motion Investigation into Freedom of Information Delays*. Canberra: Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.
8. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (2022) *Nature Positive Plan: Better for the Environment, Better for Business*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
9. Environmental Defenders Office (2024) *Submission on Proposed Amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Sydney: EDO. Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth).
10. Erbe, C., Marley, S.A., Parsons, M.J.G. et al. (2022) *Impacts of offshore renewable energy on marine mammals and seabirds: cumulative effects and gaps in governance*. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 9, 842199.
11. Hughes, L. (2023) 'Policy blind spots in renewable energy emissions accounting', *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, 30(2), pp. 165–178.
12. Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) (2022) *Investigation into Lobbying and Influence in Planning Decisions*. Sydney: ICAC.
13. International Energy Agency (2021) *Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*. Paris: IEA.
14. Lindenmayer, D., Taylor, C., Blanchard, W. & McBurney, L. (2020) *Biodiversity collapse in Australia: implications of habitat clearing for threatened species*. *Biological Conservation*, 243, 108461.
15. Oreskes, N. and Conway, E.M. (2010) *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. Bloomsbury Press.
16. Productivity Commission (2020) *Resources Sector Regulation*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
17. Samuel, G. (2020) *Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999: Final Report*. Canberra: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.
18. Senate Select Committee on the Integrity of Political Donations (2020) *Final Report*. Parliament of Australia, Canberra.
19. Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications (2022) *Inquiry into Oil and Gas Exploration and Greenhouse Gas Storage*. Parliament of Australia, Canberra.
20. United Nations Environment Programme (2022) *The State of Greenwashing: Corporate Environmental Claims under Scrutiny*. Nairobi: UNEP.
21. Victorian Ombudsman (2021) *Investigation into Community Consultation Practices in Renewable Energy Projects*. Melbourne: Victorian Ombudsman.

---

## References – Section 8

1. ACCI (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry), 2023, *Submission to the Productivity Commission: Energy and Decarbonisation*, ACCI, Canberra.
2. ACF (Australian Conservation Foundation), 2023, *Nature on the Line: Impact of Renewables on Critical Habitat*, ACF, Melbourne.

3. AER (Australian Energy Regulator), 2023, *State of the Energy Market*, AER, Canberra.
4. AI Group (Australian Industry Group), 2022, *Energy Shock: Manufacturing in Crisis*, AI Group, Sydney.
5. ANAO (Australian National Audit Office), 2023, *Procurement of Clean Energy Infrastructure Projects*, Report No. 41, ANAO, Canberra.
6. ANAO (Australian National Audit Office), 2024, *Snowy Hydro 2.0: Value for Money Review*, ANAO, Canberra.
7. ANU Energy Institute, 2024, *Toxic Waste and PFAS in Renewable Systems*, ANU, Canberra.
8. Basel Convention Secretariat, 2022, *Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment: Hazardous Components and Control Measures*, UNEP, Geneva.
9. BirdLife Australia, 2024, *Avian Mortality and Wind Farms: National Review*, BirdLife Australia, Melbourne.
10. Central Land Council, 2024, *Submission to Northern Territory EPA: Nolans Bore Rare Earths Project*, CLC, Alice Springs.
11. Clayton, S., Manning, C., Krygsmann, K. and Speiser, M., 2022, *Mental Health and Climate Change: A Global Perspective*, American Psychological Association, Washington DC.
12. Clean Energy Council, 2024, *Renewable Landholder Benefits Report*, CEC, Melbourne.
13. CSIRO, 2023, *Forecasting Solar Waste in Australia: Technical Assessment*, CSIRO Publishing, Canberra.
14. CSIRO, 2024, *Full Lifecycle Emissions of Australian Renewable Energy Imports*, CSIRO, Canberra.
15. Daily Telegraph, 2024, 'Farmers no longer speaking over secret wind turbine deals', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 February.
16. DAWE (Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment), 2023, *Agricultural Land Use and Renewable Energy Coexistence*, DAWE, Canberra.
17. DCCEEW (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water), 2024, *Rewiring the Nation Environmental Impact Overview*, DCCEEW, Canberra.
18. DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), 2023, *Transmission Project Approvals: Biodiversity Impact Statements*, DELWP, Melbourne.
19. DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), 2023, *Foreign Investment Review: Critical Infrastructure*, DFAT, Canberra.
20. Fairhead, J., Leach, M. and Scoones, I., 2012, 'Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature?', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), pp.237–261.
21. Falkner, R. (2016) *The Paris Agreement and the new logic of international climate politics*. *International Affairs*, 92(5), pp. 1107–1125.
22. Fire Rescue Victoria, 2024, *Lithium Battery Fires: Incident Reports 2022–24*, FRV, Melbourne.
23. Geoscience Australia, 2024, *Australian Critical Minerals Prospectus*, GA, Canberra.
24. Guardian Australia, 2024, 'Government-backed green fund accused of investing in carbon-intensive companies', *The Guardian*, 8 May.
25. IPA (Institute of Public Affairs), 2024, *Climate Trust Index: Survey Results*, IPA, Melbourne.
26. Keohane, R.O. and Victor, D.G. (2016) 'Cooperation and discord in global climate policy', *Nature Climate Change*, 6(6), pp. 570–575.
27. Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1997) 189 CLR 520.

28. Leatch v National Parks and Wildlife Service (1993) 81 LGERA 270.
  29. Lowy Institute, 2023, *Climate Poll 2023: Australian Public Opinion on Climate Change*, Lowy Institute, Sydney.
  30. Macintosh, A., 2023, *The Myth of Net Zero: Carbon Accounting Failures in Australia*, Centre for Environmental Law, Canberra.
  31. Marks, E., Hickman, C., Pihkala, P. et al., 2021, 'Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey', *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 5(12), pp.e863–e873.
  32. National Farmers' Federation, 2024, *Land Use Impacts of Renewable Energy*, NFF, Canberra.
  33. NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council), 2022, *Wind Farm Noise and Human Health: Evidence Review*, NHMRC, Canberra.
  34. NSW DPE (NSW Department of Planning and Environment), 2023, *Renewable Energy Zone Planning Instruments*, NSW Government, Sydney.
  35. NSW Parliament, 2025, *Submission to the Joint Houses Inquiry into Emissions from the Fossil Fuel Sector: The Toxic Legacy of Net Zero Infrastructure*, NSW Parliament, Sydney.
  36. News Corp Australia, 2024, 'More mental health support for farmers in transmission line land stoush', *News.com.au*, 24 April.
  37. Senate Hansard, 2024, *Evidence on Academic Censorship and Deplatforming*, Australian Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment, Canberra.
  38. The Australian, 2024, '\$100bn Nullarbor green energy project sparks outrage', *The Australian*, 16 May.
  39. The Australian, 2024, 'Country councils warn of looming disaster in renewables rollout', *The Australian*, 11 April.
  40. Williams v Commonwealth (2012) 248 CLR 156.
  41. WWF Australia, 2024, *Carbon Offset Failures and Environmental Approvals Report*, WWF, Sydney.
- 

## References — Section 9

1. AEMO (2024) *Integrated System Plan*. Australian Energy Market Operator.
2. ANAO (2023) *Reporting on Climate-related Expenditure and Performance*. Australian National Audit Office.
3. ARENA (2020) *Testing the Performance of Lithium-ion Batteries*. Australian Renewable Energy Agency, Canberra.
4. Clean Energy Council (2023a) *Decommissioning and End-of-Life Management for Large-Scale Renewable Energy*. Clean Energy Council.
5. Clean Energy Council (2023b) *Winding Up: Decommissioning, Recycling and Waste Management of Australian Wind Turbines*. Clean Energy Council, Melbourne.
6. Clean Energy Regulator (2025) *NGER Measurement and Reporting Guideline*. Clean Energy Regulator.
7. Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) (Australian Consumer Law, Sch 2).
8. CSIRO (2023a) *Lithium-ion Battery Safety: Report for the ACCC*. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Canberra.
9. CSIRO (2023b) *Solar PV Waste and Circular Economy Opportunities*. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

10. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (2022) *Australia State of the Environment 2021 – Land Report*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
11. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (2025) *National Inventory Report 2023: The Australian Government's Submission to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
12. Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) (2023) *Critical Minerals Strategy 2023–2030*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
13. Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic).
14. EPRI (2021) *Wind Turbine Blade Leading-Edge Erosion: Emissions, Impacts and Mitigation Options*. Electric Power Research Institute.
15. Geoscience Australia (2023) *Australia's Identified Mineral Resources 2023: Critical Minerals*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
16. Guelfo, J.L. et al. (2024) 'Lithium-ion battery components are at the nexus of sustainable energy and environmental release of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances', *Nature Communications*, 15(1), 2472.
17. IEA (2022) *Renewables 2022—Lifecycle Assessment Annex; Electricity Grids and System Integration*. International Energy Agency.
18. Industrial Chemicals Act 2019 (Cth) (AICIS).
19. Infrastructure Australia (2024) *Embodied Carbon Projections for Australian Infrastructure and Buildings*. Infrastructure Australia, Canberra.
20. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2021) *AR6, WG I: The Physical Science Basis*. IPCC, Geneva.
21. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2022) *AR6 Working Group III Report: Mitigation of Climate Change*. IPCC, Geneva.
22. IRENA (2016) *End-of-Life Management: Solar Photovoltaic Panels*. International Renewable Energy Agency.
23. *Kirk v Industrial Court of New South Wales* (2010) 239 CLR 531.
24. Liu, P. and Barlow, C. (2017) 'Wind turbine blade waste in 2050', *Waste Management*, 72, pp. 103–112.
25. Luderer, G. et al. (2019) 'Environmental co-benefits and adverse side-effects of alternative power sector decarbonization strategies', *Nature Communications*, 10, 5229.
26. Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth).
27. National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) (2021a) *Life Cycle Assessment Harmonization for Power Sector Technologies*. NREL, Golden, Colorado.
28. National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) (2021b) *Life-Cycle Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Electricity Generation: Harmonization and Update*. NREL, Golden, Colorado.
29. NSW Environment Protection Authority (2023) *PFAS Guidance and NEMP Implementation Notes*. NSW EPA.
30. NSW Resources Regulator (2024a) *Security Deposit Scheme*. NSW Resources Regulator.
31. NSW Resources Regulator (2024b) *Rehabilitation Management Plans*. NSW Resources Regulator.
32. OECD (2022) *PFAS in the Electrical and Electronics Sector*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
33. Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (NSW).
34. University of Sydney (2023) *Australia Faces a Solar Waste Crisis*. University of Sydney, Sydney.

35. Walker, T.R. (2021) 'Offshore wind farms and environmental contamination: microplastic and chemical pollution risks', *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 169, 112543.
36. WindEurope, Cefic & EUCIA (2020) *Accelerating Wind Turbine Blade Circularity*.
37. Winther-Jensen, H. et al. (2023) 'End-of-life challenges for renewable energy infrastructure', *Renewable Energy*, 204, pp. 401–414.
38. World Bank (2023) *Life-Cycle Greenhouse Gas Accounting for Energy Projects*. World Bank.

---

## References for Section 10

1. Australian Consumer Law, Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) Sch 2.
2. Australian Electoral Commission (2023) *Transparency in Political Donations: Discussion Paper*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
3. Canadian Lobbying Act 2008 (Can).
4. Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth).
5. Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic).
6. Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth).
7. *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520.
8. Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018) *How Democracies Die*. Crown Publishing.
9. Lobbying Code of Conduct (Cth) (as amended 2022).
10. Mining Act 1978 (WA).
11. Norris, P. (2011) *Democratic deficit: Critical citizens revisited*. Cambridge University Press.
12. Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).
13. Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001).
14. United Nations (1992) *Convention on Biological Diversity*. UN Treaty Series.
15. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and Paris Agreement (2015).

---

## References for the Conclusion

1. Brulle, R.J. (2014) 'Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations', *Climatic Change*, 122(4), pp. 681–694.
2. Brulle, R.J. and Dunlap, R.E. (2020) *Climate change and society: Sociological perspectives*, Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science.
3. CSIRO (2024) *GenCost 2023–24: Consultation Draft*. Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.
4. *Comcare v Banerji* (2019) 267 CLR 373.
5. Greenpeace (2009) 'API Memo Reveals Oil Industry's Astrourfing Strategy'.
6. Hughes, L. (2023) 'Policy blind spots in renewable energy emissions accounting', *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, 30(2), pp. 165–178.
7. *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520.
8. Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2018) *How Democracies Die*. Crown Publishing.
9. McCright, A.M. and Dunlap, R.E. (2011) 'Cool dudes: The denial of climate change among conservative white males in the United States', *Global Environmental Change*, 21(4), pp. 1163–1172.

10. NSW Farmers Federation (2024) *Community consultation failures in REZ rollout*, Submission to NSW Legislative Council.
11. Oreskes, N. and Conway, E.M. (2010) *Merchants of Doubt*. Bloomsbury Press.
12. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2023) *Sustainability as a Cross-Curriculum Priority: Victorian Curriculum F–10*.
13. Victorian Department of Education and Training (2021) *Gender Identity Guidance for Schools*.