

[Australian Senate Select Committee inquiry on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy](#) (2025)  
Department of the Senate, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT, Australia 2600

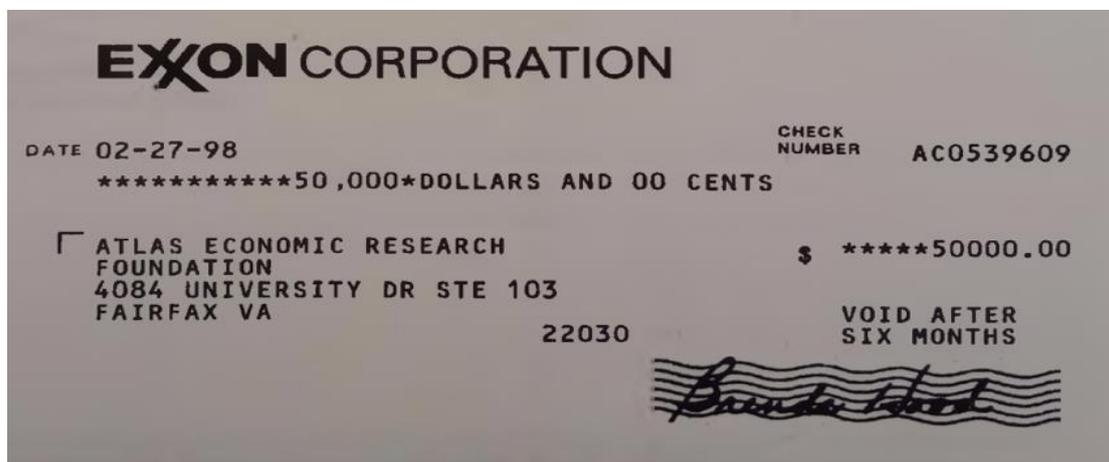
Submission by:

**Dr. Jeremy Walker**

Social & Political Sciences Program | School of Communication  
Climate Society & Environment Research Centre (C-SERC)  
Faculty of Design and Society  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

**How fossil capital built the global disinformation machinery of the Atlas Network to defeat climate policy and disable democracy.**

**A warning to Australia, and to all nations.**



Figs 1 & 2: One of thousands of payments from fossil fuel interests to the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** that built the global climate and energy disinformation architecture of the Atlas Network to its present scale of 550+ thinktanks in 100 nations.<sup>1</sup> School Strike for Climate, 2019, *Guardian*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cheque sent 5 March 1998 by Exxon public affairs manager William Hale to Alejandro Chafuen, Atlas Network president (1992-2017). Records of the Atlas Network, Box 77 – Folder 1, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, California USA.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/gallery/2019/sep/20/the-best-climate-strike-signs-from-around-the-globe-in-pictures>

Explore our expansive directory of 515 partners in 99 countries around the globe. The strengths of our dedicated partners have created some of the world's greatest improvements in freedom.



Fig 3. The US-based global **Atlas Network**, now comprising 550+ 'partner organisations' in 100 nations, and its Australia-New Zealand arm. Source: [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org), 2021 & 2019.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A global directory of the Atlas Foundation's ever-expanding Atlas Network of thinktanks was available online from its 1990s websites [AtlasUSA.org](https://atlasusa.org) until 2021, when the [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org) 'global partner directory' of 515 Atlas units went dark. Archived 2021 version of the Atlas Network directory available here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200620052651/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/partners/global-directory>.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>page no.</b>
Disclaimer	4
Summary of key findings and recommendations	5
Key research tools and documents	6
(1) Introduction	7 – 10
(2) Terms of Reference	11-14
(3) Freedom of propaganda: Atlas Network as the disinformation machinery of fossil capital	15-19
(4) Fossil-fuel MNC’s early knowledge of CO2 & global heating, with new evidence from Australia	19-23
(5) Big oil’s deception and defeat of climate policy becomes Atlas Network’s primary vocation	24- 26
(6) Overview of the organisation of the Atlas Network & climate disinformation in Australia	26-56
(a) Australian members of the Atlas Network’s ‘inner-sanctum’, the Mont Pelerin Society	24-28
(b) The Atlas Economic Research Foundation (est.1981), now trading as ‘Atlas Network’	29-34
(c) Australian member organisations of the global Atlas Network: IPA, CIS, AIP, ATA etc	34-53
(d) arms-length entities and spinoff campaign units	54-56
(e) Fossil fuel investors and corporations funding Australia’s branch of the Network.	56
(7) “Cheap clean nuclear! Windfarms kill whales! Reckless renewables!” The integrated fossil/Atlas propaganda war on clean energy in Australia, 2023-2025	56-73
(8) Recommendations	74-75

---

## **Disclaimer**

The primary evidence and data I rely upon to analyse the Australian arm of the global Atlas Network are: peer reviewed academic publications in my area of research, the voluminous publications, legacy and social media outputs created by Atlas-linked organisations in order to influence public opinion and thus shape government policy, legislation and election outcomes for the private profit of undisclosed ‘donors’; archival records, including of the Atlas Network central office which are publicly available to anyone in public libraries; the public actions and public statements of Atlas-affiliated political actors as reported in the public media; information published on the public websites of Atlas ‘thinktanks’ and aligned ‘grassroots’ community organisations supporting Atlas campaigns against climate science, climate policy and renewable energy.

Organisations and social networks are composed solely of individuals. At the outset I make clear I do not accuse the specific individuals, activists or responsible officers of the Atlas Network-linked organisations discussed in this submission of any crime against the laws of Australia, nor claim to understand or judge their personal motivations and beliefs.

In order that I may exercise the same rights and freedoms to speak publicly and attempt to influence public knowledge on matters of grave public concern, it is necessary through this method to name, quote and track the careers of a handful of key individuals whose public careers have been closely associated with opposition to climate policy, Atlas thinktanks and/or financial support from fossil fuel interests, as well as the leadership of separate but linked ‘grassroots’ organisations.

They are mentioned by way of example, in service of my aim to contribute critical information and knowledge to the Senate Select Committee of the organisation and methods by which fossil fuel interests have for four decades systematically obstructed, defeated and delayed climate policy and clean energy rollout in Australia and internationally, including through the systemic mass production and dissemination of counter-science disinformation.

These are my own research findings, analysis and interpretations, the result of my professional research as a Faculty member of an Australian public university committed to relevant public interest research and social and environmental justice. They should not be taken as the views of the University of Technology Sydney, nor of any other organisation.

## **Please note:**

In the text, confirmed member organisations of the global Atlas Network (listed on the ‘global partner directories’ published on [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org) between 2003 and 2021) are indicated in **bold** (e.g. **Institute of Public Affairs, Americans for Prosperity**).

Second-tier Atlas spinoff organisations, campaign units, astroturfed entities, conference/networking platforms, funding foundations or candidate new (post 2021) Atlas member thinktanks are in **brown** (e.g. **Advance, Australians for Prosperity**). Members of the Mont Pelerin Society are denoted by year of joining, e.g. Name (MPS 1976).

## Summary of key findings

Climate policy has not failed, it has been defeated. Key to this defeat is the organised production, by and for fossil fuel interests, of strategic counter-science and anti-climate policy disinformation, which is probably the largest component by sheer volume of the total quantity of disinformation encountered by Australian citizens on a daily basis, unwittingly or otherwise. In almost every case, the production and dissemination of anti-science, anti-climate policy, and anti-renewable energy disinformation can be traced to one or more member organisations of the little-known, yet highly professional, coherent and transnationally co-ordinated political infrastructure of the global **Atlas Network** of ‘think-tanks’, and through them to ‘fossil capital’, the wealthy individuals and multinational corporations whose power and wealth derive from our dependence on energy from combustion of geologically stored carbon (oil, gas and coal).

Despite knowing since the 1950s their industry would cause catastrophic global heating, in 1988 US oil majors inaugurated the permanent, globalised, anti-climate policy disinformation campaign. The significant investments of fossil capital in the Atlas Network of ‘free market think-tanks’ since 1988 for this purpose has expanded it from c. 80 ‘institutes’ in c.12 countries then, to its present scale of 550+ orgs in 100+ nations.

In Australia, the key Atlas Network member organisations participating in anti-climate policy obstruction on behalf of undisclosed oil, coal and gas interests are tax-deductible, tax-exempt registered ‘charities’, the **Institute of Public Affairs** and the **Centre of Independent Studies**, and since 2018, by their amply funded spinoff disinformation unit and 3<sup>rd</sup> party election campaigner **Advance**. Atlas Network generated anti-climate policy disinformation is surely the most influential factor shaping public opinion, public policy debate, and Australian elections: constraining the scope, ambition, and success of responsible public-interest government policies and legislation needed to reduce the fossil sector to zero. The history and relationships of these to a host of smaller organisations active in Australia running the current, highly integrated ‘reckless renewables’, ‘offshore wind kills whales’ and ‘we need nuclear’ strategic disinformation campaigns are detailed below.

## Summary of key recommendations

The climate crisis is inseparable from the economic, geopolitical, and informational power exercised by fossil capital. As numerous scholars and experts have said, it is our primary existential security threat. The United Nations has recognised the defeat of climate policy through disinformation as the greatest risk to the total decarbonisation of the global energy system needed to limit global heating in the interests of human survival. If Australian Governments were serious about the national security, sovereignty and prosperity of the Australian people, and in securing the truthfulness and integrity of information necessary to electoral democracy and the conduct of evidence-based, public-interest government it should:

Use existing legislation, powers and agencies to investigate, inform the public, and effectively contain, reduce, and neutralise the US based **Atlas Network**’s projection of strategic disinformation into Australia through its local institutes and infrastructure.

Enact new legislation specifically targeting ‘dark (fossil fuel) money’ influence on elections, criminalising the funding, production and distribution of anti-climate policy and anti-clean energy disinformation, prohibiting fossil interests from advertising on legacy and social media, from owning media corporations, from funding public institutions, registered charities, and from participating in elections through funding political parties and 3<sup>rd</sup> party election campaigns.

Investigate with a view to revoking the tax-deductible, tax-exempt charitable status of the **Institute of Public Affairs** and the **Centre of Independent Studies** for violating their charitable status as ‘non-profit’ ‘public interest research’ institutes by producing highly political, pseudo-research (disinformation) for the private commercial interest of (foreign domiciled) fossil capital.

Following the example of US state Attorneys-General, initiate public interest litigation against fossil fuel corporations that have systemically financed climate disinformation, to recoup damages and costs to Australian taxpayers, business and households of catastrophic wildfires, floods, heatwaves and droughts.

## Key research tools and documents

[1] Table of ‘public policy institutes’ and organisations comprising the expanding global Atlas Network, as published on [AtlasNetwork.org](https://www.atlasnetwork.org) ‘global partner directory’ between 2003 and 2021. In 2021 the ‘global partner directory’, then 515 orgs in 99 nations, was deleted from the site.

<https://www.desmog.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Atlas-Network-Directory-2021-Published.xlsx>

[2] McKie, R. (2023) Atlas Thinktank Main Employers datasheet. Name and main employer of 10,854 responsible officers (executive directors, supervisory & academic board members) of 515+ Atlas thinktanks. Published by De Montford University, UK, under European and UK privacy law.

[https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Atlas\\_Think\\_Tank\\_Main\\_Employers/22217050?file=39486961](https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Atlas_Think_Tank_Main_Employers/22217050?file=39486961)

[3] Membership directory of the Mont Pelerin Society (as of 2013). The ‘inner sanctum’ of the Atlas Network. Members are neoliberal law and economics professors, Atlas thinktank directors senior activists, and occasionally senior politicians and wealthy funders of the Atlas Network.

[https://www.desmog.com/wp-content/uploads/files/Mont%20Pelerin%20Society%202013-membership-listing\\_Redacted.pdf](https://www.desmog.com/wp-content/uploads/files/Mont%20Pelerin%20Society%202013-membership-listing_Redacted.pdf)

[4] Collection guide, Atlas Network records (1946-2014). Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, USA. <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/static/ark:/13030/c80k2f0h>

See e.g.: [Public Policy Organisations File](#) & [Funding Sources File](#).

[5] Founding documents of the **Centre of Independent Studies**: (a) 1976 letter from John Bonython (co-founder of Santos oil and gas) to Texan business partner John Murchison (Delhi International Oil, son of Santos co-founder Clint Murchison); and (b) 1981 letter from Greg Lindsay (**CIS**) letter to Anthony Fisher (**Atlas Economic Research Foundation**), incl. 1981 **CIS** Corporate Supporters list. Source: Atlas Network archives (a) Box 22, Folder 11, (b) Box 142, Folder 9. [Attachment A]

[6] Primary data sheet of funding to US-based climate obstruction organisations. Assembled by Prof. Robert Brulle from public IRS Form 990 documents, tallying nearly 50,000 payments over the period 2012-2018 amounting to **\$9.7 billion USD** flowing into 128 organisations involved in counter-science disinformation intended to obstruct or defeat climate and clean energy policy. Data supplement to: Brulle, R. et. al. (2021) Obstructing action: foundation funding and US climate change counter-movement organizations. *Climatic Change*, 166(1), 17. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-021-03117-w> [Attachment B]

[7] Shell International Petroleum ([1986]1988) Confidential: *The Greenhouse Effect*. Report Series HSE 88-001, Maatschappij B.V., The Hague. <https://www.climatefiles.com/shell/1988-shell-report-greenhouse/>

[8] Internal oil industry documents on fossil combustion CO2 emissions and global heating, 1954 to present. See: <https://www.climatefiles.com/collection-index/> and <https://climateinvestigations.org/>

[9] [Desmog.com](https://www.desmog.com) has the best collection of news articles and reference material of funding sources, biographies, publications and records of climate disinformation actors and organisations (the majority of which are Atlas Network orgs or closely linked front groups). <https://www.desmog.com/climate-disinformation-database/>

## (1) Introduction

Dear Senators, Chair and Committee,

I thank and commend the Senate for establishing this crucial inquiry on organised efforts by fossil fuel interests to deny, delay, weaken, obstruct and defeat responsible science-based government climate and energy policy. The intentional and systemic propagation of anti-climate disinformation narratives has for decades deceived, confused, divided, or angered significant segments of the community against climate policy and the replacement of fossil fuel with renewable energy. This has prevented and constrained Australia and the other member nations of the United Nations from acting promptly, responsibly and collectively in the public interest of human ecological survival to contain planetary heating by using state power to bring the fossil fuel era to a permanent close. This defeat is the service rendered by the global Atlas Network of thinktanks to fossil fuel industry owners and investors in return for 'donations' (or rather, investments).

The veiled geopolitical power of petroleum interests has long been historically exercised in Australia and internationally, especially through the special relationship of the greatest of the private British/European and American oil multinationals, Shell and ExxonMobil: private empires that have operated in nearly every country in the world for over a century. Despite the extreme care with which the funding sources of Australia's major Atlas network nodes, the tax-exempt 'charities' **Institute of Public Affairs** (est. 1943, Melbourne) and **Centre for Independent Studies** (est. 1976, Sydney) are kept hidden from the public, like other Atlas units of similar vintage, these have been intertwined and integrated with Shell and Exxon since their earliest days (and with many other corporations whose profit streams depend upon fossil fuel combustion). This is known by direct funding where evidence exists, by appointments to executive roles, or board directorships (implying oversight of an investment), and by the obvious fact that strategic political messaging against the drastically urgent necessity of climate policy and a zero carbon energy system has only one potential funder, and only one (short term) beneficiary: the financial owners of fossil fuel (and downstream) corporations. The only beneficiaries of four decades of defeat of our efforts to save our children and their Earth from becoming a permanent inferno are those already wealthy from profit flows accumulated as owners of companies that have and continue to make the earth hotter, or those who service and depend on such profit streams.

The Atlas Network now comprises 550- 600 'thinktanks' and institutes in over 100 nations. Key to their success is that none openly declare their membership in the Atlas Network.<sup>4</sup> Yet each operates in a highly coordinated and synchronised fashion in support of specific Atlas public influence campaigns, transnationally and continuously, just as do oil giants like Shell and ExxonMobil, which have been fully aware since the 1950s of the scientific reality that mass combustion of carbon minerals causes catastrophic global heating.<sup>5</sup>

The Atlas Network is the central political infrastructure through which Big Fossil has since 1988 has continuously worked to deceive, delay, obstruct, prevent or repeal effective and responsible government climate policies to decarbonise our energy system with free, clean, inexhaustible energy from the sun and wind. This it does through a small number of professional PR specialists, propagandists, speakers and writers (often with pseudo-academic titles 'senior research fellow', 'adjunct scholar') running low-cost, high impact, synchronised propaganda campaigns across multiple nations and multiple thinktanks at once, each with a firehose of fossil fuel money behind them and an impeccable network of right-wing billionaires, politicians, media, and corporate contacts. Not all of the Atlas thinktanks engage in anti-climate policy campaigns, and that is not all that Atlas thinktanks do. Some specialise in traditional neoliberal campaigns against public ownership of energy and other infrastructures, against labour unions and workers rights, or for the defunding and privatisation of public health, public education, public services and of government itself. The number of people directly involved in running the Atlas Network infrastructure, which has inflicted defeat after defeat upon effective climate policy around the world for decades, is vanishingly small. A publicly available datasheet

---

<sup>4</sup> With one known exception: the Perth based **Mannkal Economic Education Foundation**. <https://www.mannkal.org/>

<sup>5</sup> See my: Walker, J. (2023). Silencing the Voice: the fossil-fuelled Atlas Network's campaign against constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australia. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 15(2); Walker, J. (2022). Freedom to burn: mining propaganda, fossil capital and the Australian neoliberals. *Slobodian, Q. & Plehwe, D. (eds) Market Civilisations: Neoliberals East and South*, Zone, New York; Walker, J., & Johnson, M. (2018) On mineral sovereignty: Towards a political theory of geological power. *Energy research & social science*, 45, 56-66; Tienhaara, K., & Walker, J. (2021). Fossil capital, 'unquantifiable risk' and neoliberal nationalizations: The case of the Trans Mountain Pipeline in Canada. *Geoforum*, 124, 120-131.

published by De Montford University names 10,854 individuals comprising the responsible officers of over 515 Atlas thinktanks in 100 countries as of 2021.<sup>6</sup>

The success of the Atlas Network, which is not a legal entity as such, is in no small part due to its invisibility to the public as a single, relatively coherent, globally organised, and semi-centralised entity, with each of its member organisations in communication with the head office, the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** in Fairfax, Virginia, USA (which confusingly now operates under the trademark 'Atlas Network' (of which more below).

Each individual thinktank is operated by executive staff trained in its two-step method of 'moving the Overton window'. The first step is disinformation: flooding public media spaces with a constant flow of endless repetitions of the same anti-climate, anti-RE (and thus pro-fossil fuel) messages, from hundreds of seemingly disparate but in fact closely integrated sources, including 'thinktanks' registered and marketed as tax-exempt, tax-deductible, 'independent', 'non-profit', 'non-political', 'public interest economics and policy research institutes'. These range from relatively neutral sounding 'research' briefs and submissions to government, to emotional manipulation of audiences targeted for radicalisation by aggressive social media agit-prop provoking outrage amongst 'ordinary Australians' against 'insane' climate policies designed by 'cultural elites' that will 'wreck the economy' and 'send you broke'. The second step involves the training and vetting of ultra-loyal political activists, whose political careers will be built by Atlas media campaigns propelling them via 'centre right' and far-right political parties into governments which will then appoint other Atlas thinktank protagonists into key government institutions and roles. By such means, the hidden Atlas thinktank funders over time have moved the political 'centre' ever further to the right, capturing and transforming political parties, legislative, regulatory and scientific institutions and all the powers of government, including by efforts to modify or block amendments to national Constitutions (see for example the vast campaign of disinformation that sank the 2023 Voice referendum proposing to recognise Indigenous Australia and include First Nations' voices in the Federal Parliament).<sup>7</sup> It is no accident that Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was the first LNP member of parliament to demand that the Coalition 'dump net zero', which they promptly did.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning in 1989, the oil majors' first aim was to undermine acceptance in the public mind of the scientific reality of fossil-fuel induced global heating, thereby discrediting public officeholders and scientific authorities calling for a strong and effective UN climate treaty backed by national laws, defined emissions ceilings, quantitative and timetabled emission reductions, and inter-nationally coordinated carbon taxes to restrict and suppress fossil fuel combustion in favour of clean energy sources. As we now know from their own internal correspondence, between 1995 to 2008, the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** was directly commissioned by ExxonMobil to arrange the seeding of multiple new thinktanks in Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, expanding its global coverage to all continents and to many new nations for the express purpose of disseminating propaganda materials commissioned by fossil capital for the express purpose of defeating climate policy and an effective, binding, universally subscribed United Nations climate treaty.<sup>9</sup>

Following the publication of the IPCC report *Climate Change 2022* endorsed by 195 nations, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres characterised it as "an atlas of human suffering":

<sup>6</sup> Ruth McKie (2023) Atlas Thinktank Main Employers datasheet (2023), De Montford University, UK. [https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Atlas\\_Think\\_Tank\\_Main\\_Employers/22217050?file=39486961](https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Atlas_Think_Tank_Main_Employers/22217050?file=39486961)

<sup>7</sup> Walker, J. (2023). Silencing the Voice: the fossil-fuelled Atlas Network's campaign against constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australia. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 15(2). <https://eprints.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/download/8813/8251>

<sup>8</sup> As a blog for local Atlas Networkers owned by a wealthy Dubai based oil share trader was excited to announce. Flat White (2025, June 16) The Country Liberal Party: scrap Net Zero, ditch Paris! *Spectator Australia*. <https://www.spectator.com.au/2025/06/the-country-liberal-party-scrap-net-zero-ditch-paris/>

<sup>9</sup> Atlas Network archive, B76-F13 to B77-F07. ExxonMobil correspondence, 1984-2004; see original documents linked in: <https://www.desmog.com/2025/11/03/a-pretty-ugly-history-how-exxon-exported-climate-denial-to-the-global-south/>

Nearly half of humanity is living in the danger zone – now. Many ecosystems are at the point of no return – now. Unchecked carbon pollution is forcing the world’s most vulnerable on a frog march to destruction – now. It is essential to meet the goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. Science tells us that will require the world to cut emissions by 45 percent by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. But according to current commitments, global emissions are set to increase almost 14 per cent over the current decade. That spells catastrophe. [...] The facts are undeniable. This abdication of leadership is criminal. The world’s biggest polluters are guilty of arson of our only home.<sup>10</sup>

As a growing body of scholarship and NGO research has demonstrated, and as the United Nations has finally realised, climate policy has not failed, it has been systematically obstructed and defeated by powerful fossil fuel interests.<sup>11</sup>

The Atlas Network is the main tool through which fossil capital has for the last four decades obstructed, delayed and undermined the capacity of national governments and the United Nations to act responsibly and collectively on the gravest of all matters of life and death: the irreversible and rapid overheating of the Earth’s surface as a result of the mass combustion of hydrocarbon minerals (coal, oil and gas). It is predominantly through the heretofore hidden and little-known Atlas Network that fossil fuel corporations, who knew since the 1950s that they would cause planetary disaster if unrestrained by public interest law and government, managed to render the UN climate treaty weakened and ineffective. The systemic mass production and dissemination of counter-science disinformation by the Atlas Network on behalf of big oil MNCs began in 1989, in order to undermine the international unity of purpose needed to negotiate a strong and effective UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (to be moved at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992).

Guterres’ long predicted and once avoidable, “atlas of human suffering”, has now manifested abundantly, in large part due to fossil capital’s continuous and expanding information war against climate law, policy and clean energy conducted covertly through the Atlas Network.

#### What can be done about systemic disinformation?

Earlier efforts of this Parliament to attempt to legislate to protect Australians from disinformation have tended to emphasise fact-checking (which is wholly inadequate) and holding digital platforms accountable for social media content: an approach which whilst well-intended in respect of the use of bots and fake accounts to overwhelm the democratic potential of social media with hate speech and propaganda, immediately raises concerns regarding the rights of citizens, journalists and scholars to inquire and publish freely. This and the vocal resistance of Atlas network entities that produce disinformation as their primary function led the Australia government to abandon the proposed 2024 Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill.

A more focussed, direct and effective approach for the Australian government to protect Australia from the most persistent and prevalent type of disinformation across Australia’s public sphere, would be to directly confront with the powers of existing or new legislation the authors, systemic producers, funders and

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-02-28/secretary-generals-video-message-the-press-conference-launch-of-ipcc-report-scroll-down-for-languages>

<sup>11</sup> Roberts, J., Milani, C., Jacquet, J., Downie, C. (eds) (2025) *Climate obstruction: a global assessment*. Oxford University Press; Ekberg, K., et al. (2022) *Climate obstruction: How denial, delay and inaction are heating the planet*. Routledge; Brulle, R. J., Roberts, J. T., & Spencer, M. (Eds). (2024) *Climate obstruction across Europe*. Oxford University Press; Edwards, G. et. al (2023). Climate obstruction in the Global South: Future research trajectories. *PLoS Climate*, 2(7), e0000241; Lamb, W. et.al (2020) Discourses of climate delay. *Global sustainability*, 3, e17. McKie, R. E. (2021). Obstruction, delay, and transnationalism: Examining the online climate change counter-movement. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 80, 102217. Milani, C. et.al (2025) Climate obstruction in Brazil under the Bolsonaro administration, *Climate and Development*, 1-14. Carroll, W. et.al (2022) Regime of obstruction: fossil capitalism and the many facets of climate denial in Canada, *Handbook of anti-environmentalism*. Nanko, M. & Coan, T. G. (2024). Defeating cap-and-trade: How the fossil fuel industry and climate change counter movement obstruct US Climate Change Legislation. *Global Environmental Change*, 89, 102919.

United Nations (2024) Brazil leads global charge against climate disinformation at G20 and COP29. <https://unclimatesummit.org/brazil-leads-global-charge-against-climate-disinformation-at-g20-and-cop29/>

disseminators of anti-climate science and policy disinformation (whose submissions were a substantial portion of those made to that Seante Inquiry, and to this one).

It is the responsible exercise of parliamentary, state, and judicial power to restrict and indeed eliminate forms of private-profit seeking which are predatory, harmful and destructive of public health (e.g. cigarettes, human slavery). Unrestricted coal, oil and gas industry profit-seeking far exceeds the destructive capacity of tobacco. The public health crisis caused by cigarette advertising and the wide acceptance and availability of tobacco is serious. Yet it has been significantly contained and reduced by government policy repressing predatory private power and profit-seeking in the public interest, by criminalising tobacco company propaganda (e.g. advertising, sponsorship of medical research, etc.) Cigarette smoking at any scale could never be anywhere near as destructive to public health as the oil, gas and coal combustion industries combined. Smoking does not cause mass coral bleaching, runaway ocean heating and acidification, catastrophic heatwaves, hurricanes and mega-fires, inundation of croplands, cities and towns, nor could it make the Earth progressively hotter and uninhabitable for millennia to come.

Targeting climate and energy disinformation as the most urgent focus of government efforts to defend the integrity of democratic communication is further simplified by the fact that the vast majority of intentional anti-climate policy messaging is demonstrably manufactured by and disseminated from a single, relatively coherent entity with a central office: the global Atlas Network infrastructure of fossil-funded thinktanks and their spinoff campaign units headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia USA. If you know the name of the author and publisher of any book, report, petition, news item, website, parliamentary submission, YouTube video etc. denying the reality that mass hydrocarbon combustion and CO<sub>2</sub> accumulation in the atmosphere will cause irreversible planetary heating, you will quickly discover its origin in an **Atlas Network** affiliated 'economic research' thinktank, or one of its numerous spinoff specialist campaign units, media outlets, astroturfed 'community groups' or anonymous websites. The same is almost invariably true of any claim that carbon taxation, the UNFCCC climate treaty, or renewable energy will 'wreck the economy', or that Earth scientists, academics and climate activists are adherents of a fringe 'religion' which threatens 'Western civilisation', or that renewable energy is killing whales, rainforests and farms, or that nuclear power is 'clean and cheap'.

With a small population and a highly concentrated corporate media, much of it either founded, owned or influenced at editorial and hiring level by fossil/mining interests, Australia provides one of the clearest exemplars of how this has been done. Australia's political life and quarry economy has been dominated by predominantly foreign owned coal, gas and mining multinationals since the late 1960s. Often cited as the world's largest exporter of both coal and methane gas globally, Australia is a tax haven for oil and gas interests. It also has among the greatest solar and wind resources in the world, and is one of the few remaining electoral democracies. Australia is thus critical to the success of planetary decarbonisation. Conversely, the defeat of renewable energy policy in Australia is critical to the global strategy of fossil capital to suppress the terminal threat to it posed by our ability, with existing technology, to supply all our energy needs from the inexhaustible free energy flows of sunshine and moving air, available everywhere on the surface of the earth at zero cost and with zero atmospheric pollution once the infrastructure is built. Renewable energy obviously only requires but a tiny fraction of the total quantity of mined material needed for depletable and polluting energy equivalents, and without adding to the vast quantity of heat already trapped at the Earth's surface by the vast amounts of coal, oil and gas now burned forever into the sea and sky as carbonic acid and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.

## **(2) Terms of reference:**

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

**Prevalence:** Produced by and for fossil capital (e.g. multinational oil, gas, coal mining corporations, their wealthy owners and investors, and corporate service firms), intentionally and professionally produced strategic anti-climate policy and anti-clean energy *disinformation* is propagated from a multitude of seemingly unrelated sources and is ubiquitous throughout every part of the information environment, in Australia and almost everywhere else. Every Australian has been constantly exposed to fossil-sponsored anti-climate policy disinformation since 1988, when the major oil and coal multinationals began their concerted global campaign against modern science, to protect their profits from a science-based UN treaty.<sup>12</sup> Even those who have no interest in politics, do not follow political news, and don't look at social media will still be routinely exposed to it as *misinformation*: friends or family members will express doubts or confusion, repeat various pseudo-facts or narratives, or express strongly held beliefs which have been placed in their minds by fossil/Atlas disinformation campaigns, e.g. that climate change is 'just a theory', 'natural' or 'a scam', or any such false claim or narrative originally produced by agents of the fossil fuel industry for precisely the purpose of disabling and disrupting reasonable and rational evidence-based discussion at the micro-political level of daily life, during election campaigns, and in democratic, deliberative decision-making forums at all levels of government.

Produced over several decades by a small handful of key individuals through a highly coordinated network of opaquely funded, tax-exempt Atlas Network affiliated 'thinktanks' or 'non-profit economic research institutes', campaign vehicles, anonymous websites, and astroturfed 'community organisations'; propagated, disseminated and amplified by NewsCorp and other legacy or social media sources, in almost every specific case climate and energy disinformation can be traced back to Atlas Network organisations and actors, and through them to funding from fossil fuel interests.

**Motivation:** *Cui bono*, who benefits? The motive for the professional mass production of counter-science disinformation by a small number of individuals with the vast financial resources of big oil, gas and coal investors behind them is obvious: the profit motive. Big oil's leadership- especially ExxonMobil, Shell, and the members of the American Petroleum Institute - have repeatedly been advised of the scientific reality of CO<sub>2</sub> and global heating since the late 1950s, and acted in full knowledge of this in conducting their successful and ongoing information war against scientific truth and effective national and international climate policy.<sup>13</sup>

Once the relationship between fossil combustion and global heating become general public knowledge and the subject of inter-governmental policy forums in the late 1980s, big oil chose not to tell the truth of what it had long known, and chose not to co-operate with societies and governments to avert catastrophe. Since the late 1980s, securing fossil industry profits and investment payoff horizons against the 'political risk' of climate policy and the 'market risk' of competing solar, wind and EV technologies has required the fortification of the political power that fossil capital had already long wielded (esp. oil majors like Shell and ExxonMobil, active in Australia and most nations for over a century) to determine, deter or defeat public interest legislation and policies proposed by elected national parliaments, in order to maintain and protect its incumbent monopoly rents. Just as the largely foreign owned fossil methane gas export sector is virtually immune to taxation in Australia, Australia's self-described 'greenhouse mafia' has either captured or prevented governments from introducing science-based, enforceable, mandated greenhouse gas pollution controls,<sup>14</sup> including direct carbon taxation according to the polluter pays principle, or compulsory regulation by a environmental pollution authorities of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> gases as dangerous environmental pollutants.

---

<sup>12</sup> See: original 1988 Exxon Memo on the Greenhouse Effect, noting that the 'public and government affairs' strategy deployed by Exxon and the American Petroleum would be to deceive the public about the scientific consensus Exxon and Shell studied, known of and not challenged since the late 1950s, and rather to "emphasize the uncertainty in scientific conclusions regarding the potential enhanced Greenhouse effect."  
<https://www.climatefiles.com/exxonmobil/566/>

<sup>13</sup> Franta, B. (2018) Early oil industry knowledge of CO<sub>2</sub> and global warming. *Nature Climate Change* 8, 1024–1025 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-018-0349-9>

<sup>14</sup> Hamilton, C. (2006, Feb). The dirty politics of climate change. Speech to Climate Change and Business Conference, Adelaide ; Pearse, G. (2009) Quarry Vision: Coal, Climate Change and the End of the Resources Boom, *Quarterly Essay* (Vol. 33).

**Impact:** In Australia as elsewhere, climate policy has not so much failed, as has been defeated. Every Australian federal election and the fate of each prime minister and government since 2007 has turned on climate and energy policy, with the electorate inundated by strategic disinformation opaquely financed by fossil fuel interests to delay, delegitimise, destabilise, prevent, repeal or otherwise defeat any and all proposed measures capable of progressively restricting the scale (and profitability) of the fossil fuel sector to zero and replacing it with clean energy.

The ‘post-truth era’ is the result of nearly 40 years of fossil capital sponsored disinformation against modern science and evidence-based public policy, a compounding effect of the vast number of books, articles, news items and conspiracy theories generated by faux-‘research institutes’ and their senior ‘adjunct scholars’, unqualified ‘research fellows’ and media protagonists, who relentlessly attack the once shared and common foundation of modern democratic government: respect for the scientific method of evidence based truth discovery, and the reality of the universal truths of cause and effect identified by modern science and energy physics.

Effective climate policy can only mean one thing, the deployment of government authority to enable and enforce rapid, permanent and global shutdown of oil, coal and gas industries and their complete replacement by clean energy power and transportation systems. Yet fossil capital has effectively restricted the scope of climate policy in Australia and elsewhere, e.g. by turning carbon taxation into political poison, by inserting the ‘Net’ (e.g. carbon offset markets and carbon capture and storage boondoggles instead of direct reductions in fossil fuel extraction and burning) into ‘Net Zero’, whilst moving attacks on Net Zero from Atlas actors on the far right political fringe into official federal LNP policy.

As a 1991 study commissioned by ExxonMobil’s Canadian subsidiary Imperial Oil found, carbon taxation would effectively reduce fossil energy use and shift energy consumption to low carbon sources, without any major impacts on the national economy or general living standards. But it would definitely reduce Exxon’s market share and profits, and require writing off long planned investments in the world’s most polluting oil field, the Athabasca oilsands in Alberta.<sup>15</sup> This is why ‘free market environmentalism’ was developed and promoted by Atlas Network economists and thinktanks, servicing their polluting industry funders.<sup>16</sup> It is why direct carbon taxation, solar subsidies and feed-in tariffs have been opposed so aggressively by fossil fuel lobbyists and Atlas thinktanks in multiple nations, because carbon taxes and renewable energy subsidies work to slow, shrink and replace the fossil sector with clean energy, and offset trading schemes don’t.<sup>17</sup>

Another 1991 Imperial Oil/ExxonMobil study found that the enormous capital costs of CCS facilities meant it was never going to work as a genuine climate response. As the Imperial study noted, as CCS could never ‘sequester’ the CO<sub>2</sub> generated by burning final refined petroleum products, it could at very best “achieve a relatively minor impact in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions” and even at this modest scale would not “appear to be economic at any market price for oil.”<sup>18</sup> This is why petroleum lobbies push costly CCS white elephant projects onto government budgets: because CCS doesn’t work. Like carbon offset schemes, it was never intended to.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Imperial Oil (1991) Carbon Tax Study: A Discussion of the Economic Consequences of Alternative Taxes. Climate Files. <https://www.climatefiles.com/exxonmobil/imperial-oil/1991-imperial-oil-carbon-tax-study/>

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Anderson, T. (1991) *Free market environmentalism: Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy*, San Francisco, Atlas Network archives B76 and B77, Exxon Mobil correspondence 1984-2004.

<sup>17</sup> Jouty, F., & Bonneuil, C. (2025). Undermining Climate Action: The Fight by European Oil Companies Against the European Carbon Tax. *International History Review*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2025.2583948>

Below I discuss the seven year long ‘axe the tax and Kyoto’ media campaign of the **Institute of Public Affairs** to repeal Australia’s Clean Energy Act (2011) supported by Atlas Network. Similar outcomes were achieved in Sweden with money from ExxonMobil, via the Atlas Network through its Swedish thinktank **Timbro**. See: Lindsten, J. & Söderin, (2024, Jun 4) Så köpte oljejätten Exxon inflytande över Moderaternas miljöpolitik, [Supermiljöbloggen/Dagens ETC](#). In English: How oil giant Exxon bought influence over the Swedish Moderate Party, [DeSmog](#).

<sup>18</sup> Imperial Oil (1991) Discussion Paper on Underground Disposal of Carbon Dioxide. Climate Files. <https://www.climatefiles.com/exxonmobil/1991-imperial-oil-discussion-paper-on-underground-disposal-of-carbon-dioxide/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://michaelwest.com.au/carbon-capture-ccs-chevron-santos-fail/>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/21/australias-biggest-industrial-polluter-receives-millions-in-carbon-credits-despite-rising-emissions>

It is strictly physically impossible to both burn fossil energy minerals (e.g. hydrocarbon minerals are nature's CCS, that has worked for millions of years, and will continue to, if merely left in the ground unburned), and then use some of that energy to somehow return all the newly generated atmospheric carbon dioxide gas back into to permanent storage in geological strata. CCS has never been more than a PR program for oil corporations to postpone genuine and effective climate policy, usually paid for with public money that would have been much better spent shuttering existing fossil infrastructure, re-training energy sector workers, and building solar, wind and battery infrastructure directly.

*(b) how misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy is financed, produced and disseminated, including, but not limited to, understanding its impact on: (i) Australian politics, (ii) domestic and international media narratives, and (iii) Australian public policy debate and outcomes;*

*(c) the origins, growth and prevalence of 'astroturfing' and its impact on public policy and debate;*

*(d) connections between Australian organisations and international think tank and influence networks associated with the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation related to matters of public policy;*

*(e) the role of social media, ...in facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation;*

As I will demonstrate in this submission, the above can be best explained in terms of the careers of the veteran activists, authors, media figures, executive directors, corporate board members, and economists comprising the senior staff and board members of fossil fuel funded **Atlas Network member thinktanks**, among them the elite membership of the **Mont Pelerin Society**, and politicians either aligned with or directly trained, cultivated, and publicly promoted by them.

In Australia the most important by historic influence, funding and staff capacity are the **Institute of Public Affairs** (est 1943) and the **Centre for Independent Studies** (est 1976), of which election propaganda entity **Advance** is a spinoff arms length entity. Both are registered as tax-exempt, tax-deductible 'charities' and closely guard the secret of who invests in ('donates to') their efforts to shape public opinion against climate policy and clean energy. Both were historically founded, funded, and supervised by an overlapping set of major oil and mining companies, and the same can be said of many other Atlas partners of similar vintage in the UK, US, Canada and elsewhere. Both were from the beginning closely integrated with the primary media outlet for English language Atlas 'research' and 'opinion', the Murdoch press, itself in turn founded by mining companies for the express purpose of producing propaganda.<sup>20</sup>

*(f) any other matters*

As Prof. Nancy MacLean reports from their own internal discussions, the senior leadership of the Atlas Network in Washington DC know that their fifty year old global campaign for neoliberal 'economic freedom' on behalf of powerful (oil) corporations and elite billionaire wealth holders – resulting in rollback of redistributive taxation, labour rights, public education, healthcare, welfare safety nets and environmental protection laws – has never won popular support from ordinary citizens.<sup>21</sup> The ultra-wealthy/corporate backers of the Atlas Network thus need "other horses to ride" to power. This is why Atlas messaging has largely abandoned earlier stock appeals to 'the growth miracles' of free-market economics and globalisation and now cultivates radical and authoritarian [REDACTED] movements amongst citizens made economically insecure by decades of neoliberal policy. This they do by deploying strategic disinformation narratives to create or intensify fear, disgust and anger toward immigrants, sexual minorities, other religions, and scientifically-literate university-educated individuals ('inner city elites' pushing 'woke climate hysteria'). They then attach these negative emotions to advocates of Indigenous land rights, renewable energy and government planning to achieve

---

<sup>20</sup> Young, S. (2019) *Paper emperors: the rise of Australia's newspaper empires*. NewSouth.

<sup>21</sup> MacLean, N. (2020) "[Since we are greatly outnumbered": Why and How the Koch network uses disinformation to thwart Democracy](#)". In *The Disinformation Age*, Cambridge University Press;. See also: MacLean, N. (2017) *Democracy in chains: The deep history of the radical right's stealth plan for America*, Penguin.

decarbonisation of the economy [Fig 4].<sup>22</sup> We saw this in the Advance/Atlas thinktank campaign which defeated the 2023 Voice referendum, and now again in the [REDACTED] campaign to attach outrage about fictitious levels of ‘mass immigration’ to the demands of fossil fuel investors broadcast through the Atlas Network and its web of campaign units to ‘dump net zero’.<sup>23</sup>

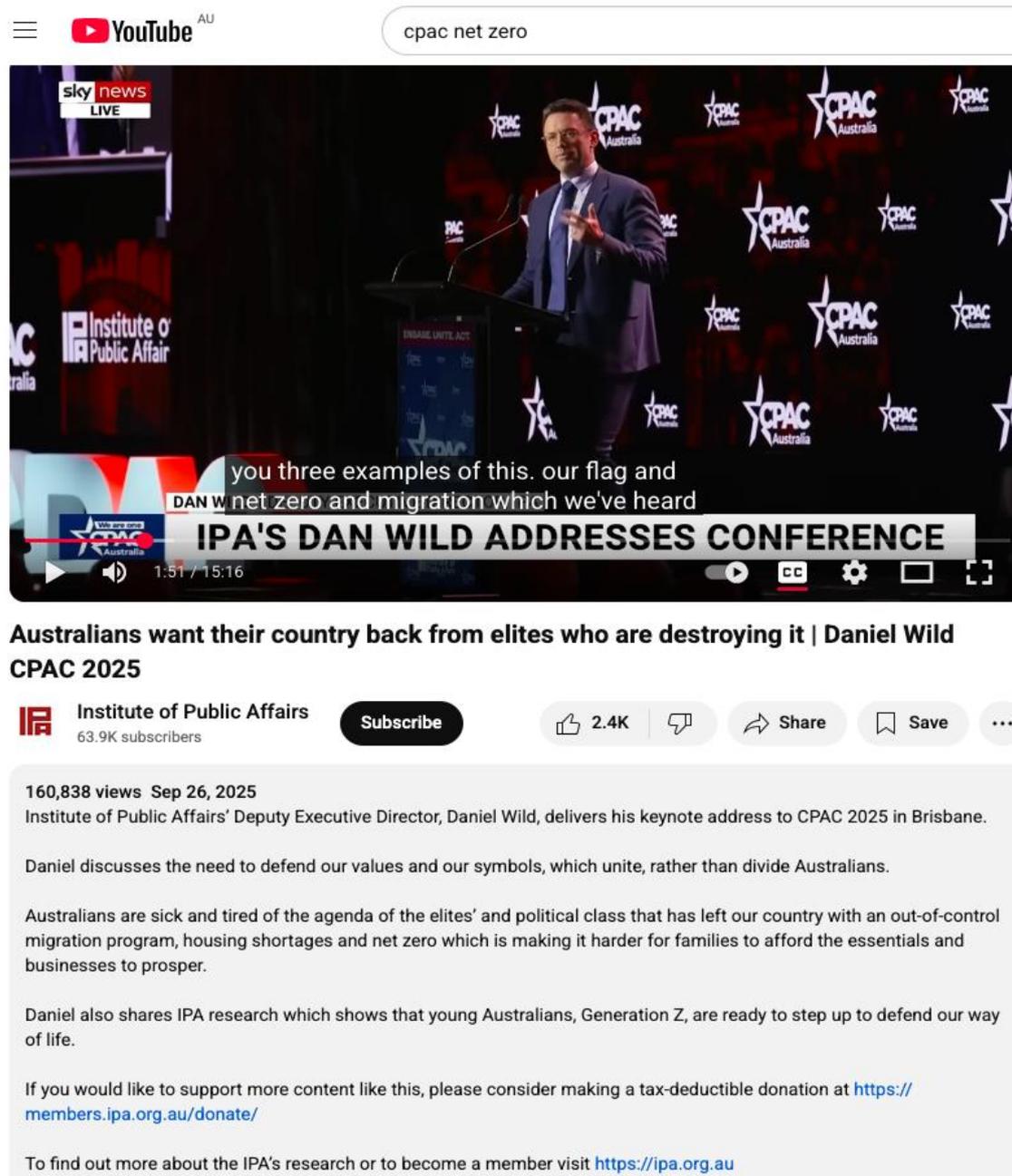


Fig 4. Deputy executive director of Atlas-affiliated **Institute of Public Affairs** Daniel Wild [REDACTED] at the **CPAC Aust**, a conference of the **American Conservative Union**, Brisbane, 2025. Source: [IPA YouTube Channel](#).

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. Atkin, E. (2025, Sep 19) Charlie Kirk was a fossil fuel industry plant: Big Oil's money gave Kirk a larger platform to spread baseless climate conspiracy theories—as well as other extremist views, *Heated*. With the assistance of *Financial Review* editors, the **Institute of Public Affairs** is working to import the cult of Kirk to Australia: See: <https://www.afr.com/by/mia-schlicht-p53867> One of Kirks's early 'partners' was the **Atlas Society**, an Ayn Rand themed Atlas Network member. <https://www.atlassociety.org/post/the-atlas-society-announces-student-partnership-with-turning-point-usa>

<sup>23</sup> It is a misnomer to describe far-right, authoritarian anti-climate science (e.g. book burning) [REDACTED] movements as 'populist'. Cultivated top-down by oil and coal billionaires funded thinktanks and media sources, scholars have more accurately described the fusion of neoliberal thinktank's climate denial with anti-immigrant 'national-conservatism' as 'fossil fascism'. See: Malm, A., & Zetkin Collective. (2021) *White skin, black fuel: On the danger of fossil fascism*, Verso.

### **(3) Freedom of propaganda: the origins of the Atlas Network as the disinformation machinery of fossil capital**

Although he was unaware of the existence of the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** (est. 1981) as the central to the growing neoliberal thinktank network, one of the earliest analysts of the techniques and activities of its corporation-sponsored ‘think-tanks’ was Australian sociologist Alex Carey, who presciently wrote:

When the twentieth century becomes history it will be seen as distinctive [...] for three developments in liberal Western societies: the growth of democracy; the rise of huge concentrations of economic power, known as corporations; and the professionalizing and institutionalizing of propaganda, especially as a means for safe-guarding the power of free-enterprise corporations against democracy. (1987, p.14)<sup>24</sup>

From our vantage point in 2025, Carey has been proved tragically and abundantly correct by the history of climate policy obstruction mounted and maintained by the Atlas thinktanks.

As Ed Feulner (Mont Pelerin Society 1972; **Heritage Foundation** co-founder 1973) told a 1985 Sydney workshop of the international Atlas thinktank leaders hosted by Greg Lindsay (MPS 1982) and the **Centre for Independent Studies**, the primary purpose of Atlas ‘institutes’ and thinktanks is to generate corporation-sponsored propaganda:

.. it takes an institution to *propagandize* an idea — to market an idea. [...] Proctor & Gamble does not sell Crest toothpaste by taking out one newspaper ad or running one television commercial. They sell and re-sell it every day by keeping the product fresh in the consumer’s mind. The institutes I have mentioned sell ideas in much the same manner.<sup>25</sup>

Despite being overly-associated in the public mind with the totalitarian states of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the term *propaganda* originally referred to corporation-sponsored activities aiming to influence the ‘public mind’, or the ‘national mind’, now known as ‘public relations’, or ‘public and government affairs’.<sup>26</sup> Hence the name of the tax-exempt ‘independent’, ‘not-for-profit charity’ the **Institute of Public Affairs**, founded in Melbourne in 1943 to manage public perceptions and the political and government affairs of private, for-profit corporations.

The full story of the origins of the **IPA**, established in 1943 by Keith Murdoch (News Ltd) and Melbourne mining monopolies to generate ‘publicity’ against the WW2 Curtin ALP government and to found a new anti-labour party (the Liberal Party, est. 1944) remains hidden in the private **IPA** archives. We do know that the **IPA** founders were in contact with exponents of state-of-the-art business propaganda methods, such as the National Association of Manufacturers (USA) and the Confederation of British Industry, as well as with the London School of Economics,<sup>27</sup> the academic base of neoliberal economists such as Friedrich von Hayek and others benefitting from generous research grants provided by US oil giant Standard Oil (now ExxonMobil) via the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>28</sup> The **IPA** founders may well have directly taken their organisations’ name from a US outfit linked to Edward Bernays [Fig 5], the author of the definitive textbook on the methods of applied psychology used by ‘public relations counsel’ to manipulate mass audiences for its clients: *Propaganda* (1928).

Whenever we see fossil fuel funded Atlas Network organisations such as the **Institute of Public Affairs**, the **Australian Institute of Progress**, or Atlas adjacent entities like the **Free Speech Union** defending ‘freedom of speech’ from efforts to protect the public from hate speech and systemic and intentional climate

---

<sup>24</sup> Carey, A. (1987) Conspiracy or groundswell? In Coghill K (ed.) *The new right’s Australian fantasy*. Penguin, Melbourne.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Carey (1987)

<sup>26</sup> Hence the name of the tax-exempt ‘not-for-profit charity’ the **Institute of Public Affairs**, founded in 1943 to manage the public, political and government affairs of private for-profit corporations. See: Chomsky, N., & Barsamian, D. (2020). *Propaganda and the public mind*. Haymarket Books.

<sup>27</sup> National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Security Service/ASIO file on the Institute of Public Affairs, 1942-1949. Item No: 1108226;

<sup>28</sup> Walker, J. (2020) *More Heat than Life*, Palgrave, p. 28.

disinformation, we can be safe in assuming that what they really seek is ‘freedom of propaganda’ for their hidden funders, which (where known) have always included the largest and most powerful oil, gas and coal corporations active in Australia.<sup>29</sup>

As Bernays himself said of the use of propaganda for ‘engineering consent’ :

"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of."<sup>30</sup>

# Freedom of Propaganda

THE CONSTRUCTIVE FORMING OF PUBLIC OPINION

By EDWARD L. BERNAYS, *Public Relations Counsel, New York, N. Y.*

*At Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, July 16, 1936*

**P**ROPAGANDA is the voice of the people in the democracy of today. Freedom of propaganda is as important as the other civil liberties—freedom of worship, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of radio, and freedom of assembly. The use of propaganda provides, for the people, an open forum for the conflict of ideas and for the competition of the market-place, which are integral parts of our present-day system. Propaganda offers everyone a free choice as to the basis of the course of action to be pursued. With only one kind of propaganda,

as used constructively. That is why, it seems to me, men and women who are interested in their civilization should have a thorough knowledge of the scope of propaganda, its functions, and its limitations.

Let me be specific. The victory for women's suffrage would have been utterly impossible without the brilliant and vigorous propaganda technique employed. The propaganda had to convince women as well as men. It had to convince liberals as well as conservatives. It had to convince the rank and file as well as legislators. It had to consolidate

Fig 5: Pioneering corporate propaganda (‘public relations’) expert Ed Bernays calling for ‘freedom of propaganda’ in a 1936 article. Note his appropriation of the public esteem and credibility of university-based research in support of his claim that ‘propaganda is the voice of the people’, via an entity named the ‘Institute of Public Affairs.’<sup>31</sup>

A contemporary synonym for propaganda is *disinformation*. An authoritative report by the security analysts of the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue (A4D 2024, supported by the Australian Government & Australian Civil-Military Centre) defines *disinformation* as:

.. verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or with intention to cause harm (including threats to democratic, political and policymaking processes as well as public goods such as the protection of citizens’ health, the environment or security. [...]

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. submissions to Senate Communications Committee inquiry on the shelved Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2024 by the [Institute of Public Affairs](#), [Australian Institute of Progress](#), IPA climate denial spinoff, [Australian Environment Foundation](#), climate denying, anti-Covid-vaccine entity [Australians for Science and Freedom](#) and [Free Speech Union of Australia](#), which admits it is modelled on the similarly named UK and NZ entities, both with close links to Atlas Network thinktanks, and anonymous, astro-turfed anti-offshore windfarm disinformation generator [Responsible Future Illawarra](#).

Atlas-affiliated Australian Institute of Progress boasted of receiving election \$746,600 for electoral propaganda against ALP, Greens and pro-renewable policies from Coal Australia in the 2024 Queensland state election, a lobby which represents global coal giants Peabody, Yancoal, Whitehaven. See: <https://www.coalaustralia.com/supporters> and <https://aip.asn.au/newsletter/report-to-significant-financial-supporters-on-aip-state-election-campaign/?frame=0>

<sup>30</sup> Bernays, E. (1928) *Propaganda*. Horace Liveright, New York, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> The idea for an Australian version of the US original **Institute of Public Affairs** may have come from Richard Casey, who gave an address to the IPA at the University of Virginia entitled “Australia’s Place in the World” whilst serving as Australian ambassador to the US in 1941. He went on to serve as secretary to the Liberal Party, 1947-1950. [Papers of the Institute of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 1927-1953](#), Box 50. University of Virginia Library.

Coordinated activities to generate strategic effects through the information domain, typically involving the production and dissemination of targeted information.<sup>32</sup>

The A4D report warns of the intensifying impacts on the integrity of Australia's information environment and democracy of concealed actors co-ordinating strategic disinformation and propaganda campaigns. Its terms and insights aptly characterise the high-volume, global, permanent, multi-layered, deep-rooted anti-climate policy campaign conducted by fossil fuel interests and projected into the Australian information environment through the **Atlas Network**. These aggressive disinformation campaigns have for decades effectively disabled the truth-based dialogue, solidarity and bi-partisan cooperation needed to respond to the challenge of decarbonisation and prevent catastrophic climate change, dividing families, communities, nations, and the international community against any policy, law, measure, treaty or renewable energy technology capable of reigning in the fossil fuel sector and its acceleration of irreversible and catastrophic planetary heating. Clearly, to use the words of A4D, this has "disastrous consequences for global and national security."

Memorable disinformation campaigns against climate policy mounted across the **Atlas Network** internationally and in Australia have been organised around slogans such as "the science isn't settled", UN climate treaties are "unfair to Australia" or a sinister attack by the United Nations on Australia's "energy sovereignty", carbon taxation and clean energy will "wreck the economy" or cause mass unemployment, imaginary "clean-coal" or "carbon capture" technologies will make fossil fuels 'net zero', "gas is a transition fuel", only coal will "keeps the lights on", "windfarms kill whales", "reckless renewables" threaten food security and biodiversity, and the "nuclear is clean and cheap" campaign that came out of nowhere and dominated Peter Dutton's federal election campaign over the period 2023-2025 to return the LNP to government.

The aim is not to demonstrate or prove the truth of the key disinformation campaign 'messages', but rather to dominate media space and the public sphere, to frame what the 'public debate' will consist of, normalising once extreme views by constant repetition, marginalising university trained experts, discouraging or intimidating good faith participants in democratic processes by preventing an informed public policy discussion from actually occurring. None of the above narratives forcefully inserted into 'climate and energy policy debates' by the Atlas Network thinktanks have any scientific credibility, nor are they propagated with a genuine interest in evidence-based research on what government policy is best for all Australians.

The first book to name the Atlas Network to the public was Richard Cockett's (1994) *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931–1983*, a history of the original neoliberal thinktank, London's **Institute of Economic Affairs**.<sup>33</sup> As the book's title aptly captures, the purpose and method of each individual Atlas Network thinktank and transnational Atlas campaign is to stage a counter-revolution against the 20<sup>th</sup> century gains of egalitarian social and economic democracy.

By its own account, the Atlas Network moves public opinion and national perception by 'moving the Overton window': making what was once politically possible impossible (or vice versa), making the unthinkable thinkable, breaking accepted truths and moral norms, normalising opinions and policies once relegated to the radical fringes. And thereby constantly moving the political 'centre' further rightward. Claiming and capturing the 'centre', Atlas Network thinktanks and aligned politicians will then portray the critics of their corporate sponsors as 'extremists'; non-violent climate protestors will be labelled 'terrorists' who should be locked up.<sup>34</sup> As Alejandro Chafuen (Atlas Network president 1991-2017, MPS 1980) reports, it was Joseph Overton of the Atlas-affiliated **Mackinac Centre**<sup>35</sup> who developed the central concept of Atlas disinformation operations, the Overton window; "a process that leads to policy change". This involves the crafting and propagation of

---

<sup>32</sup> Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy & Defence Dialogue (2024, Apr) What Does it Look Like for Australia to Use All Tools of Statecraft in the Information Environment, Canberra. [www.asiapacific4d.com](http://www.asiapacific4d.com)

<sup>33</sup> Cockett, R (1994) *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931–1983*, London. Harper Collins.

<sup>34</sup> <https://worldantiextremism.org/team/brad-lips/> ; <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/extremism-rebellion/> ; <https://fcpp.org/2024/03/19/the-deadly-fruits-of-climate-change-alarmism/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.mackinac.org/podcasts/the-overton-window/larry-reed-and-joe-lehman-on-the-overton-window-and-joe-overton>

ideological messages “that can increase or decrease the number of ideas politicians can support without unduly risking their electoral support”.

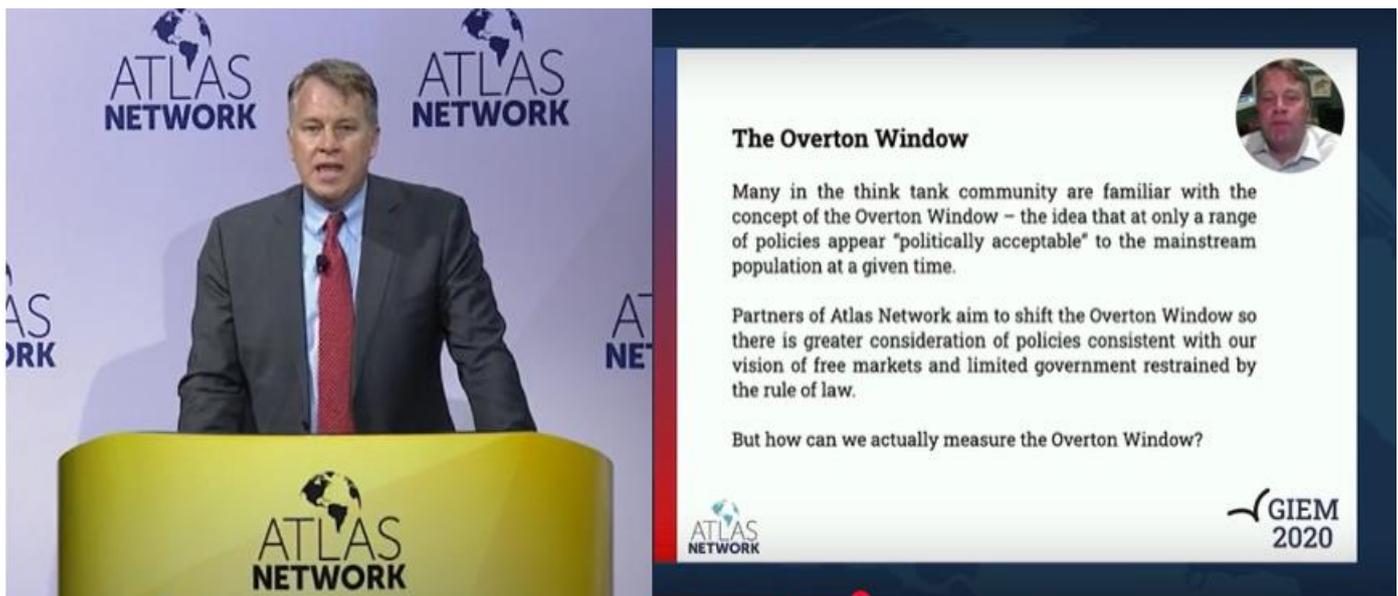


Fig 6: Atlas Network CEO Brad Lips teaches the ‘Overton window’ to a 2020 Atlas Network conference.  
Source: [Atlas Network](#) YouTube.

By this means the most obvious, sensible and effective climate policy (direct carbon taxation of the fossil fuel industry to subsidise clean energy) has been made politically toxic in Australia and all around the world by Atlas Network thinktanks. Every Australian election at Federal, State (and now council) level has been targeted in this way with overwhelming Atlas-generated anti-climate policy messaging. More alarmingly, as Chafuen goes on to tell us, the ultimate purpose of ‘moving the Overton Window’ involves Atlas operatives:

*...taking control of organizations and institutions, modifying processes so outcomes can be more favourable to freedom, and pushing for middle-of-the-road solutions which might create a culture more respectful of freedom.*<sup>36</sup>

Here is one among many possible examples. Currently deputy prime minister of Aotearoa-New Zealand, David Seymour trained with Atlas CEO Brad Lips for an ‘Atlas Thinktank MBA’ in 2008, and worked at Atlas affiliated climate denial orgs **Frontier Centre** and **Manning Centre** in Canada (2008-2013), before returning to NZ as a candidate for the ACT Party, itself founded by Mont Pelerin Society members and Atlas thinktank protagonists.

In the 2023 NZ election, Seymour campaigned against NZ’s constitutional document, Te Tiriti O Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) between Māori and the Crown, using exactly the same slogan **Advance** used in Australia “end division by race”, which reframed the Voice referendum debate from questions of reconciliation, inclusion and historical justice to the intensely polarising and hurtful terminology of ‘race’. In government, Seymour has introduced bills to radically undermine the electoral rights and rights to land, waters and fisheries guaranteed to Māori by the Treaty and settlements of the higher courts. As in Australia, Canada and elsewhere, Indigenous land rights present a legal, judicial, even constitutional barrier to petroleum and mining interests. Seymour has recently called for NZ to defect from the UNFCCC Paris Agreement.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Chafuen, A. (2023) The political-economic views of Mont Pelerin Society members and other promoters of a free economy in 1980, in Howden, D. & Bagus, P. (eds) *The Emergence of a Tradition: Essays in Honor of Jesús Huerta de Soto, Volume II: Philosophy and Political Economy*, Springer, pp. 53-71. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17418-6\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17418-6_6)

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/571796/act-wants-out-of-paris-agreement-national-says-no>

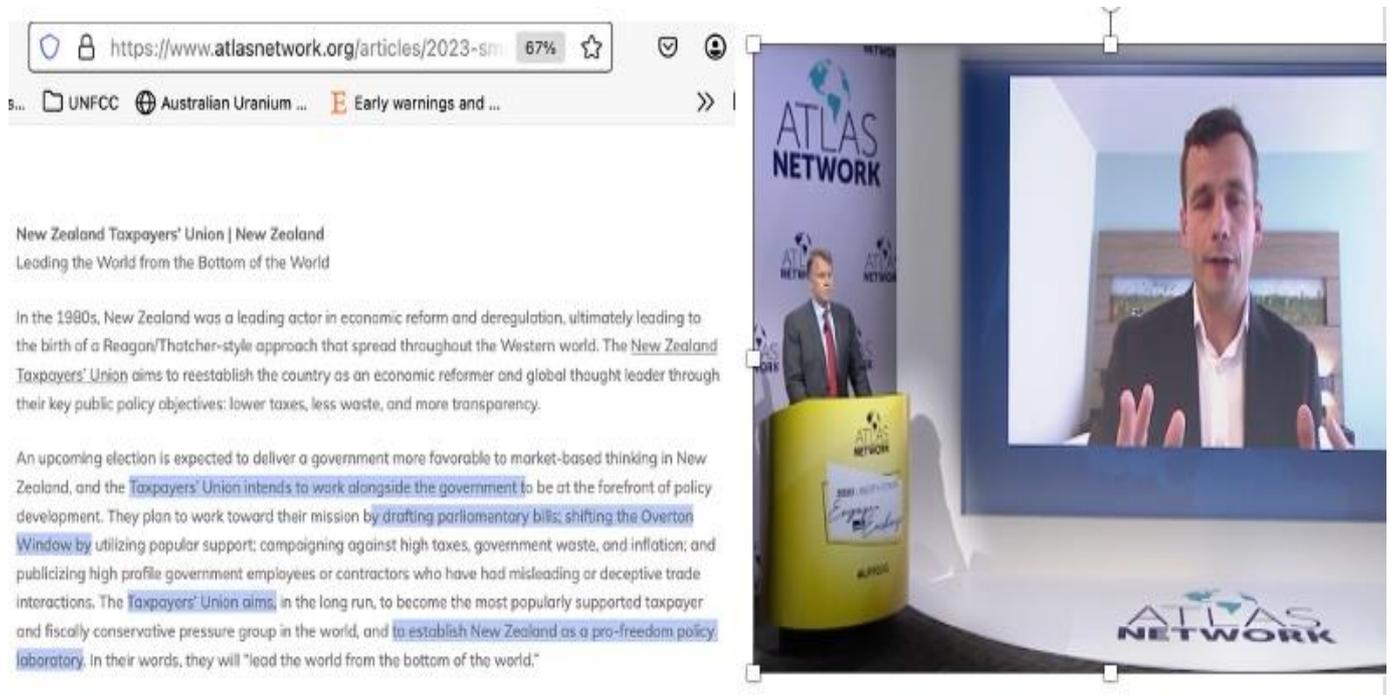


Fig 7: AtlasNetwork.org (2023) announces that the Atlas org **NZ Taxpayer's Union** will work 'alongside the government' to 'draft parliamentary bills' & 'shift the Overton Window', using NZ as a 'policy laboratory'. Atlas trained politician David Seymour (Atlas Thinktank MBA 2008, **Frontier Centre for Public Policy** (Canada), **Manning Centre** (Canada), now deputy PM of New Zealand, attends a 2020 Atlas conference<sup>38</sup>.

#### **(4) Fossil-fuel multinationals' early knowledge of CO2 and global heating, with new evidence from Australia**

In order to provide an historical benchmark against which to gauge the malign effects of 40 years of organised saturation-level disinformation against climate science and policy, it is necessary to understand that since the 1950s senior oil industry executives have been fully, authoritatively and repeatedly briefed, including by their own scientists and engineers, of the bare fact that CO2 accumulation in the atmosphere must cause disastrous global heating. Modern natural science has accurately understood for some 75 years that the current average temperature of the earth's surface and the heat content of the oceans is directly related to the vast quantity of carbon gases removed over hundreds of millions of years from the atmosphere by photosynthetic life and fossilised into carbon minerals - what we call fuel: coal, oil and gas. Accurate warnings began to appear in the scientific literature in the mid-1950s.<sup>39</sup> This followed the major leap in scientific knowledge of the Earth sciences of the international scientific collaboration of the International Geophysical year. For example, a 1957 issue of the journal of the Royal Geographical Society noted that:

.. in fifty years' time our coal- and oil-burning habits will have increased the present content of that gas by 70 per cent. The "greenhouse" effect that it produces will lead to a general warming of the atmosphere, and this will presumably accelerate the retreat of glaciers and ice sheets and increase the consequent rise in sea level.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> [Atlas Network Youtube \(2020\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> Revelle, R. & Suess, H. (1957). Carbon dioxide exchange between atmosphere and ocean and the question of an increase of atmospheric CO2 during the past decades. *Tellus*, 9(1), 18–27.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor, E.G. (1957) Operation International Geophysical Year, *Geographical Journal*, 123(4): 514-517.

These warnings were not confined to prestigious, if inaccessible, scientific journals of geophysics and geochemistry. Gilbert Plass published an article in the widely-read popular science and engineering magazine *Scientific American* in July 1959, outlining the basic science showing that mass combustion of fossil carbon would heat the earth, and giving projections of likely future CO<sub>2</sub> and temperature rises within the range reconfirmed by climate scientists ever since (c. +3 deg C when a doubling of pre-industrial CO<sub>2</sub> is reached).<sup>41</sup>

In November 1959, H-Bomb physicist Edward Teller used his keynote address to the American Petroleum Institute to warn this powerful congregation of senior oil corporation executives that unless they had replaced petrol motors with electric vehicles by the year 2000, New York and all the coastal cities would end up permanently inundated due to the greenhouse effect.<sup>42</sup> In 1958, solar PV modules had been installed by NASA on the satellite. Based on the photovoltaic effect identified by Becquerel in the 19<sup>th</sup> C, solar PV technology is a far simpler, safer, resilient and democratising energy technology than nuclear fission reactors. It is to our eternal loss that the fossil fuel executives did not take Teller's warning of the coming climate disaster seriously, and did not heed Teller's advice in the speech to and rapidly accelerate R&D research into solar electricity and electric vehicles. If that research effort had been backed since 1959 by government agencies and private industrial corporations with the urgency and funding applied to the Manhattan Project and the nuclear arms race, we would have long ago averted the climate disaster we now inhabit.

In 1968, Australian prime minister John Gorton's (Liberal-Country Party) government established a Senate Select committee to run a comprehensive public inquiry into all forms of Air Pollution. In 1969, the Senate published its 108 page report on Air Pollution and the 804 pages of evidence upon which it was based.<sup>43</sup> Noting the general lack of effective national research, standards, legislation and effective pollution control regulation, the report recommended urgent Federal and State government action on air pollution research and controlling legislation.

The opening paragraph of the 1969 Senate report on Air Pollution warned of catastrophic global heating to come:

The burning of coal, oil and natural gas over the years has increased the global concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and although this increase has had no recorded effect on living organisms, it has been suggested by leading scientists that further increases could modify the heat balance of the atmosphere. This could result in marked changes in world climate and ultimately a warming of the earth to such an extent that the arctic ice caps would melt and sea levels would rise by some 400 feet. Many major cities would become inundated as a consequence." (p.4)

Notably, both Senate Select Committee chair George Branson and deputy chair Condor Laucke were Liberal MPs in the Liberal-Country Party government that commissioned the report. During the hearings, Senator Laucke informed ALP member for Cunningham Rex Connor that:

The problem is one that has to be thought of in very large terms. Scientific opinion has stated that mankind has since the industrial revolution burned so much of the carboniferous fuels that he has destroyed the whole balance between man, plant and the atmosphere. Actually there is carbon dioxide in the upper atmosphere which has to a point caused a glass house effect and is raising the average temperature of the world and thereby causing some melting of the polar ice caps (p. 184).

One of the most important scientific authorities giving evidence was Prof. Harry Bloom of the University of Tasmania's chemistry department (Senate 1969, part II, pp. 645-648):

I have seen some very highly scientific studies of this matter [...] There have been analyses of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere over a couple of hundred years. *No doubt exists* that carbon dioxide contents

---

<sup>41</sup> Plass, G. (1959, July) Carbon dioxide and climate, *Scientific American*, 201(1).

<sup>42</sup> Teller, E. (1960). Energy patterns of the future. In *Energy and man: a symposium* (pp. 54–72). New York: Appleton-Century Croft; Franta, B. (2018). Early oil industry knowledge of CO<sub>2</sub> and global warming. *Nature Climate Change*, 8(12), 1024-1025.

<sup>43</sup> Australian Parliament (1969, Sept 10) [Senate Select Committee on Air Pollution Part I: Report](#) - 1969 Parliamentary Paper No. 91; Australian Parliament (1969, Sept 10) [Senate Select Committee on Air Pollution Part II: Minutes of Evidence](#) - 1969 Parliamentary Paper No. 91A.

in the atmosphere are increasing. *There is no doubt* that the processes that cause this increase are escalating rapidly. *There is also no doubt whatsoever* that the constitution of the atmosphere has a vast influence on the amount of sunlight trapped in the earth's atmosphere, and therefore communicated to the earth, to the icecaps, and so on. [...] *the increased temperature required to cause that change in the ice caps, etc., is only very microscopic. It is only a few degrees centigrade.* I think the whole situation is one which is very desperate *and needs immediate action.*

In 1969, Bloom did his very best to instil a sense of urgency to act to prevent catastrophic heating into the Australian Government:

It is a big problem facing us all over the world and it will become even more evident as time goes on. It could well be left *until it is too late* to do something about it. *This sort of thing creeps up on you until you find it is impossible at one stage or other to reverse the turn of events.* [...] If carbon dioxide built up to such an extent in the earth's atmosphere as to trap radiation from the sun and cause climatic conditions to change all over the world, perhaps heating the whole world and melting the ice caps, nothing could be done about it at that stage. *At this stage, when we recognise the problem exists we ought to do something about it before it becomes too acute.* (p. 648)

Liberal Senator Branson replied reassuringly to Bloom:

You are amongst friends. That is why we are here. The Commonwealth thought this, too.

Key fossil-intensive industry participants in the 1969 Senate hearings on air pollution, who gave evidence and received copies of the Report and its Minutes of Evidence, included Shell, Alcoa, Amoco (later merged with BP), Ampol, Boral, British Petroleum (BP), Broken Hill Associated Smelters, BHP, Electrolytic Zinc (Rio Tinto), South Australian Gas Co. (now Australian Gas Networks), Mobil (now ExxonMobil) and the public and private corporate members of the Joint Coal Board (pp. 2-4, pp. 105-107). Most of these corporations have provided funding, executive leadership and/or board supervision to Australia's Atlas thinktanks, and in the case of BP, Shell, ExxonMobil, Peabody and Rio Tinto, to other Atlas units around the world.

In 1971 the Australian Mining Industry Council (now Minerals Council of Australia) convened the conference 'Progress: Mining and Environment' to discuss rising international alarm at successive revelations by scientists projecting catastrophic consequences for global ecosystems, climate stability and the survival of human civilisation if present trends of pollution and natural resource depletion were continued unregulated by national environmental laws or by international laws made by UN treaties.<sup>44</sup>

The proceedings acknowledged widespread industry discussion of the above 1969 Senate report which acknowledged CO<sub>2</sub>-induced global warming without 'scepticism', and the need for uniform international standards, UN brokered international laws backed by national pollution control legislation, and the polluter pays principle in which the mining industries should bear the costs of pollution. The AMIC leadership vowed to play a responsible and co-operative role in the interests of human survival, in stark contrast to the later and continuing efforts of its successor organisation the Minerals Council of Australia, which represents coal and uranium (along with metal) mining corporations, to undermine and neutralise (inter)national climate treaties, policies and the renewable energy transition.

*Carbon dioxide is really the only contaminant which we can say is proved to be accumulating in the global atmosphere. Apparently, it is being generated somewhat faster than it can be removed. The atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration is currently about 330 parts per million - up from a bit under 300 ppm fifty years ago. [...] There are frequent press reports that an increasing CO<sub>2</sub> concentration decreases heat radiation from the earth's surface and that the resulting "greenhouse effect" will cause an average temperature rise world-wide. Then the polar ice caps will melt, raise the level of the oceans, flood our coastal cities etc"* (K.W Nelson, ASARCO, p.3)

---

<sup>44</sup> AMIC (1971, Apr 19-22) *Progress: Mining and Environment*. Proceedings of the National Seminar of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy & Australian Mining Industry Council, Canberra.

*We are all familiar with the reports of the Senate Select Committees on Air and Water Pollution. [...] The United Nations conference on the Environment is scheduled for 1972 and in this is the opportunity for international cooperation. [...] cooperation in the field of controlling legislation and the collection of much needed data. [...] Arising out of this Conference, is it too much to expect that there could be established an international authority for environmental control, whose activities are governed on a multi-national basis? [...] the concrete measures taken against industrial pollutants ought to be more or less identical for similar industries irrespective of the countries in which they operate.*  
(K. Grey, CEDA, p. 1-4)

*The problem is real, perhaps it may be fundamental to the prolongation of life as we understand it ...[...] Mankind is now alerted to the dangers. The problems must be tackled in a logical and responsible way. Resolute national and international regulation of practices injurious to mankind must be implemented.”*  
(Maurice Mawby, Rio Tinto).

This seminar [was convened] so that the subject can be examined on a scientific and factual basis, [...] ..the mining companies [...] have accepted a responsibility to the environment [...] I cannot over-emphasise the necessity for a scientific and factual approach to all aspects of environmental control. [...] we can [...] ensure that the side effects do not cause such a deterioration in our way of life so as to render it unliveable (p. 8). All sections of industry [...] expect that legislative controls will be implemented. [...] The mining industry- and indeed all industry – must bear the cost of pollution control...The industry recognises its responsibilities in regard to the environment. [...] (George Fisher, Mount Isa Mines, AMIC president, p. 1-11)

The conference chair was Sir Maurice Mawby (board chair, Conzinc Riotinto Australia, board director UK parent Rio Tinto Zinc). Also in attendance were Ian McLennan of BHP (e.g. coal mining, Bass Strait joint venture partner with Exxon); J.B. Massy-Greene (Santos), W. Brodie-Hall, (WA Chamber of Mines, Western Mining Corporation, then **Institute of Public Affairs** board), J.W. Foots and George Fisher of Mount Isa Mines (then owned by American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), now by coal giant Glencore). Representatives of Comalco, Esso Australia (now ExxonMobil), and US coal giant Peabody were in attendance.

As documented below, most of the above-mentioned companies have been supporters of the anti-environmentalism and counter-science campaigns of the **Institute of Public Affairs, Centre of Independent Studies** and in the case of Shell and ExxonMobil, the wider **Atlas Network**. Giant American coal corporation Peabody, for example, recently supported Atlas Network’s Brisbane outpost the **Australian Institute of Progress** through funding for 2024 election propaganda provided by new coal mining lobby **Coal Australia**.

During the Whitlam government (1972-1975), an audacious project to ‘buy back the farm’ and subordinate foreign oil, coal, gas and uranium multinationals to a national energy and environmental policy in Australia’s long term public interest was undertaken by the much (and unfairly) maligned minister for minerals and energy, Rex Connor. In Connor’s ministerial files is a letter from Prof. John Bockris of Flinders University’s chemistry department, who had already raised the alarm in the national press about catastrophic CO2 driven global heating, and advocated renewable energy as the *only* solution, calculating correctly that the entire electricity consumption of Australia could be generated by covering the roofs of existing buildings with solar panels. In 1975, Bockris advised the Whitlam government that:

The time to build a system in which the inexhaustible sources of energy (solar, wind, etc.) could be used would be several decades, and the needed preliminary research and development would take 10-20 years (for we are not yet clear what would be the most economic system to build). *After the solar collecting system has been built Australia would have an enormous export potential without an end in sight. The income therefrom would make Australia a Saudi Arabia of Solar Energy.*

Tragically, Prof. Bockris was entirely correct and prescient in warning the Whitlam government that vested interests would do all in their power to retain their disastrous energy monopoly of carbon fuels, anticipating half a century ago the task carried on for some forty years by the ever-expanding **Atlas Network** infrastructure of anti-climate and anti-clean energy disinformation that is the immediate concern of this Senate inquiry:

Because Australia is abnormally well-endowed with solar and wind sources, it should have a lead in developing these more than countries such as the U.S., which are less well-endowed. It should not wait for foreign technology, but develop its own, with its own workers. *The competing sources of oil, coal and natural gas are associated with private interests, which can be expected to put their claims as to why the present developments should not take place, lustily forward.* There are no comparable organisations with interests in the speedy development of the *inexhaustible clean energy sources*.<sup>45</sup>

The same fateful year, Rex Connor wrote a letter of reply to one E. W. Andrew, to thank him for sending a draft copy of his forthcoming book *The Energy Crisis and the Wind*:

I heartily commend you for your interest in wind power, as no alternative should be overlooked in the interests of minimising pollution and utilising one of the of the most readily available of all natural power sources.<sup>46</sup>

This author has read many books and scientific papers on CO2 induced global heating, including the hundreds of confidential internal oil industry reports received between the 1950s to the late 1980s by senior management of Shell, Exxon and the American Petroleum Institute gathered at [ClimateFiles.com](https://www.climatefiles.com). In these internal oil industry documents, the bad news from scientists and engineers that oil burning will inevitably overheat the world if not promptly and massively curtailed is not at any point challenged as anything other than scientifically true and correct. Prior to 1989, there was none of the wonky pseudo-science, none of the cargo-cult pseudo-science from retired mining company geologists, none of the explicit counter-science propaganda campaign against long established and confirmed chemistry and physics. This all began a few weeks after James Hansen of NASA put the greenhouse effect in the headlines all around the world. Hansen warned the US Senate on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1988 that there was 99% certainty that CO2 induced global warming had well and truly arrived.<sup>47</sup> Five weeks later on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, Exxon 'public affairs' manager James Carlson advised his superiors of the beginning of the global anti-climate policy disinformation campaign the fossil majors have run constantly ever since:

Exxon is providing leadership through API [the American Petroleum Institute] in developing the petroleum industry position. ***The Exxon position will be to emphasize the uncertainty in scientific conclusions regarding the potential enhanced greenhouse effect.***<sup>48</sup>

The post-truth era had begun.

---

<sup>45</sup> Reginald Francis Xavier (Rex) Connor archival collection, D61 Box 53, Item 2/616. Letter from Prof. John Bockris, Dept of Chemistry, Flinders University, to the Hon. Kep Enderby, Attorney General (1975, Aug 29). University of Wollongong Library and Archives.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Rex Connor to E.W. Andrew, Warnambool, Victoria (1975, March 5). Rex Connor archive, Box 25, Item 1/252 'Windmills'. See: Andrew, E. (1978) *The energy crisis and the wind*, Collet & Bain.

<sup>47</sup> United States Senate (1988, June 30) Greenhouse effect and global climate change : hearings before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate". HathiTrust. S. HRG. ;100-461. June 30, 1988. hdl:2027/uc1.b5127807.

Hansen, J. et. al (1988). [Global climate changes as forecast by Goddard Institute for Space Studies three-dimensional model](https://doi.org/10.1029/1987JD004841), *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 93 (93): 9341–9364

<sup>48</sup> Carlson, Joseph (1988, Aug 3). 'The Greenhouse Effect', memo to Exxon management. <https://www.climatefiles.com/exxonmobi/566/>

## **(5) Big oil's deception and defeat of climate policy becomes the Atlas Network's primary vocation**

From the outset, big oil's information war against scientific reality and public interest government was conducted through the arms length 'institutes' of the Atlas Network thinktanks, which they were already quietly funding.

In 1989, Dr. Fred Singer published arguably the first book directly attacking the long-established scientific consensus that atmospheric accumulation of CO<sub>2</sub> caused by oil, coal and gas combustion would cause catastrophic global heating.<sup>49</sup> Singer was perfect for the job. He had been the editor of an early comprehensive collection of scientific papers on the *Global effects of environmental pollution* (1970), which had included a seminal paper by climate expert Syukuro Manabe on 'The dependence of atmospheric temperature on the concentration of carbon dioxide'.<sup>50</sup> By the late 1980s, however, Singer had form selling his scientific authority to 'economic research institutes' funded by fossil fuel interests. In a 1984 book Singer attacked the public interest regulation of the US fossil fuel industry. The book was published by the **Heritage Foundation** (author of the Trump 2.0 administration policy planning document 'Project 2025'), whose major sponsor was Richard Mellon Scaife, billionaire heir to the family banking, Alcoa and Gulf Oil (now Chevron) fortune.<sup>51</sup>

As ex-Atlas Network president (1991-2017) Alejandro Chafuen says of the origins of the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** on his personal blog, of "the early donors which made the launching possible":

Some are still generous supporters, like a Canadian family that wishes to remain anonymous, and the Scaife Foundation.

This network was held together by the views and intellectual leadership of Hayek and Friedman and benefitted from the generosity and leadership of Richard Mellon Scaife, The Earhart Foundation, Charles Koch, the John M. Olin Foundation, and Liberty Fund.<sup>52</sup>

Singer's book opened the floodgates for a rash of pseudo-science climate disinformation books. None of these were published by commercial, scientific or university presses, but by **Atlas Network** thinktanks founded and funded by fossil fuel investors. Hidden Atlas 'donors' would then pay for bulk orders of these books to be distributed and publicised through their press contacts. In Australia these have been published by the **Institute of Public Affairs** via its publishing arm Connor Court. I include only English titles in this indicative footnote, which shows that the bulk of the oil industry's science denial campaign was conducted under concealment, by the Atlas Network's allegedly 'independent' not-for-profit 'research institutes'.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Singer, S.F. (ed.) (1989) *Global climate change: human and natural influences*. ICUS, New York. (ICUS was not a scientific press, it was owned by Reverend Moon- see: <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/sun-myung-moon-unification-church-climate-change-denial-1234808552/>)

<sup>50</sup> Singer, S.F. (ed.) (1970) *Global effects of environmental pollution*, Springer-Verlag, New York. [https://archive.org/details/isbn\\_9789027701510](https://archive.org/details/isbn_9789027701510)

<sup>51</sup> Singer, F. (ed) (1984) *Free market energy: the way to benefit consumers*. **Heritage Foundation**, Universe: New York; Stahl, J. (2016). *Right moves: The conservative think tank in American political culture since 1945*. UNC Press Books, p. 55 & 71; on **Heritage Foundation's** Project 2025 as policy planning for an authoritarian coup against democracy, renewable energy transition and climate policy, see e.g.: <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2024/07/what-project-2025-would-do-to-climate-policy-in-the-us/>; <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/project-2025-would-jeopardize-global-climate-action/>; <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/project-2025-is-a-mandate-for-destroying-democracy-and-the-climate/>; <https://english.elpais.com/climate/2024-09-03/project-2025-and-the-prospect-of-a-more-radical-trump-worry-environmentalists.html>; <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/08/1192634090/if-republicans-win-the-white-house-in-2024-climate-policy-will-likely-change>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.chafuen.com/alejandro-antonio-chafuen/free-market-think-tanks/antony-fisher-and-think-tanks>

<sup>53</sup> See e.g.: Shaw, J., Stroup, R. (1990) Global warming and ozone depletion, in Block, W. (ed) *Economics and the environment: a reconsideration*, **The Fraser Institute**, Vancouver; Chisolm, A., Moran, A., Porter, M. (1991) *Markets, resources and the environment*, **The Tasman Institute**, National Priorities Project; Jeffrey, K. (1991) *Why worry about global warming?* **Competitive Enterprise Institute/ National Center for Policy Analysis**; Balling, R. (1992) *The Heated Debate: Greenhouse Predictions and Climate Reality*, **Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy**; Singer, F. (1992) *The greenhouse debate continued: an analysis and critique of the IPCC climate assessment*, **Science and Environmental Policy Project**; Michaels, P. (1992) *Sound and Fury: The Science and Politics of Global Warming*, **Cato Institute**; Bast, J., Hill, P., Rue, R. (1994) *Eco-Sanity: a common sense guide to environmentalism*, **Heartland Institute**; Bate, R & Morris, J. (1994) *Global warming: apocalypse or hot air?* **Institute of Economic Affairs**, London; Sanera M, Shaw J (1996) *Facts not fear: a parent's guide to teaching children about the environment*, **Alabama Policy Institute**, Regnery; Jones, L., Michaels, P., Soon, W., Balling, R., Idso, C. (1997) *Global Warming: The Science and the Politics*; **Fraser Institute**; Adler, J., Montgomery, D., Fisher, B., Spencer, R., Lal, D. Bate, R et al (1997) *The Costs of Kyoto: Climate Change Policy And Its Implications*, **Competitive Enterprise Institute**; Singer, F. (1997) *Hot Talk- Cold Science*, **Independent Institute**; Singer, F. (1999) *Climate policy from Rio to Kyoto : a political issue for 2000 and beyond*, **Hoover Institution**, Stanford University,

In 1990, Singer was invited by the **Institute of Public Affairs** to tour Australia to promote science denial and generate hostility toward the UN climate treaty, up for negotiation at the UN conference to be held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. As the **IPA** announced in its journal, *IPA Review*:

Fred Singer, on leave from his Professoriat of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, is Director of the **Science and Environmental Policy Project** [SEPP] at the Washington Institute for Values in Public Policy. During a whirlwind visit to Australia in late November-early December, Prof. Singer spoke to IPA functions in Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart and Canberra, as well as giving numerous addresses to the media.<sup>54</sup>

Singer then flew to New Zealand to deliver an address entitled ‘Global warming: an imaginary crisis’ to the **New Zealand Centre for Independent Studies**.<sup>55</sup> The NZCIS was founded in 1986 as an offshoot of the Sydney-based **Centre for Independent Studies**.<sup>56</sup>

Singer’s (1989) book was soon cited in a co-authored book by Alan Moran (ex-Rio Tinto public affairs manager, director **Institute of Public Affairs, Heartland Institute**, owner StopTheseThings.com): Moran falsely claimed that “conclusive empirical evidence to support the [global warming] hypothesis has not been found”.<sup>57</sup>

Published by the **Tasman Institute**, a now defunct corporation-sponsored thinktank led by Michael Porter (MPS) later converted into consultancy **ACIL Tasman**, the book was part of a project supported by the Australian Institute of Petroleum to cast doubt on climate science, oppose direct science-based government regulation or environmental pollution through prohibitions, taxes and fines, and instead promote the MPS/Atlas thinktank generated alternative policy paradigm: ‘free market environmentalism’ through privatisation and tradeable pollution permits and as carbon or biodiversity ‘offsets’.

Moran’s name has appeared on almost every anti-climate policy organisation, conference and publication in Australia since then to the present day. As a key veteran of the Atlas Network climate disinformation machine in Australia, he would be well-placed to assist this inquiry.

Through the 1990s, Singer’s **SEPP** was a prodigious source for big oil’s internationally disseminated counter-science disinformation aimed at defeating an effective UN climate treaty and national level support for climate policies capable of preventing catastrophic climate change, such as the coordinated OECD carbon tax proposed by the European Union and defeated by an Exxon-led ferocious lobbying effort by big oil just on time

---

CA; Michaels, P. & Balling, R. (2000) *The Satanic Gases*, **Cato Institute**; Soon, W., Baliunas, S. L., Robinson, A., & Robinson, Z. W. (2001) *Global warming: a guide to the science*, **Fraser Institute**, Vancouver; Gough, M, Happer, W., Singer, F., Michaels, P., Bate, R. (2003) *Politicizing science : the alchemy of policymaking*, **Hoover Institution & George C. Marshall Institute**; Michaels, P (2005) *Meltdown: The Predictable Distortion of Global Warming by Scientists, Politicians, and the Media*, **Cato Institute**; Michaels, P (2005) *Shattered Consensus: The True State of Global Warming*, Rowman & Littlefield; Driessen, P. (2007) *Eco-Imperialism: Green Power, Black Death*, Free Enterprise Press, **Committee For a Constructive Tomorrow (C-FACT)**; Michaels, P. (2009) *Climate of Extremes: Global Warming Science They Don't Want You to Know*, **Cato Institute**; Plimer, I (2008) *Heaven and Earth: Global Warming-the Missing Science*, **Institute of Public Affairs/Connor Court**; McKittrick, R. (ed. 2009), *Critical Topics in Global Warming*, **Fraser Institute**, Vancouver; Moran, A. (ed) (2010) *Climate Change the Facts*, **Institute of Public Affairs**, Melbourne; Michaels, P. (2011) *Climate Coup: Global Warming's Invasion of Our Government and Our Lives*, **Cato Institute**; Bennett, J. (2012) *Little Green Lies: An Expose of Twelve Environmental Myths*, **Institute of Public Affairs**, Melbourne; Idso, C., Carter, Singer, F. (2015) Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming, **Heartland Institute**. Michaels, P. & Knappenberger, P. (2016) *Lukewarming: The New Climate Science that Changes Everything*, **Cato Institute**; Plimer, I. (2021) *Green Murder: a Life Sentence of Net Zero with no Parole*, Connor Court; Lindzen, R. (2022) An Assessment of the conventional global warming narrative, **Global Warming Policy Foundation**; Marohasy, J & Abott, J (eds) Kellow, A. Kinninmonth, W., Legates, D., Marohasy, J. Monckton, C., Plimer, I. (2025) *Climate Change the Facts*, **Institute of Public Affairs**.

Paul Driessen was a senior fellow of **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** who negotiated with Atlas president Alejandro Chafuen for Exxon funding in the mid-1990s through early 2000s- See Atlas Network archive, B76 and B77.

<sup>54</sup> *IPA Review* (1991, Summer) Vol. 44, Issue 2.

<sup>55</sup> Anon (1990, 30 Nov) Global warming imaginary- expert. *The New Zealand Herald*.

<sup>56</sup> Atlas Network Archive, B126-F10, **New Zealand Centre for Independent Studies & New Zealand Business Roundtable** 1986-1992, **Hoover Institution**. Along with the education-focussed **Maxim Institute**, these organisations have since been succeeded by **The New Zealand Initiative** and **NZ Taxpayer’s Union**. Both campaign against effective climate policy and have links to the oil and gas industry association Energy Aotearoa and the MPS/Atlas founded ACT Party (Association of Consumers and Taxpayers), now led by Deputy PM of New Zealand David Seymour (Atlas Thinktank MBA 2008, **Frontier Institute for Public Policy**).

<sup>57</sup> Chisolm, A., Moran, A., Porter, M. (1991) *Markets, resources and the environment*, **The Tasman Institute**, National Priorities Project, p. 237.

to undermine momentum for an effective UN climate treaty at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.<sup>58</sup> In 1995, the Atlas Network's head office announced that SEPP had:

...moved to Fairfax, joining **Atlas**, the **Institute for Humane Studies**, **The Locke Institute**, and the **Centre for Market Processes** at 4084 University Drive near **George Mason University**. Atlas provided a grant to ... facilitate the move and help fund the organization during its first year in Fairfax. Atlas invites other institutes to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the proximity of **SEPP**. The organization's founding president, Dr. S. Fred Singer, is a well-known physical scientist who has been an active contributor in the battle against the "politicization" of science. Singer, along with a handful of other prominent scientists, have dared to challenge claims of environmental apocalypse from global warming.<sup>59</sup>

The Atlas Network's vocation for transnational disinformation campaigns against scientific reality and the United Nations climate treaty had only just begun.

## **(6) Overview of the organisation of the Atlas Network & climate disinformation in Australia**

### **(a) Australian members of the Atlas Network's 'inner-sanctum', the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS)**<sup>60</sup>

Founded in 1947 by the neoliberal economists Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman as a closed workshop for annual international networking conferences, the MPS has been described as the "inner sanctum" of the Atlas Network. Until the thinktanks made them seem normal and inevitable, ideas of the Austrian and Chicago school MPS economists were then considered so radical, reactionary, undemocratic and outdated as to be irrelevant. The first nation-scale experiment in the wholesale neoliberal transformation of an economy and constitution was conducted in Chile during the dictatorship of General Pinochet (1973-1989), with the advice and influence of MPS economists and constitutional theorists Milton Friedman, Arnold Harberger, Friedrich Hayek and James Buchanan.<sup>61</sup>

Scholars have oft-noted that MPS members advocacy for 'economic freedom' for 'the market' (e.g. large corporations) is accompanied by a jaundiced view of electoral democracy, parliamentary sovereignty and human rights.<sup>62</sup> But it was the 'thinktank method' of altering national level public opinion in the medium to long-term pioneered by Atlas Network founder Antony Fisher (MPS 1955) that was to reverse the political fortunes of the MPS intellectuals and their undeclared corporate patrons, resulting in the election of Margeret Thatcher (UK, 1979) and Ronald Reagan (1981), and the seemingly irresistible consolidation of neoliberal globalisation from the 1980s until the global financial crisis of 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Jouty, F., & Bonneuil, C. (2025). Undermining Climate Action: The Fight by European Oil Companies Against the European Carbon Tax. *The International History Review*, 1-22. [doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2025.2583948](https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2025.2583948)

<sup>59</sup> Atlas Network (1995, Jan) **Science & Environmental Policy Project** Moves To Fairfax, Virginia. **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**. [https://web.archive.org/web/20021021144545/http://www.atlasusa.org/highlight\\_archive/1995/H1995-02-Environment.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20021021144545/http://www.atlasusa.org/highlight_archive/1995/H1995-02-Environment.html)

<sup>60</sup> See DeSmog 2021a, 'Mont Pelerin Society 2013 member directory'. [https://www.desmog.com/wp-content/uploads/files/Mont%20Pelerin%20Society%202013-membership-listing\\_Redacted.pdf](https://www.desmog.com/wp-content/uploads/files/Mont%20Pelerin%20Society%202013-membership-listing_Redacted.pdf)

For the Australian and international membership directory of the MPS as of 2013, included key anti-climate disinformation actors and activists mentioned in this submission and relevant to this inquiry. [Attachment 1] In this submission I denote MPS members by the date of their invitation and acceptance into the Society.

<sup>61</sup> Filip, B. (2018). Friedrich Hayek and his visits to Chile: Some Austrian misrepresentations. In: Leeson, R. (eds) *Hayek: A Collaborative Biography*, Palgrave. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91358-2\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91358-2_11); Farrant, A., & Tarko, V. (2024). Who is to put the bell on the cat? Democracy, dictatorship, and James M. Buchanan's early 1980s involvement with Pinochet's Chile. *Southern Economic Journal*, 91(2), 590-608.

<sup>62</sup> Cornelissen, L., 2017, 'How can the people be restricted? The Mont Pèlerin society and the problem of democracy, 1947–1998' *History of European Ideas*, vol. 43, no 5, pp.507-524. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2017.1365745>

Maier, H. (2024). Neoliberal fascism? Fascist trends in early neoliberal thought and echoes in the present. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 23(3), 392-410.

Originally to be comprised exclusively of economics and law professors, only occasionally have ultra-wealthy donors such as the US oil-refining billionaire, **Cato Institute** founder and Atlas Network mega-funder Charles Koch (MPS 1970) been admitted to its membership.<sup>63</sup> Increasingly, the MPS membership is dominated by Atlas thinktank directors and activists, such as Maurice Newman (MPS 1976, co-founder of **Centre of Independent Studies**, **Advance**, and **ADHTV-Newsmax**), who in 1975 flew Milton Friedman direct from advising the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile for an Australian speaking tour against the allegedly inflationary policies of the Whitlam government.<sup>64</sup> Newman was integral to the foundation and funding arrangements of the Australian arm, and has been central to its climate and energy disinformation efforts right up to the present.

Another key Australian MPS member was John Stone. According to Whitlam's secretary John Menadue, it was Stone in the Treasury department who leaked cabinet documents to the L-CP opposition during the Loans Affair which brought down the Whitlam government.<sup>65</sup> In 1984, Stone resigned his public service role as head of Treasury. As Shell's archived records show, Stone was paid \$35,000 by the Shell Oil Company for an unspecified 1986-1987 consulting project with the **Institute of Public Affairs**. Shell was also sponsoring the **Centre of Independent Studies** (Sydney) and the **Australian Institute of Public Policy** (Perth) in similar amounts over this period.<sup>66</sup> Stone would later be closely associated with the anti-science climate disinformation front the **Lavoisier Group** (active 2000-2013, and recently revived for the current Atlas anti-renewables campaign), an organisation co-founded by Stone along with inaugural Atlas Network board member Hugh Morgan and his speechwriter Ray Evans (MPS 1988). Stone was inaugurated into the **Mont Pelerin Society** in 2009.

Better known Australian MPS members include ex-prime minister John Howard (MPS 2010) of the science denial unit **Global Warming Policy Foundation** and the anti-multiculturalism, anti-climate policy focussed national-conservative **Alliance for Responsible Citizenship**. Whilst neither organisation has appeared on the AtlasNetwork.org partner directory, both have all the key ingredients: MPS members and Atlas thinktank veterans on their advisory board, financed by multinational oil investors and foundations which finance other Atlas units, highly networked across the rightward factions of right-wing parties and governments. The **Alliance for Responsible Citizenship** generates and re-propagates cheap, [REDACTED] media content for distribution through 'news-like' YouTube channels interviewing 'distinguished experts' from the Atlas speakers bureau inserting 'dump net zero' messages into the online political sphere.<sup>67</sup> Other MPS members familiar to Australians are Liberal MP Tim Wilson (MPS 2012) who ran the **Institute of Public Affairs** 'axe the carbon tax and Kyoto' campaign 2006-2013, a campaign documented in detail and praised by the Atlas Network [Fig 13, 14]. Another key MPS member is News Corp journalist Janet Albrechtsen (MPS 2011, ex-director **Institute of Public Affairs**, **Samuel Griffiths Society**).<sup>68</sup>

Along with Hugh Morgan, who has been central to the organisation and funding of the Australian Atlas infrastructure and its counter-science climate disinformation for half a century and was an inaugural member of business advisory council of the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** at the US centre of the Atlas Network,<sup>69</sup> among the most important veterans of the Mont Pelerin Society and the Australian arm of the Atlas Network for the purposes of this Senate inquiry is ex-Shell Coal and Chemical (Aust.) chief executive, and veteran **Institute of Public Affairs** board member Dr. Michael Folie (MPS 2011).

---

<sup>63</sup> Atlas Network archive, B178-F11. Charles and David Koch ploughed a fraction of their vast private fortune into the Atlas thinktank infrastructure. Koch's lifelong counter-revolution against egalitarian democracy through the Atlas can be dated to 1970, when Koch's **Institute of Humane Studies** invited Antony Fisher on a private speaking tour to US business leaders in the USA and a private stay with Charles at his Wichita compound.

<sup>64</sup> Courvisanos, J. & Millmow, A. 2006, 'How Milton Friedman came to Australia', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, 57: 112-136.

<sup>65</sup> Pers comm, oral history research interview with author.

<sup>66</sup> Shell Historical Archive (1903-2007) Registry of sponsorships, grants and donations, Unit 252. Accession no. 2008.0045, University of Melbourne Archives.

<sup>67</sup> See e.g. **ARC**'s YouTube channel videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF9dSJEhx1Y>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j7jU3cwDQw>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRhNOv1Uo4M>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWqv6RH-3WE>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVOZ5PlyqHU&list=PLuOdzpOweEiFaRAK-Uk-VSW9GGZ8DmY7e>; <https://www.smh.com.au/federal-election-2019/albrechtsen-in-kemp-out-at-the-ipa-20190515-p51nq0.html?js-chunk-not-found-refresh=true>

<sup>69</sup> Chafuen, A., 2021b, 'Atlas boards in 1984'. Retrieved 2023-09-11. <https://web.archive.org/web/20211110004921/https://www.chafuen.com/atlas-economic-research-foundation-atlas-network-early-history/atlas-boards-in-1984>

Folie left his job as an academic resource economist at the University of New South Wales to become chief economist of Shell (Australia) in 1979, becoming chief executive of Shell Coal and Chemical (Australia) until retiring from Shell in 1998. Folie joined the board of the **Institute of Public Affairs** in 1995,<sup>70</sup> presumably to look after Shell's investments ('donations') across the Australian branch of the Atlas Network, and remains a current member of the IPA's board of directors. As one of the responsible officers of the IPA, Folie has for 30 years supervised and signed off on the IPA's endless attacks on responsible climate policy, renewable energy, and the climate science that Shell long knew was completely sound in predicting climate disaster.<sup>71</sup>

As early as 1980, Folie's own peer-reviewed research on the prospects of Australian coal exporting companies warned his readers plainly that it would soon be necessary to leave unburned coal permanently in the ground:

.. environmental constraints could severely restrict the market for coal [...] many scientists have strong reservations about the effects of large increases in global levels of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>72</sup>

As a senior Shell executive only a few short years later, it is surely likely Folie was on the distribution list to receive Shell International's confidential internal scientific review of the catastrophic effects of *The Greenhouse Effect* [Shell 1986/1988].<sup>73</sup>



Fig 8: Ningaloo Reef, Western Australia (2024)  
Devastation of entire coral reef ecosystems caused by fossil fuel combustion emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>,  
As anticipated by Shell 's confidential internal scientific report *The Greenhouse Effect* (1986, p. 26).

<sup>70</sup> Folie and fellow officers of the IPA listed here: ASIC (2014) Current & Historical Company Extract ASIC extract of **Institute of Public Affairs** [Institute Of Public Affairs Limited Acn: 008 627 727](https://www.instituteofpublicaffairs.com.au/)

<sup>71</sup> Climate Investigations (2025) Shell Document Index. <https://climateinvestigations.org/shell-oil-climate-documents/document-index/>

US Congress (2023) Shell Documents - Denial, disinformation, and doublespeak: big oil's evolving efforts to avoid accountability for climate change. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/shell-documents-denial-disinformation-and-doublespeak-big-oils-evolving-efforts-avoid>

<sup>72</sup> Folie, M. & McColl (1980, March) The Australian coal industry: an economic appraisal, *Resources Policy*, p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> Shell International Petroleum ([1986]1988) Confidential: The Greenhouse Effect. Report Series HSE 88-001, Maatschappij B.V., The Hague. <https://www.climatefiles.com/shell/1988-shell-report-greenhouse/>

Warning that “by the time the global warming becomes detectable it could be too late to take effective countermeasures to reduce the effects or even to stabilize the situation” (p.4), the Shell report on *The Greenhouse Effect* (1986/1988) accurately summarised the then already long-established scientific consensus that fossil fuel combustion emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> were causing increasingly catastrophic planetary heating.

Shell’s scientists frankly warned senior management that millions would be made homeless climate refugees:

*... large low-lying areas could be inundated (e.g. Bangladesh) and might have to be abandoned.*

Already then, they were fully aware that fossil-combustion caused ocean acidification, which could “quite rapidly” dissolve “shells, corals and sediments”, resulting in:

*...the disappearance of complete coral islands.* (Shell 1986, p. 26).

### **(b) The Atlas Economic Research Foundation (est.1981), trading as ‘Atlas Network’ (Fairfax, Virginia USA)**

The little known “mother of all think tanks”, the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** (USA) sits quietly at the US centre of its global web of the some 550+ affiliated organisations comprising the global **Atlas Network**.<sup>74</sup> Registered in 1981 by Antony Fisher (MPS 1955) in Delaware, its offices are in Fairfax, Virginia- near George Mason University and the US capital, Washington DC. As corporate registry data shows, the Atlas Economic Research Foundation first registered ‘Atlas Network’ as a trademark in 2014, which it has since used in its public facing materials, presumably to deflect attention from its original role as a central funding vehicle for its primary function of ‘littering the world with free market thinktanks’.

Confusingly, the Atlas no longer uses its real name in public: it trades as ‘Atlas Network’, which is a registered trademark of the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**: presumably to mislead the public regarding its original mission to arrange funding for Atlas thinktanks.



Fig 9: Retired and current (since 2014) registered trademarks of the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**. Source: [OpenCorporates.com](https://opencorporates.com)

<sup>74</sup> The **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** was first registered in 1981 by its founder Antony Fisher in tax and corporate secrecy jurisdiction Delaware, USA. It now trades under the copyrighted trademark “Atlas Network”. See corporate registry data here: [https://opencorporates.com/companies/us\\_de/918391/statements/trademark\\_registration](https://opencorporates.com/companies/us_de/918391/statements/trademark_registration)

It is important to note that *there is no legal entity formally called the Atlas Network*: I use the name to refer to all 550+ orgs and their executive, academic and corporate board members as a single coherent networked entity, and in the larger sense to including the network of ultra-wealthy individuals, private foundations, oil and other multinational corporations that have consistently financed Atlas thinktanks and their spin-off campaign entities.

Importantly, the **Atlas Foundation** is not itself a ‘thinktank’ producing reports and op-eds in its own name, but a central hub for coordination, training, new think-tank seeding, international networking, and grant disbursal. Presenting itself publicly as a kind of international development NGO that wants to train people to help the poor to achieve “human flourishing” through “economic freedom”, the **Atlas Foundation** has for decades successfully kept an extremely low public profile, and wants to keep it that way. Maintaining secrecy and public ignorance about the very existence of the Atlas Network of 550+ organisations with which it continuously communicates with, coordinates and expands, is critical to it’s world historic victories. Very few of the 550+ member orgs comprising the global Atlas Network openly declare their membership of the Atlas Network in public, preserving the illusion necessary to deceiving the public whose ‘opinions’ and governments they seek to condition and capture, that each individual Atlas thinktank is, as they are careful to routinely declare, a ‘not for profit’, ‘independent’ ‘public interest’ ‘public policy research institute.’

The secret of its success is keeping its central secret: that the Atlas Network is a single, coherent, global, and (to some unknown extent) centrally co-ordinated corporate propaganda infrastructure, endlessly repeating and re-translating the same messages across national borders and languages, using the same strategies, tactics, and personnel for the same set of transnational corporations and billionaire investors (‘donors’) across 100 countries. We should ensure that henceforth the Atlas Foundation and its Network member organisations are kept permanently under critical examination and public scrutiny.

Born to a wealthy English coal-mine owning family, Fisher founded the prototype neoliberal thinktank, the **Institute of Economic Affairs** in 1955. From the early 1960s to the present day, **IEA** has been funded, like all the others where funding is known, by a roster of multinational oil (among other) companies and fossil fuel investors. The role of the **IEA** and every ‘IEA clone’ later founded by Fisher was to counter the influence of university-based scholars, philosophers and scientists upon what Hayek called the ‘second-hand dealers in ideas’ (journalists, teachers, college lecturers). The model includes publicising short, easily read ‘economic research’ commissioned from MPS academics by hidden ‘donors’ in the mass media, disseminating books and pamphlets throughout school and university libraries, and translating this research into concrete public policy proposals and advocate for them amongst journalists and politicians.

By the mid-late 1970s, the **IEA** had created the ‘climate of opinion’ that Margaret Thatcher credited with making possible her 1979 election victory. At that time, the **IEA**’s funders, carefully concealed from the public under their influence, included core funders Shell, Rio Tinto and British Petroleum, along with Burmah, Exxon, Texaco, Amoco, and Gulf Oil and many other global chemical, mining, banking, tobacco, media and other corporations.<sup>75</sup> This pattern of sponsorship from the same or similar corporations is mirrored in the funding lists, where available, of other Atlas thinktanks.

Fisher’s 1970 visit to the US supported via the **Institute for Humane Studies** by the oil-refining billionaire Charles Koch (MPS 1970) soon lead to the formation of the **Charles Koch Foundation** (later rebranded as the **Cato Institute**), the **Heritage Foundation**, and many, many others. Fisher was then invited by big business to Canada to personally found the **Fraser Institute** (Vancouver, 1974) and then to Sydney to set up an **IEA** style thinktank, the **Centre for Independent Studies** (Sydney, 1976). Like **IEA** London and the **IPA** Melbourne, **Fraser** and **CIS** were supported by Shell, Rio Tinto and Exxon among other corporations. Their current funding remains opaque. In the mid-1970s Fisher moved to the USA, and founded the **Manhattan Institute** (1975, with OSS veteran and Reagan’s CIA director William Casey), the **Pacific Institute**, and the **National Centre for Policy Analysis**. All of the above thinktanks were originally funded by multiple oil companies, and have since engaged in science denial and defence of fossil capital’s profits against climate policy and the right to life in a living world of our children and grandchildren.

<sup>75</sup> **Institute of Economic Affairs** contributors (July 1978). Internal only list of corporate funders. In author’s possession.

The return to power of radically pro-corporate, pro-profit and anti-welfare state government with Thatcher and Reagan in 1979 and 1981 was widely acknowledged as the result of Fisher's neoliberal thinktank method, which avoided directly partisan election-focussed propaganda, and instead slowly and subtly reshaped the terms and norms of political and economic 'debate' over the medium to long term. Through this method, political power has been reshaped in country after country, at low cost and without any corporate names being mentioned. Fisher was in such demand, that in 1981 he established the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**, which was not to be a thinktank, but an assembly line factory to mass-manufacture them, to fundraise from Fisher's every growing network of ultra-wealthy individuals and corporate leaders and in order to "litter the world with free market thinktanks".

The **Atlas Foundation** is the nerve centre of the global Atlas Network: it trains and vets thinktank managers and organises the secretive annual international meetings of the Atlas Network executive directors and foundation funders, which have historically been held in parallel with the equally secretive meetings of the Mont Pelerin Society. Australian Atlas thinktank directors have attended the closed international meetings of the global Atlas Network thinktank leadership (which publish no proceedings, and do not speak to the press) since veteran Atlas networker Greg Lindsay (MPS 1982, **Centre for Independent Studies** co-founder, long-term executive director & board member) attended the first, hosted by the **Fraser Institute** in 1983. Just before Fisher died in 1987, he could count c. 80 organisations in 12 countries founded or supported by the Atlas Foundation. Under the leadership of Atlas president Alejandro Chafuen (1991-2017), the Atlas Network roster of 'IEA clones' (Fisher's words) would be rapidly expanded and further globalised by fossil fuel industry financing to become the central communications infrastructure of its global anti-climate policy obstruction campaign, toward its present dimensions of over 550+ global partners overseen by current Atlas president Matt Warner and CEO Brad Lips (MPS 2009, Atlas CEO since 2009).<sup>76</sup>

Due to the legal non-transparency of the **IPA** and **CIS** funding sources as tax -exempt 'public interest charities', we do not know the exact funding and campaign coordination relationship between the Australian arm of the Atlas Network and its central office, the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**, which advises and mobilises the enormous financial capacities of the multiple US foundations that we do know have funded hundreds of US based Atlas think-tanks for decades: Donors Trust, Donors Capital, Koch, Scaife, Templeton, Earhart, Bradley, Olin, Smith Richardson, Lambe to name a few.<sup>77</sup> With an extensive list of multinational oil, coal, gas, uranium mining, banking and other corporations available to locally fund them, the **IPA** and the **CIS** hardly need US funding sources to operate. Nevertheless, both have been financed for specific projects commissioned across multiple thinktanks and nations by the Atlas Foundation by US foundations and corporations like ExxonMobil.

Using the Form 990 public disclosures required in US law of philanthropic foundations and tax exempt non-profits, Greenpeace USA was able to piece together evidence to show in 2004 that Exxon had funded a long list of US 'thinktanks' producing climate denial content on an industrial scale, although without noticing that most of these organisations were either thinktanks listed on the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation's** 'partner directory', or were front groups and campaign entities composed of individuals who were affiliated with, paid, or published by them.<sup>78</sup> Almost no one outside of the Atlas Network had then heard of the Atlas Network.

We now know that these payments were part of an international campaign to ramp up the quantity, intensity and international reach of originally US-based anti-climate policy disinformation activities, and to expand and extend the Atlas Network presence to every continent for this purpose, a project negotiated directly between Atlas head office and Exxon between 1997 and 2003 for the explicit purpose of the production, translation and dissemination of anti-climate policy disinformation intended to create hostility and division within and between countries over climate climate policy in order to render the UN climate treaty a weak and ineffective

---

<sup>77</sup> See Attachment B: From public IRS Form 990 documents, Brulle et. al tally nearly 50,000 payments over the period 2012-2018 amounting to **\$9.7 billion USD** flowing into 128 organisations (most are Atlas members) involved in counter-science disinformation to obstruct or defeat climate and clean energy policy. Data supplement to: Brulle, R. et. al. (2021) Obstructing action: foundation funding and US climate change counter-movement organizations. *Climatic Change*, 166(1), 17. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-021-03117-w>

<sup>78</sup> ExxonSecrets.org (2004) Documenting Exxon-Mobil's funding of climate change sceptics. List of organisations. <https://web.archive.org/web/20040626101451/http://www.exxonsecrets.org/html/listorganizations.php> ; Greenpeace USA (2004, Mar 23) <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/greenpeace-and-the-people-vs-exxonmobil/>

instrument. In 1997, Exxon public affairs manager William Hale wrote to Alejandro Chafuen and Paul Driessen at Atlas HQ:

Exxon is interested in nurturing free-market think tanks outside the United States (through other efforts, we are comfortable with the support we provide to US-based organizations and on US-related issues). Accordingly, we would challenge Atlas to suggest a program which is entirely supportive of non-US groups. It could include elements of "flow-through" funding, work on international information networks, or other activities which would have as their intended result the growth of international groups which have the ability to influence government policies. We are particularly interested in the creation of such groups in Asia (including India), the Former Soviet Union, continental Europe, and Latin America (and this is in priority order). We are comparatively comfortable with the availability of groups in Canada, the UK, and Australia, and reasonably encouraged in Latin America.<sup>79</sup>

The envelope contained a small consideration toward these efforts.

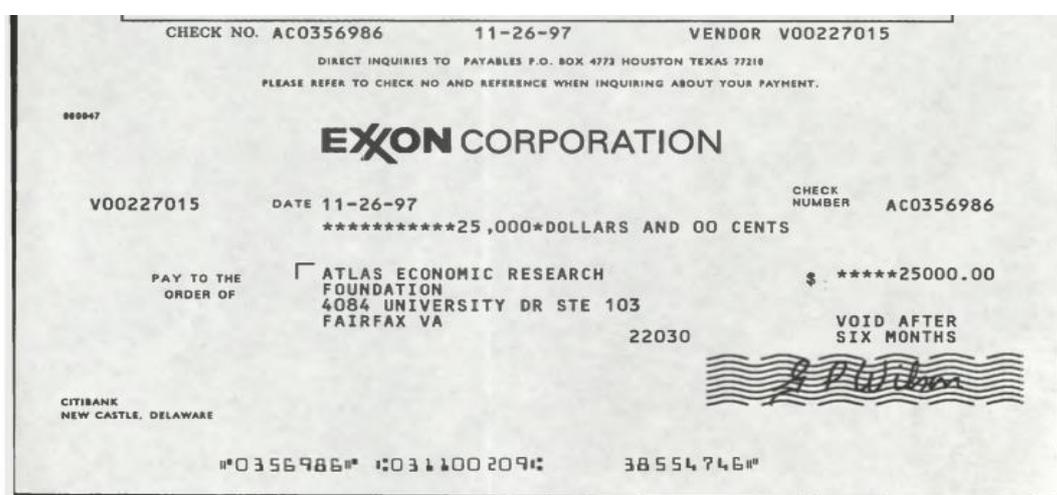


Fig 10. One of many cheques written for the **Atlas Foundation** to build new climate disinformation capacities internationally, and to individual member thinktanks for their publications, events, media, and activism against climate science and policy.

This cheque was a downpayment responding to Chafuen’s detailed funding proposal pitch for \$75,000 from Exxon. At the top of the list of international Atlas projects to be funded by Exxon were efforts aimed at:

*Countering the expanded use of international laws and treaties to impose unnecessarily restrictive regulations and pervasive command-and-control government mandates. International laws, treaties and protocols have become the weapons of choice among government agencies and "progressive" organizations that seek to impose their philosophies and priorities on businesses, countries, cities and individuals everywhere. Global climate change, energy and mineral development, eco-labels, population control, health care, and risks from chemicals and pesticides are just a few of the issues on which the global governing elite is attempting to require one-size-fits- all "solutions."*<sup>80</sup>

Specifically, Chafuen promised that Atlas would use the money from Exxon to:

- ❖ Expand the use of Web sites and links, telefaxes, workshops, conferences, reports, articles, radio and television talk and interview programs, videos and other electronic media, by Atlas

<sup>79</sup> Atlas Network archive, B76-F13. ExxonMobil 1994-1997. Letter from Hale to Chafuen cc. Paul Driessen (1997, Nov 21). See original document scans linked in: Dembicki, G. (2025, Nov 3) 'A Pretty Ugly History': How Exxon Exported Climate Denial to the Global South. With Brazil about to host COP30, DeSmog has obtained copies of checks Exxon mailed to the right-wing Atlas Network in the 1990s to turn Latin America against climate treaties, DeSmog.com. <https://www.desmog.com/2025/11/03/a-pretty-ugly-history-how-exxon-exported-climate-denial-to-the-global-south/>

<sup>80</sup> Atlas Network archive, B76-F13. ExxonMobil 1994-1997 Chafuen, Atlas Foundation funding proposal to Hale, Exxon. (1997, Oct 8).

and its network of institutes, to promote free market thinking.

- ❖ Increase institute alliances and cooperative efforts with grassroots groups *that have successfully opposed United Nations initiatives.*
- ❖ Develop, fund and assist new overseas organizations and programs, dealing specifically with *the problems of international treaties*, and the export of bad laws and policies. [my italics]

Chafuen assured Exxon that:

Atlas-sponsored conferences, workshops and publications have influenced large numbers of policy makers, journalists, business professionals, teachers, students, the clergy and other opinion leaders. [...] Atlas fellow Ronald Bailey ...and other experts (like Michael Fumento, Fred Singer, Steve Milloy, Lynn Scarlett and John Stossel) have spoken before business, professional and educational groups, and played major roles at Atlas conferences and workshops, in the US, China, Brazil, Argentina and many other countries.

Speaking directly to the issue at hand:

Atlas also sponsors Dr. S. Fred Singer's Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP), which has just published a new book, *Global Warming: Unfinished Business*. We helped develop new Internet Web sites on global climate change ([www.globalwarming.org](http://www.globalwarming.org) for Consumer Alert and [www.sepp.org](http://www.sepp.org) for SEPP), and expect to help translate the enclosed booklet (*The Scientific Case Against the Global Climate Treaty*) into German, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese.

Summing up, Chafuen assured Exxon of the highly professional training of its directors, and their discretion in keeping Exxon's name out of the papers whilst filling them with Exxon commissioned climate denial 'content' capable of protecting Exxon's profits from the prospect of a science-based global UN climate treaty involving nationally legislated carbon taxes, emissions caps, and investments in non-fossil energy systems:

*By working through Atlas, Exxon will also ensure that risks to its investments in these institutes are minimized.* Atlas thus offers a sound, *highly leveraged, long term investment* opportunity in changing the way America and the world think about problems, solutions and policies that are important to business, and to the continued health, freedom and prosperity of our nation and world.

In an era when centralized command-and-control regulations, confiscatory tax policies and other utopian "solutions" are being vigorously exported from the United States and Europe to the far corners of the globe, this investment in market-oriented public policies is a vital key to our future prosperity and well-being - *and to continued strong returns to Exxon's investors.*

Chafuen concluded with a list of 25 of its institutes that he proposed would be ideal recipients of Exxon's strategic financing of anti-climate treaty media outputs, conferences and books. "Exxon can support these groups directly - or, if it is more convenient, give Atlas additional funds that we can distribute in large or small amounts". Given that a major UNFCCC meeting (COP 4) was scheduled for Argentina in 1998, most of these Atlas units were in countries in Latin America, with the addition of one in Ghana, another in Poland, and another in Turkey. Only one was located in a familiar, English-speaking country:

**Center for Independent Studies, St. Leonard's, Australia** <sup>81</sup>

It had been expected that the unresolved issues blocking a binding, effective and enforceable UN climate agreement carried over from the 1997 Kyoto meeting would be resolved in Buenos Aires, but this was not to be. Chafuen was himself from Argentina and had boasted to Exxon of his extensive network of allies in Argentinian business, politics and the media available to swamp the COP with hostile messaging.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> See original document scans in: Dembicki, G. (2025, Nov 3) 'A Pretty Ugly History': How Exxon Exported Climate Denial to the Global South. With Brazil about to host COP30, DeSmog has obtained copies of checks Exxon mailed to the right-wing Atlas Network in the 1990s to turn Latin America against climate treaties, DeSmog.com. <https://www.desmog.com/2025/11/03/a-pretty-ugly-history-how-exxon-exported-climate-denial-to-the-global-south/>

Soon after the 2004 revelations of [ExxonSecrets.org](https://www.exxonsecrets.org), which used the public disclosures of IRS Form 990s to show that Exxon had funded a host of US based climate denial organisations (nearly all of which were members or spinoff entities of the Atlas Network, a fact unnoticed at the time) Exxon began to wind down its direct investments in US thinktanks. Since, ever increasing quantities of ‘dark money’ have since flowed through **Donors Capital** and **Donors Trust** into the US branch of the Atlas Network of at least 192 ‘partner organisations’.<sup>83</sup>

A key resource for this Committee to carefully study is the comprehensive primary funding data assembled by Prof Robert Brulle from thousands of public IRS Form 990 documents, tallying nearly 50,000 payments over the period 2012-2018 amounting to **\$9.7 billion USD** flowing into 128 organisations involved in counter-science disinformation intended to obstruct or defeat climate and clean energy policy [see Brulle 2014, 2021, funding data [Attachment](#)].<sup>84</sup> Most of the recipient organisations named in Brulle’s database are Atlas Network ‘partner organisations’ (compare e.g. with [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org) 2021 member directory) and those that aren’t are likely short term campaign fronts composed of the usual suspects on the Atlas climate denial circuit.

The degree of (foreign) political coordination, campaign direction, influence and control exerted upon Australian public opinion, elections, political parties and climate and energy policy by the US based Atlas Network through its Australian ‘partners’, related entities and extensive business and political contacts, for example by arms length coordination of funding arrangements or policy campaigns across the local and regional Atlas orgs, the Murdoch and other media sources that platform and broadcast Atlas ‘content’, and the public policy positions of the Liberal Party, which seem since John Howard to have been downstream of those taken by the Australian Atlas Network orgs and the private multinational oil and mining corporations that have built and overseen them since the **Institute of Public Affairs** was formed in 1943.

### (c) Australian member organisations of the Atlas Network (see Fig 3).

A key resource for this inquiry is the comprehensive dataset published by De Montford University under UK and EU privacy law. Assembled from the public websites of the entire global Atlas Network of 515 thinktanks in 100 countries (as published on the 2021 [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org) ‘partner directory’) and published in redacted form the data includes the names of the c. 8000 senior executives, academic and business board members running the global Atlas Network thinktank infrastructure, and each individual’s main employer or corporate board crossover.<sup>85</sup>

The largest in Australia by legacy, funding, staff and political influence are the **Institute of Public Affairs** (IPA est. 1943, Melbourne), far and away Australia’s most prodigious and belligerent source counter-science election influence and fossil fuel industry sponsored anti-climate policy propaganda since 1989,<sup>86</sup> followed by its more discrete but no less effective unacknowledged partner the **Centre for Independent Studies** (CIS

---

<sup>83</sup> See: Atlas Network Archives, **Donors Trust** documents, B75-F11 & B292-F09, **Hoover Institution**, Stanford University, California USA; Brulle, R. (2014). Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of US climate change counter-movement organizations. *Climatic change*, 122(4), 681-694.

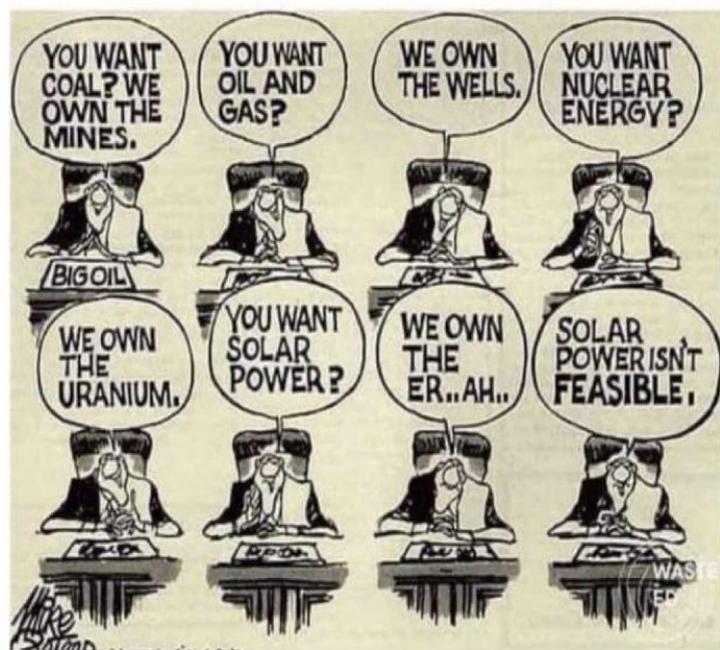
The term ‘dark money’ comes from Jane Mayer’s (2016) *Dark Money: The hidden history of the billionaires behind the rise of the radical right*, a profile of the **Koch, Scaife, Bradley** and **Olin** billionaires, whose vast wealth derived from oil, arms and chemicals have been among the largest ‘philanthropic foundation’ sources of income across the US arm of the Atlas Network since it began, long linked through the Atlas head office or by direct payments to numerous US ‘institutes’ engaged in science denial and anti-climate policy publicity. The extent to which thinktanks outside the US have been funded from US sources, or local subsidiaries of US corporations is unknown.

<sup>84</sup> It should be noted that this figure sums all donations declared in Form 990s from ‘philanthropic foundations’ to 128 ‘non-profit’ entities engaged in climate and energy disinformation. This sum also includes funding for other Atlas Network campaigns. Brulle, R. J. (2014). Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of US climate change counter-movement organizations. *Climatic change*, 122(4), 681-694; Brulle, R. J., Hall, G., Loy, L., & Schell-Smith, K. (2021). Obstructing action: foundation funding and US climate change counter-movement organizations. *Climatic Change*, 166(1), 17.

<sup>85</sup> See McKie, R. (2023) Atlas Think Tank Main Employers, De Montford University UK [Australian orgs and membership under ‘Oceania-Asia’ tab]. [https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Atlas\\_Think\\_Tank\\_Main\\_Employers/22217050?file=39486961](https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Atlas_Think_Tank_Main_Employers/22217050?file=39486961).

<sup>86</sup> The NSW branch of the IPA was rebranded the **Sydney Institute** in 1989, and has been run without disclosing its finances by climate denier Gerard Henderson ever since.

est.1976, Sydney). Incredibly, both are registered as tax-exempt, tax-deductible fund-raising ‘not-for-profit’ ‘charities’ that ‘help people’ by doing ‘research’ in the ‘public interest’.



Share this edition:   

## Stephen Wilson Discussing IPA

Figure 11: 1970s cartoon, source unknown. The *raison d'être* of the ‘economics research’ of the **Institute of Public Affairs** (YouTube, 2025), the **Centre for Independent Studies**, and the **Atlas Network’s** integrated agenda-setting disinformation machine..

Both must declare to the Charities Commissioner that they are *not* engaged in directly political activity, or for-profit commercial activities. and are not required to declare the interests of fossil fuel corporations in the production of their tax exempt, tax deductible ‘public interest research’ on climate and energy matters which surely can only be accurately described as highly slanted propaganda attacking science, responsible climate policy, and clean energy in order to protect the commercial profits of coal, oil and gas interests.

The founding board of the **IPA** in 1943 included Harold Darling (BHP), Walter Massy-Greene of the Collins House mining monopoly and media conglomerate (Herald and Weekly Times, Western Mining, Consolidated Zinc-later Conzinc Riotinto, BHAS, Broken Hill North, etc), and Keith Murdoch of News Ltd, a holding company for the numerous newspapers secretly acquired by Collins House since 1918 for the explicit purpose, and they said so, of propaganda.<sup>87</sup> The Melbourne mining establishment that founded the **IPA** in 1943 for research and ‘publicity’ against the WW2 ALP governments of Curtin and Chifley went on to found the Liberal Party in 1944.

<sup>87</sup> Young, S. (2019) The secret history of News Corp: a media empire built on spreading propaganda. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/the-secret-history-of-news-corp-a-media-empire-built-on-spreading-propaganda-116992>

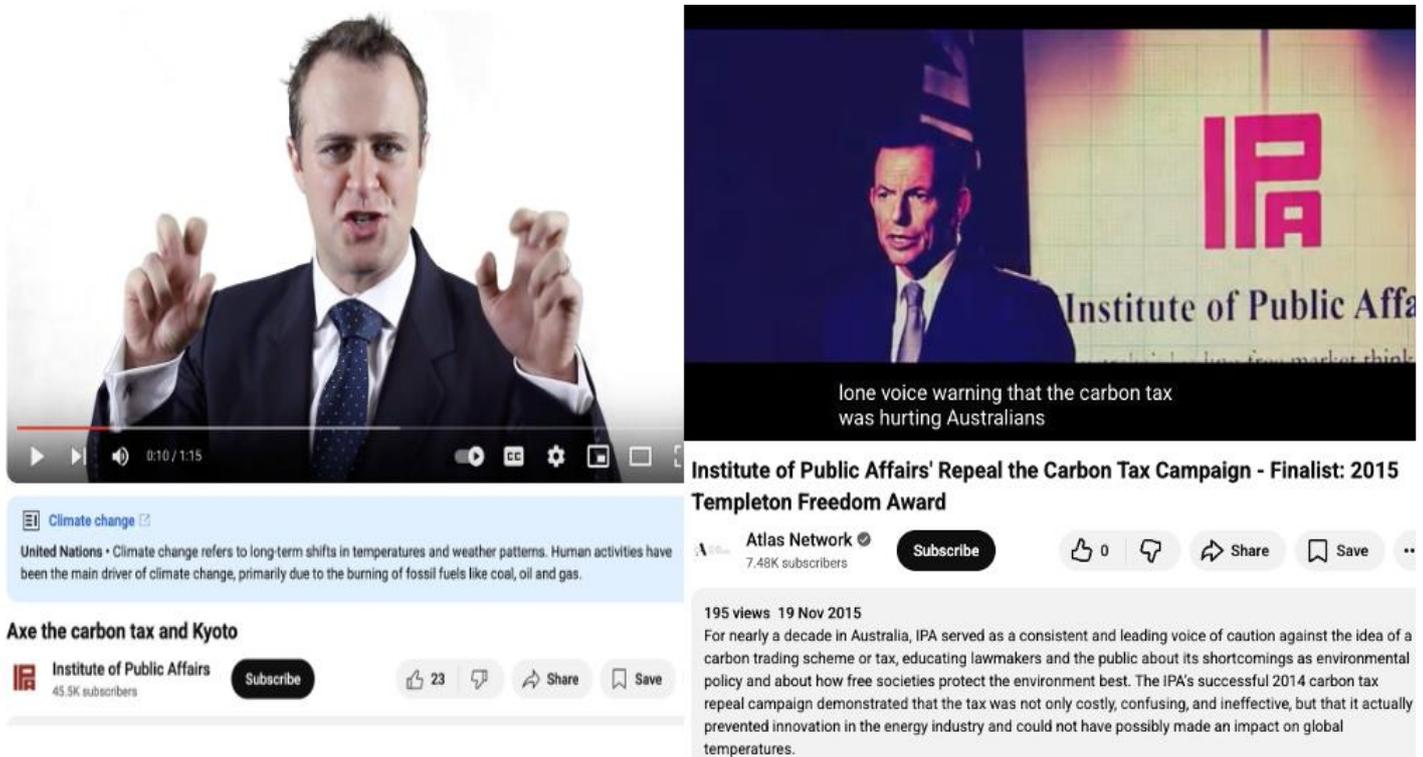


Fig 12. Tim Wilson in action during the 7 year long ‘axe the carbon tax and Kyoto’ campaign he ran for fossil capital through the **Institute of Public Affairs**, winning applause as the ‘lone voice warning the carbon tax was hurting Australians’ by the [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org) (2015).<sup>88</sup> Sources: YouTube accounts of [IPA](https://ipa.org) and [Atlas Network](https://atlasnetwork.org).

From the 1970s through to the 2000s the **IPA**’s board chairs, members and executives included CEOs and senior executives of Mobil, Shell, Western Mining Corporation, Woodside, Imperial Chemical, RioTinto, Loy Yang coal, oil and gas engineering firm Clough, and notably media magnate Rupert Murdoch.<sup>89</sup> The current responsible officers of the **IPA** include Geoff Hone – Chairman, Scott Hargreaves – executive Director, Dr Michael Folie (MPS, ex-Shell Oil and Coal, 1979-1998), Dr Tim Duncan (ex- Rio Tinto), Michael Hickinbotham, Maurice O’Shannassy (Blackrock), Rebecca Clough (Clough oil and gas), James Power (**Advance** director) and Simon Fenwick (**Advance** donor).<sup>90</sup> **IPA**’s Honorary Life Members include the coal, gas and iron mining magnate Gina Rinehart (**IPA** donor), Charles Goode (ex-chair of Woodside Petroleum, chair of the **Cormack Foundation** which funds **Advance**, the **IPA** and the **CIS**), Dr Bryant Macfie (**Advance** donor).<sup>91</sup> Previous executive directors have included John Roskam (MPS 2008, ex-Rio Tinto) and Janet Albrechtsen (MPS 2011, NewsCorp, **Samuel Griffiths Society**).

The **IPA** acquired its current vocation as a prodigious generator of aggressive counter-science disinformation and anti-climate policy propaganda (among many others across the global Atlas Network) in late 1989, with a first effort entitled ‘Is there really a greenhouse effect?’<sup>92</sup>

Perhaps the most significant victory of the publicly undisclosed fossil fuel investors in the **IPA** was its massive ‘Axe the carbon tax and Kyoto’ media campaign run from 2008 to 2013, which constantly destabilised and then defeated the first Australian government to ratify the UNFCCC climate treaty, and the only government to pass legislation applying the polluter pays principle to fossil energy, the government which kicked off the now unstoppable boom in solar and wind power : Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard’s ALP government of 2007-2013.

<sup>89</sup> See back issues of *IPA Review* from 1974 to present.

<sup>90</sup> Senate Inquiry into Offshore wind industry consultation process, IPA Submission no. 49. [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment\\_and\\_Communications/OffshoreWind/Submissions](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/OffshoreWind/Submissions)

<sup>92</sup> Braddock, R. (1989, Oct-Dec) Is There Really a Greenhouse Effect? By: Braddock, Roger, *IPA Review*, Vol. 43, Issue 2.

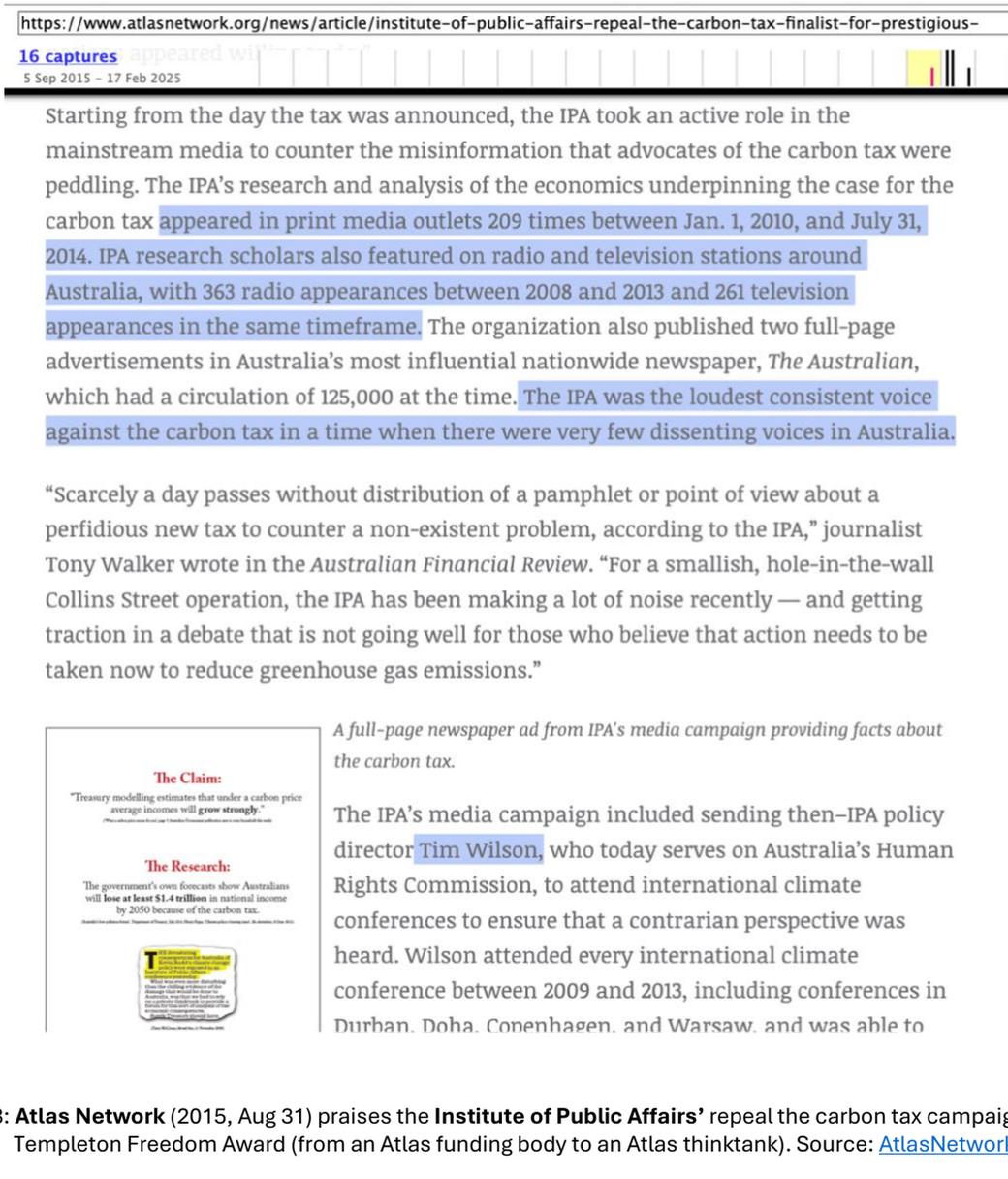


Fig 13: Atlas Network (2015, Aug 31) praises the Institute of Public Affairs' repeal the carbon tax campaign, listed for a Templeton Freedom Award (from an Atlas funding body to an Atlas thinktank). Source: [AtlasNetwork.org](https://atlasnetwork.org)<sup>93</sup>

As this recently deleted Atlas Network page [Fig 13] celebrating the downfall of an Australian government elected on a climate action platform by fossil funded Atlas protagonists and propaganda methods correctly notes, the majority of Australian voters supported the ALP governments of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard to do what they voted them in to do: to require coal, gas and mining companies to pay a fair amount of tax, to sign the UNFCCC Kyoto climate treaty, to establish carbon pollution pricing, and to launch the renewable energy revolution through the Clean Energy Act (2011). Incredible as it seems from the perspective of the present, there was then bipartisan support for climate action: then leader of the federal LNP opposition Malcolm Turnbull supported carbon pricing and climate policy. That consensus and unity of purpose amongst Australians was intentionally sabotaged by a relentless disinformation campaign generated primarily by the Atlas Network's major Australian exponent of science denial and climate policy obstruction, the IPA, and daily splashed across the front pages of corporate press.

<sup>93</sup> Atlas Network (2015, Aug 31) This page applauding the rolling of the twice elected Australian government by and for fossil fuel interests was deleted from their website after I cited it in my submission to the Senate's (2024) Offshore wind inquiry. See Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150905095014/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/news/article/institute-of-public-affairs-repeal-the-carbon-tax-finalist-for-prestigious-16-captures>



Fig 14: Liberal opposition leader Tony Abbott celebrated by Rupert Murdoch and Gina Rinehart at the **IPA's** 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gala dinner, soon to be PM following a 7-year long Atlas/NewsCorp campaign against carbon pricing, renewable energy and the UN climate treaty. Also attended by [REDACTED] Cardinal George Pell. Source: Crikey.<sup>94</sup>

Both the **IPA** and the Atlas Network leadership in Washington DC were keen to emphasize in their celebration of the achievement their Australian Atlas Network 'partner' in bringing about the the fall of the first pro-climate policy Australian government, and the worlds' first repeal of national level emissions pricing legislation (the Clean Energy Act 2011, in 2013 by the Abbott LNP government), that the **IPA** was:

.. *the sole voice* warning that the carbon tax was hurting Australians..

.. *the loudest consistent voice* against the carbon tax in a time *when there were very few dissenting voices in Australia*.<sup>95</sup>

A 2015 video still available on the Atlas Network YouTube channel celebrates the repeal of the Clean Energy Act (2011) by the Abbott government, again attributing this victory to the IPA:

For nearly a decade in Australia, **IPA** served as a consistent and leading voice of caution against the idea of a carbon trading scheme or tax, educating lawmakers and the public about its shortcomings as environmental policy and about how free societies protect the environment best. The **IPA's** successful carbon tax repeal campaign demonstrated that the tax was not only costly, confusing, and ineffective, but that it actually prevented innovation in the energy industry and could not have possibly made an impact on global temperatures.<sup>96</sup>

Working with the Murdoch press for undisclosed fossil fuel investors, **IPA** climate policy lead Tim Wilson (MPS 2012) changed all that, placing a phenomenal 833 media articles, interviews and mentions attacking climate science and policy across TV, radio and newspapers over a six year period, whilst being flown to all the UNFCC climate conferences between 2009 and 2013, presumably to work with the fellow fossil fuel industry lobbyists

<sup>94</sup> Crikey (2013, Apr 5) Abbott, Bolt, Rinehart fawn in the IPA court of King Murdoch. <https://www.crikey.com.au/2013/04/05/abbott-bolt-rinehart-fawn-in-the-ipa-court-of-king-murdoch/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20150905095014/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/news/article/institute-of-public-affairs-repeal-the-carbon-tax-finalist-for-prestigious->

<sup>96</sup> Atlas Network (2015) 'Institute of Public Affairs' Repeal the Carbon Tax Campaign - Finalist: 2015 Templeton Freedom Award'. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_M6eyoD\\_1M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_M6eyoD_1M)

and other Atlas thinktankers routinely embedded in the UNFCCC conferences in order to disrupt progress toward a binding and effective UN climate treaty. How and why, we might ask, did the Atlas head office in Washington DC know to such a precise level of detail of the 833 media hits of Wilson's giant anti-climate policy propaganda operation, which regardless of what ordinary Australians may have wanted from their elected leaders, brought down prime minister Kevin Rudd, deposed Malcolm Turnbull as Liberal Opposition leader, brought down the minority ALP-Greens government of prime minister Julia Gillard, and replaced it with the fossil fuel industry / **Institute of Public Affairs** preferred prime minister Tony Abbott?

In 2013, Tim Wilson was elected as an MP in the incoming LNP government of Tony Abbott, and was re-elected in 2025. Abbott did not last very long as prime minister after doing what he was appointed to do: repeal the Clean Energy Act (2011). He is now a 'distinguished fellow' of the **IPA**, a board member of Fox News and of the **Global Warming Policy Foundation**.<sup>97</sup>

Whilst the **IPA** led the media assault on the Rudd and Gillard government's pro-renewable climate policies and carbon pollution pricing legislation, and was claimed by [AtlasNetwork.org](http://AtlasNetwork.org) to be the 'lone voice' opposing it, the 'axe the tax' campaign was in reality widely supported by other Australian members of the Atlas Network and a host of spinoff organisations recirculating articles by 'sceptical scientists' invariably affiliated with Atlas thinktanks (e.g. the **Lavoisier Group**, founded by Hugh Morgan and Ray Evans, MPS) and a host of anonymous short term websites and 'grassroots' Facebook groups.<sup>98</sup>

In a now deleted 2014 article for [AtlasNetwork.org](http://AtlasNetwork.org) celebrating the 'axe the tax campaign', which resulted in Australia being "the first country ever to repeal a major climate-change initiative", Tim Andrews (**Australian Taxpayers Alliance**, **HR Nicholls Society**) proposed it as a model that could be repeated in other nations, reporting how fossil capital's highly-coordinated disinformation operation run for six years against an unwitting public across the Australian Atlas infrastructure had destroyed the pre-existing "consensus across the entire political class" on the scientific reality of global heating and the necessity of addressing it through government mandated carbon-pricing measures, and subsidies for clean energy rollout.<sup>99</sup> Tim Andrews and John Humphreys (MPS 2011, **Australian Taxpayers Alliance**) contributed to the campaign with a website called **StopGillardsCarbonTax.com** where one could download a flyer denouncing carbon taxation as "Marxist" and citing veteran Atlas science-deniers Richard Lindzen, Willie Soon, Roy Spencer and Lord Monckton.<sup>100</sup> The website linked to fellow Atlas orgs **Mankall Economic Education Foundation**, the **Australian Libertarian Society**, the **Lavoisier Society**, the **Carbon Sense Coalition** and to a Facebook account called 'Revolt Against the Carbon Tax', the "main umbrella volunteer organisation responsible for organising and co-ordinating many of the marches against the carbon tax in capital cities".<sup>101</sup>

Another parallel counter-science disinformation front group was the **Galileo Movement**, founded in 2011, ostensibly to enable Australians to "use facts to axe the Australian carbon dioxide tax".<sup>102</sup> This was one of many similar Atlas front groups with similar deceptive and impressive names, which was not much more than a website with a list of seemingly qualified, distinguished 'advisors', the same small set of science deniers, economists and thinktankers platformed by and affiliated with fossil funded **Atlas Network** thinktanks, including the **CO2 Coalition**, the **Carbon Sense Coalition**, the **International Climate Science Coalition**, the **New Zealand Climate Science Coalition** and so forth.

---

<sup>97</sup> <https://thegwpcf.org/tony-abbott-former-australian-prime-minister-joins-the-gwpcf/>

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.lavoisier.com.au/articles/climate-change-by-author.php>

<sup>99</sup> Andrews, T. (2014, July 31) Bad climate laws: ideas can win the day, [AtlasNetwork.org](http://AtlasNetwork.org).  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20150922223626/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/news/article/bad-climate-change-laws-ideas-can-win-the-day>

<sup>100</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20121116180718/http://menzieshouse.typepad.com/files/Carbon%20Dioxide%20and%20the%20Politics%20of%20the%20Carbon%20Tax%20-%20Sept%202011%202.pdf>

<sup>101</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20130227182248/http://www.stopgillardscarbontax.com/additional-info.html> ;  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20130408171106/http://carbon-sense.com/>

<sup>102</sup> [https://web.archive.org/web/20170414202118/http://galileomovement.com.au/who\\_we\\_are.php](https://web.archive.org/web/20170414202118/http://galileomovement.com.au/who_we_are.php)

In the table below, I reproduce the list of ‘scientific experts’ appointed as ‘independent advisors’ to the **Galileo Movement** listed on its website, with their known affiliations with **Atlas Network** thinktanks and associated campaign units or front groups past and present.<sup>103</sup>

Project Leader: <i>Malcolm Roberts</i>	<b>Galileo Movement</b> (est. 2011) This is the complete list of science-denial authors and speakers appointed as expert “ <a href="#">independent advisors</a> ” and their known affiliations or authorship of climate denial outputs by <b>Atlas Network</b> thinktanks and <b>front groups</b> past and present. Most, if not all of the Atlas affiliated orgs (in bold) have documented fossil fuel derived funding, often from the same sources.
Patron: <i>Alan Jones</i>	
Advisers list:	Sources: DeSmog.com, SourceWatch.org, AtlasNetwork.org
<i>Tim Ball</i>	<b>Heartland Institute, Frontier Center for Public Policy</b>
<i>Warwick Hughes</i>	<b>New Zealand Climate Science Coalition</b> (also incl. Bryce Wilkinson of <b>New Zealand Initiative</b> , Bob Carter)
<i>Fred Singer</i>	<b>SEPP, Cato Institute, National Centre for Policy Analysis, Independent Institute, Institute for Humane Studies, Hoover Institution, Heritage Foundation, Federalist Society, Heartland Institute, Frontiers of Freedom</b>
<i>Richard Lindzen</i>	<b>Texas Public Policy Foundation, Cato, Heartland</b>
<i>Bill Kininmonth</i>	<b>Heartland Institute, Lavoisier Group, Global Warming Policy Foundation</b>
<i>Bob Carter</i>	<b>IPA, AEF, Heartland, Global Warming Policy Foundation</b>
<i>Ian Plimer</i>	<b>IPA, AEF, Global Warming Policy Foundation</b>
<i>David Archibald</i>	MPS, <b>Lavoisier Group, CO2 Coalition</b> (incl. Pat Michaels, Richard Lindzen, Roy Spencer)
<i>Roy Spencer</i>	<b>Heartland Institute</b>
<i>Peter Ridd</i>	<b>IPA, AEF, Global Warming Policy Foundation</b>
<i>Garth Paltridge</i>	<b>IPA, Global Warming Policy Foundation, Lavoisier Group, Heartland Institute</b>
<i>Vincent Gray</i>	<b>New Zealand Climate Science Coalition</b> (reportedly funded by <b>Heartland Institute</b> )
<i>Jo Nova</i>	<b>IPA, AEF, Heartland, CFACT</b>
<i>Des Moore</i>	<b>IPA, Institute for Private Enterprise</b>
<i>John Nicol</i>	<b>IPA</b>
<i>David Flint</i>	<b>ADHTV-Newsmax</b>
<i>John McLean</i>	<b>International Climate Science Coalition</b> (also incl. Alan Gibbs- <b>MPS</b> , ex <b>Centre of Independent Studies</b> , Julian Morris <b>Institute of Economic Affairs</b> )
<i>David Evans</i>	<b>CFACT, Lavoisier Group, IPA/AEF</b> spinoff <b>Australian Climate Science Coalition</b> )
<i>Pat Michaels</i>	<b>CEI, Cato, Heritage, ALEC, Australian Taxpayers Alliance,</b>
<i>Joe D'Aleo</i>	<b>Fraser Institute, Heartland Institute</b>
<i>Christopher Monckton</i>	<b>Heartland Institute</b>

As part of the Clean Energy Act (Cth 2011), the Gillard governments cap-and-trade market-based carbon pricing scheme, a temporary 3 year fixed carbon price was applied to the 500 largest CO2 emitters, a revenue neutral ‘carbon tax’ designed to have minimal effects on households by subsidising household solar installs and energy bills whilst imposing a pollution charge upon the largest GHG emitting corporate entities, thus creating disincentives for fossil fuel investment and revenue streams for incentives for investment in solar and wind power.

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/tim-ball/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/new-zealand-climate-science-coalition/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/s-fred-singer/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/richard-lindzen/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/william-kininmonth/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/bob-carter/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/ian-plimer/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/lavoisier-group/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/peter-ridd/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/global-warming-policy-foundation/> ; [https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Garth\\_Paltridge](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Garth_Paltridge) ; [https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=The\\_Climate\\_Caper](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=The_Climate_Caper) ; <https://www.desmog.com/joanne-nova/> ; [https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=New\\_Zealand\\_Climate\\_Science\\_Coalition](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=New_Zealand_Climate_Science_Coalition) ; <https://www.cfact.org/2025/08/12/great-barrier-reef-in-great-health-whiles-climate-change-kills-science/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/institute-private-enterprise/> ; [https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Des\\_Moore](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Des_Moore) ; <https://climatechangethefacts.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ABBOT-NICOL-CCTF2017-CH19-The-Contribution-Of-Carbon-Dioxide-To-Global-Warming.pdf> ; <https://www.spectator.com.au/2025/09/the-climate-catastrophism-v-common-sense/> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDByuDXN5PU> ; [https://skepticalscience.com/John\\_McLean\\_arg.htm](https://skepticalscience.com/John_McLean_arg.htm) ; <https://www.desmog.com/international-climate-science-coalition/> ; <https://web.archive.org/web/20230602211242/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/our-people/debbi-gibbs> ; <https://www.desmog.com/david-evans/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/patrick-michaels/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/joseph-d-aleo/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/christopher-monckton/>

In 2007 the **CIS** had published a paper by John Humphreys (MPS, **ATA**, **StopGillardsCarbonTax.com**) recommending precisely such a revenue neutral carbon tax as the optimal climate policy.<sup>104</sup> Yet by 2011 Humphreys had joined in lockstep with the wider Australian Atlas machinery in its denunciation of the government's short term 'carbon tax' scheme, almost identical to that which he had recommended in **CIS**-published 'research'. As Humphrey's colleague Tim Andrews wrote in 2015 for [AtlasNetwork.org](#), it was the wider Australian arm of the Atlas Network that had 'moved the Overton window' through disinformation, dividing and wrecking Australia's prior consensus and unity of purpose on climate policy:

Five years ago, retreat from such a regulatory regime would have hardly seemed imaginable, let alone possible. *There was consensus across the entire political class*, with both major parties supporting an emissions-trading scheme (ETS), with the press corps proclaiming that any party departing from the consensus would "[face humiliation](#)" and "[sign its own death warrant](#)." Millions of dollars were spent in public campaigns promoting the legislation, and polling showed a clear majority of Australians supporting "action."

A historically unprecedented grassroots [*sic*] revolt developed. As [think-tanks educated Australians](#) about the destructive consequences of such a scheme and [activist groups formed and mobilised](#), public support quickly began to plummet.

In 2008 a [staggering 77 percent](#) of Australians supported action on climate change. But in 2012 [support for the carbon tax fell to 33 percent](#), a dramatic turnaround.

The Australian carbon tax experience demonstrates how, with information, public opinion can rapidly shift, and a bipartisan consensus can rapidly break down. Public opinion – once fully informed on an issue – can rapidly shift. [links in original]<sup>105</sup>

The **Centre of Independent Studies**, a registered 'not-for-profit' tax-exempt charity, has long concealed its corporate funding sources from the Australian public. The CIS was founded in 1976, and not for charitable purposes, following a 'very confidential' visit to Australian fossil fuel, mining and banking executives by the inventor of the thinktank method and Atlas founder, Sir Antony Fisher (MPS 1955). Fisher's visit to privately drum up corporate support for an Australian IEA clone was arranged by John Bonython, co-founder of fossil gas giant Santos.

As Bonython explained in a 1976 letter to the son of his fellow Santos co-founder, Texas oil billionaire John Murchison, the purpose of Fisher's visit was to teach Australian business leaders his thinktank "method". Bonython believed this method could protect and increase petroleum business profits by slowly changing public opinion and public policy through propaganda, that is, through targeted mass media messaging aiming to achieve a concealed political purpose for the powerful private corporations. As Bonython put it:

I have had, over the years, a good bit to do with Chambers of Commerce, of Manufacturers, with politicians - and what they say is regarded sceptically by a public encouraged by leftwing academics. [...]

Fisher has a way of getting academics to write and say, in their own names, what business cannot say for itself. What you may say, what any business itself may say, is put down by many to "vested interest". He has a technique of getting academics to say and write under their own names what business cannot say for itself.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Humphrys, J. (2007) Exploring a carbon tax for Australia, **Centre for Independent Studies**.  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20251121140404/https://www.cis.org.au/publication/exploring-a-carbon-tax-for-australia/>

<sup>105</sup> Andrews, T. (2014, July 31) Bad climate change laws: ideas can win the day. **Atlas Network**.  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20150922223626/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/news/article/bad-climate-change-laws-ideas-can-win-the-day>  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20151119115446/http://new.spectator.co.uk/2011/09/meet-the-man-behind-the-anticarbon-tax-lobby/>

<sup>106</sup> Atlas Network Archives, B22-F12 (1976, Aug 19) Letter from John Bonython (Santos) to John Murchison (Delhi International Oil) re: his hosting of Antony Fisher trip to Sydney, Australia, **Hoover Institution**. See also: Atlas Archive B75-F13, Antony Fisher letter to Peter Townsend of Exxon Public Affairs, 21 May 1986: "I believe that Exxon in Australia is a supporter of the CIS in Sydney."

The official origin myth of the **CIS** is that it was founded in 1976 by a young high school teacher, Greg Lindsay (**MPS** 1982, **MPS** president 2006-2008), in a backyard shed in Pennant Hills, on Sydney's North Shore.<sup>107</sup> The reality is that Fisher's 1976 closed door meetings with the CEOs of Australian subsidiaries of multinational oil, mining and banking corporations for the purpose of founding an Australian **Institute of Economic Affairs** had already been arranged.<sup>108</sup> It was only later, despite Fisher's concern (as expressed in a 1978 letter to John Bonython) that Lindsay "may not have the academic standing that I would originally have chosen to be the director or preferably research director of **CIS**", that it was decided to invite him to lead the **CIS**, which is in reality the result of a pre-existing, highly-confidential corporate propaganda project of wealthy oil, gas, coal and mining corporation owners and managers.<sup>109</sup> This basic fact, the true reason for being of the **CIS**, is of course absent from the **CIS** website and its many publications.

According to NewsCorp editor Paul Kelly, the original major foundation grants for the **CIS** (1979-1984) were supplied by NewsCorp's *Adelaide Advertiser*, and the giant multinational corporations that at the time controlled between them or in joint ventures the lion's share of Australia's oil, coal, gas and uranium licenses: Shell, Santos, Western Mining Corp, Rio Tinto, and BHP. As Kelly reports, senior executives of these corporations believed that "new institutions were needed to promote the cause of freedom" because "Australian universities had failed to lead the intellectual debate".<sup>110</sup> In other words, giant oil and mining corporations they did not like the fact that independent university-based economists, political scientists, historians and scientists were often critical of them, rarely agreed that their arguments for unrestricted 'free enterprise' was in the public and general interest, and often advocated for environmental regulation, Indigenous land rights, and resource taxation. The key function of Atlas thinktanks, from the beginning, has been to displace the influence of genuine academic researchers and university based research institutes on public policy debate, with faux-'independent' studies funded secretly by corporate interests prominently titles as 'senior research fellows' and 'adjunct scholars', whilst systematically and routinely undermining and attacking the legitimacy of publicly funded scientific institutions, universities and schools.

These founding grants were arranged by veteran anti-climate propagandist Maurice Newman (**MPS** 1976, inaugural board chair **CIS**, co-founder **Advance**) with the assistance of the mining industry's formidable international political fixer Hugh Morgan (Alcoa, Western Mining, **CIS** and **IPA** boards, **Cormack Foundation**, **BCA**, **MCA**), perhaps the most important figure in the establishment and financing of the Australian Atlas orgs and its many spinoff entities.<sup>111</sup> In 1983, Hugh Morgan accepted Antony Fisher's invitation to join the inaugural **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** business advisory council.<sup>112</sup> Greg Lindsay also recommended Rod

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.cis.org.au/commentary/video/on-liberty-ep-23-greg-lindsay-founder-of-cis/>

<sup>108</sup> Atlas Network archives, B22-F10. Fisher's 'Very Confidential' report (30 Nov 1976) to an unnamed person listing the numerous corporate contacts he made during his visit to Sydney and Melbourne does not mention Greg Lindsay or the CIS.

<sup>109</sup> Atlas Network Archives B22-F12, Letter from Antony Fisher to John Bonython (Santos and **CIS** co-founder), 21 June 1978. The letter was copied to coal, gas and iron mining billionaire Gina Hayward (now Rinehart), a known funder and 'honourary life member' of the **Institute of Public Affairs**.

The Atlas Network Archive **Centre of Independent Studies** correspondence (B142-F09) contains a letter from then **CIS** board chair Maurice Newman (**MPS**, **Advance**, **ADH-Newsmax**) to Anthony Fisher (15 Aug 1978), reporting that "I am in touch with Gina Hayward and the Centre has had her to lunch but again, we have received moral support but nothing in the way of cash. Perhaps we should be more aggressive!"

Secombe, M. (2018, July 28) Rinehart's secret millions to the IPA, *The Saturday Paper*.  
<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2018/07/28/rineharts-secret-millions-the-ipa/1532700006616>

<sup>110</sup> Kelly, P. (1992) *End of Certainty, The Story of the 1980s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney. p. 47.

<sup>111</sup> Such as the science denying, anti-Kyoto **Lavoisier Institute**, **HR Nicholls Society**, the **Bennelong Society**, the **Samuel Griffiths Society** and its likely close cousin the **Rule of Law Education Centre**. Some of the Rule of Law Centres' distinguished presenters are **Samuel Griffiths Society** speaker Lorraine Finlay, ex-**Institute of Public Affairs** (now Australian Human Rights Commissioner), Walter Sofronoff QC, and the *Australian's* Paul Kelly, (a vote NO speech). Hugh Morgan joins David Lowy and CIS affiliate Prof. Geoffrey De Quincy Walker on the governing board:  
<https://www.ruleoflaw.org.au/about-us/>; <https://www.cis.org.au/person/geoffrey-de-q-walker/>

<sup>112</sup> Atlas Network archive, B102-F08, Western Mining Corporation 1983-1999. Letter from Hugh Morgan to Antony Fisher, 15 Sept 1983. See also: personal blog of Atlas Network president Alejandro Chafuen (1991-2017), 'Atlas Boards in 1984', <https://www.chafuen.com/atlas-economic-research-foundation-atlas-network-early-history/atlas-boards-in-1984>

Carnegie, chair of **CIS** founding donor Conzinc Riotinto Australia, for the other of two Australian positions available on the Atlas board.<sup>113</sup> The then CEO of McDonald's (Aust.) took it instead.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the understandable desire of the **CIS** leadership to conceal from the public both its constitutive integration with the global Atlas Network and its corporate funders, mission and reason for being, its own records and documents clearly show that the **CIS** was founded by giant petroleum, coal, uranium mining and banking multinationals, along with local business, for the explicit purpose of producing subtle political propaganda ('public policy research') for the concealed purposes of its concealed investors. Given the **CIS**'s current disinformation campaign across right-wing corporate and social media against climate policy and renewable energy (falsely claiming that 'uranium is cheapest' and 'coal is cheapest'), and its refusal to disclose its donors, there is little reason to think that **CIS** current sources of funding are now (or have ever been) substantially different to what they were in its early years.

In 1981, Antony Fisher wrote to **CIS** executive director Greg Lindsay regarding his newly established **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**. Fisher asked Lindsay to mail him evidence of media coverage and policy impact of CIS outputs, as well as for a list of corporate sponsors to bolster his campaign to drum up investments for his new project, the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**. Lindsay obliged Fisher with a list of 105 corporate supporters, listed alphabetically without amounts [Attachment A].<sup>115</sup> Noteworthy in the list are major multinational fossil fuel interests central to the drama of the counter-movement against the Whitlam government's efforts to restore appropriate taxation and a measure of Australian ownership and control of Australia's vast coal, oil, and gas reserves. In his abovementioned 1976 letter to fellow oil company owner John Murchison, Bonython implies that his commissioning of Antony Fisher to found a neoliberal think tank in Australia was to counter wide public support for the policies of the "very regrettable Labour-Socialist government" of Gough Whitlam. The Whitlam government had passed Australia's first federal environment and Aboriginal land rights laws, protected the entire Great Barrier Reef in a Marine Park from US oil companies who held exploration licences over the reef, attempted to make mining companies pay a fair share of tax, and established the Petroleum and Minerals Authority as a national oil and mining company with which to achieve Australian public (and private) ownership and control of Australia's richest oil, coal, gas and uranium assets. These had rapidly come under foreign ownership during the 1960s, including the vast Woodside offshore gas concession of the North West Shelf, coal in the Bowen Basin in Queensland, and the Cooper basin (operated by Delhi-Santos) in South Australia. The Whitlam government's efforts to 'buy back the farm' culminated in the 'Loans Affair' and the downfall of the key parliamentarians involved in it: Treasurer and Deputy PM Jim Cairns, Minister for Minerals and Energy Rex Connor, and finally Whitlam himself in the Dismissal of 11 Nov 1975.

Along with Santos, and Shell (which then held the major share in Woodside and its vast North West Shelf gas concession, and which has had more than one of its CEOs on the **IPA** board over the years), a 1981 investor in the **CIS** was the controversial, enormously profitable, wholly US-owned mining multinational Utah Development Co, which dominated the vast coal exports of the Bowen Basin with close support of Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson from the late 1960s until Utah merged with BHP in 1983.<sup>116</sup>

The 1981 **CIS** supporter list also includes the Australian subsidiary of leading US oil multinational Esso (now ExxonMobil). Exxon was the partner of BHP in the Bass Strait offshore oilfields, and a player on the North West Shelf. That same year, Exxon's scientific research division circulated a confidential internal report on the global heating caused by its business to Exxon senior management. Like every other scientific study then and since, it accurately predicted the extremely rapid and irreversible acceleration of global heating in lockstep with global CO2 combustion emissions [see Fig 15].

---

<sup>113</sup> Atlas Network Archives B142-F09, Centre of Independent Studies 1977-984. Letter from Greg Lindsay to Anthony Fisher, 29 Nov 1983.

<sup>114</sup> See: personal blog of Atlas Network president Alejandro Chafuen (1991-2017), 'Atlas Boards in 1984', <https://www.chafuen.com/atlas-economic-research-foundation-atlas-network-early-history/atlas-boards-in-1984>

<sup>115</sup> Atlas Network archive, B142-F09. **Centre for Independent Studies** Corporate Supporters list (1981, Oct).

<sup>116</sup> See classic public interest ABC investigation: Lyneham, P. (1977) Utah and Australia. Four Corners, Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-09/utah-and-australia---1977/2844710>

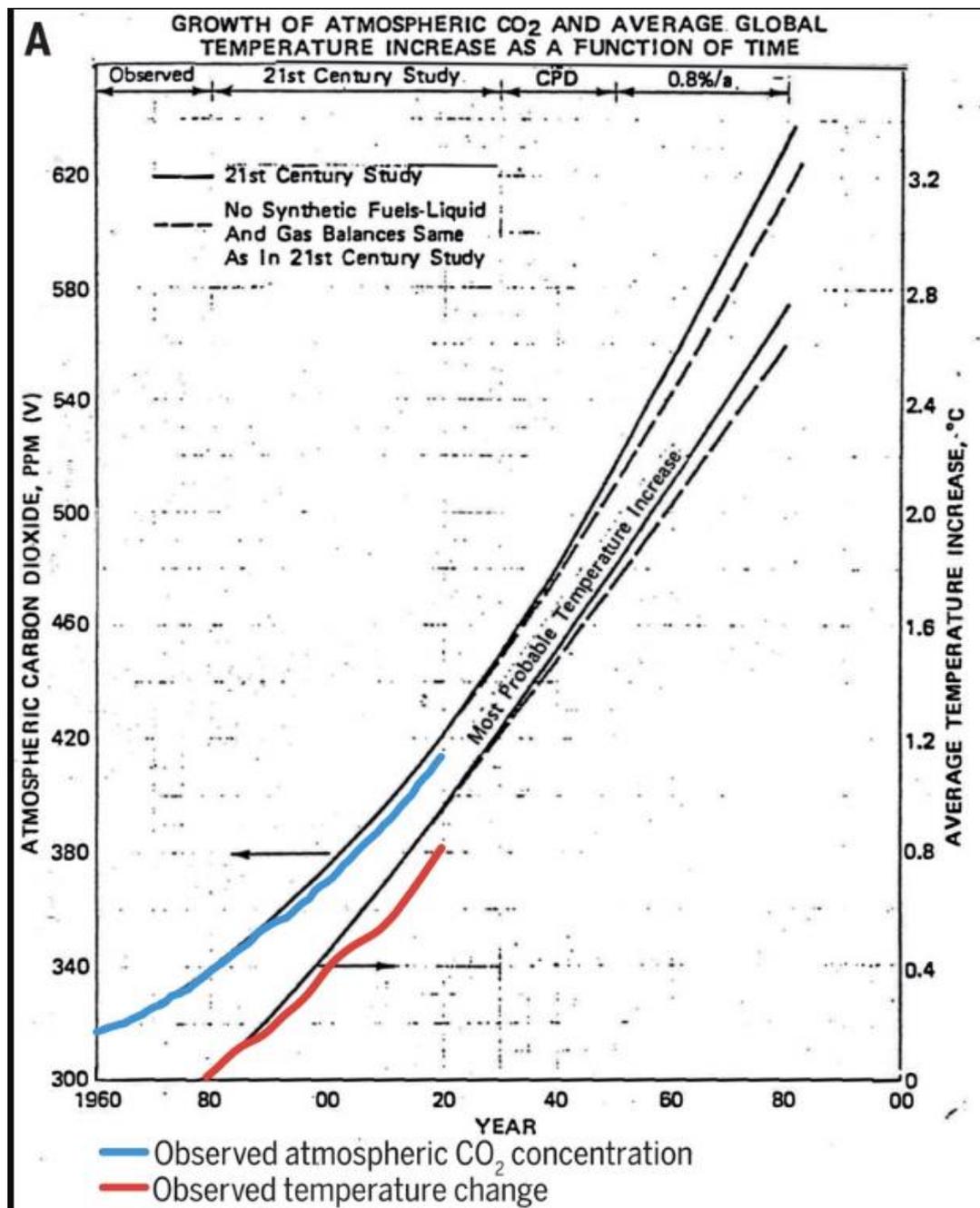


Fig 15: Projections of future CO<sub>2</sub> and global heat accumulation by Exxon scientists, from a 1982 ‘proprietary’ briefing document.<sup>117</sup> Coloured lines represent observed data since then (Supran et.al 2023).<sup>118</sup> Already then funding multiple Atlas Network thinktanks (incl. the **Centre for Independent Studies**) Exxon later directly commissioned and funded the Atlas Network’s major expansion to Asia, Africa and post-Soviet Europe in order to defeat the UN climate treaty.<sup>119</sup>

Along with oil giants Shell and Exxon, **CIS** was supported in 1981 by minor oil and gas companies Moonie Oil, CSR (which had purchased Delhi’s Australian gas interests), and Clough (the latter has for many years and up to the present has been represented on the **IPA** board). A key founding funder of the **CIS** was the wholly British-owned and controlled mining giant Rio Tinto, which also has a history of extensive representation on the **IPA**

<sup>117</sup> See: Exxon (1982, Apr 1) CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse effect: a technical review. Coordination and Planning Division, Exxon Research and Engineering Company, in: Centre for Climate Integrity (2019, Sept) *Documentary evidence of oil and gas companies’ knowledge of their products’ role in causing climate change and their subsequent deception campaign*, (614 pages, at p. 189). [https://climateintegrity.org/uploads/media/DeceptionBinder\\_September2019.pdf](https://climateintegrity.org/uploads/media/DeceptionBinder_September2019.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> Supran G, Rahmstorf M, Oreskes N (2023) Assessing ExxonMobil’s global warming projections. *Science*, 379(6628). DOI: 10.1126/science.abk0063

<sup>119</sup> Atlas Network archive, Boxes 76 – 77: ExxonMobil 1995-2003. See e.g. 1998 Atlas Foundation funding proposal to Exxon. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/26207548-1998-atlas-foundation-proposal-for-funding-energy-and-the-environment-market-based-solutions/?q=small+investment&mode=document#document/p5>

board and executive. Rio Tinto then dominated the global uranium market.<sup>120</sup> Also funding **CIS** in its early years was BHP (the original 1943 **IPA** board included BHP chair Harold Darling) and Western Mining Corp, then led by founding Atlas business board member Hugh Morgan (WMC was closely associated with the board of the **IPA**). WMC was then co-owner with British Petroleum of the worlds largest uranium orebody at Olympic Dam (SA, now owned by BHP-Billiton) and co-owner with Exxon of the Yeelirrie uranium deposit.<sup>121</sup> It is remarkable that no journalists reporting the **CIS** ‘we need nuclear instead of solar and wind’ campaign, run across the Australian Atlas Network since 2023, have thought to ask if **CIS** or **IPA** is funded by fossil fuel and/or uranium interests. Other 1981 donors included Comalco, Mount Isa Mines, Queensland Alumina, Wright Prospecting (a business partner of Lang Hancock, Gina Rinehart’s father), Tioxide, Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), British Tobacco/Amatil and ANZ bank. The 1981 **CIS** Corporate Supporters list included a grant arranged for **CIS** by Fisher through the **Atlas** head office from a mysterious Uranus Trust, based in the Bahamas and run by the Attorney General of that tax secrecy haven.<sup>122</sup>

The **Atlas Foundation** has arranged multiple such funding sources for the **IPA** and the **CIS**. For example, in 2003, the Atlas head office sent Lindsay USD \$25,000 from a foundation established by Stan Smith, a wealthy Australian who had retired in Bermuda.<sup>123</sup> Prior to serving British secret intelligence as chief of propaganda operations in China during WW2, Smith worked as the advertising manager for ‘a large Australian news service’. He made his fortune from an iron mining venture in post-WW2 Malaysia.<sup>124</sup>

Having won the ‘economic wars’ by the 1990s, the Atlas Network opened a new ‘culture war’ front in the ‘climate wars’. In 1999 the **Atlas Foundation** passed on to **CIS** a grant of USD \$20,000 from the US-based **Earhart Foundation**, part of its multinational thinktank funding program on ‘Religion and the Free Society’.<sup>125</sup> The original Earhart money came from the personal fortune of the founder of White Star Petroleum, a company sold to Mobil (now ExxonMobil). The recipient of the grant was Dr. Samuel Gregg (MPS 2014). In 2000, CIS published his Earhart-funded essay. Alleging that “fears of destructive man-made global warming” were “unfounded”, Gregg warned Christians against ethical support for the environmental protection of God’s Creation, because environmentalism had pagan and indigenous (read ‘Satanic’) philosophical roots, allegedly antithetical to the God-given ‘Judaeo-Christian’ ethic.<sup>126</sup> Gregg went on to a stellar career in US Atlas thinktanks known for fostering counter-science, climate denial and far-right versions of Christianity, such as the Koch-funded **Acton Institute for Religion and Liberty**, which publishes spiritual think-pieces such as ‘A Christian defence of fracking’.<sup>127</sup> As research director at **Acton**, Gregg came out in support of Cardinal George Pell’s “refreshing” speech to the Exxon-funded **Global Warming Policy Foundation** denying the reality of global warming and denouncing climate concerns as ‘totalitarian’ or mere ‘intellectual fashion’.<sup>128</sup> One project linked to the fossil fuel funded **Acton Institute** (prior to Gregg’s appointment) was the **Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation**, which produced *Resisting the Green Dragon: a Biblical Response* (2010): a 12 part DVD series aimed at American churches denouncing “radical environmentalism which is striving to put America and the world under its destructive control” and global heating, which it positioned not as a scientific truth but as a dangerous anti-Christian cult.<sup>129</sup> Gregg was appointed president of the **American Institute for**

<sup>120</sup> Venturini, V. G. (1982) *Partners in ecocide: Australia's complicity in the uranium cartel*. Foreword by Manning Clark. Rigmarole, Melbourne.

<sup>121</sup> See detailed ownership table of Australian uranium mining leases in: Roberts, J. (1981) *Massacres to Mining: The Colonisation of Aboriginal Australia*, Dove, Melbourne, p. 126.

<sup>122</sup> Atlas Network archive, B142-F09. Letter from Greg Lindsay to Anthony Fisher, 5 June 1981; Fisher to Lindsay 26 Nov 1982.

<sup>123</sup> Atlas Network archive, B97-F02. Stan Smith Foundation grants.

<sup>124</sup> <https://smithht.org/about-the-trust/the-story-of-the-smiths>

<sup>125</sup> Atlas Network archive, B143-F01. **Centre of Independent Studies** 1995-2000.

<sup>126</sup> Gregg, S. (2000) *Beyond romanticism: questioning the green gospel*. **CIS** Occasional Publication 73

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.bradleyfdn.org/prizes/recipients/samuel-gregg> ; <https://rlo.acton.org/archives/66253-christian-defense-fracking.html>

<sup>128</sup> <https://rlo.acton.org/archives/26969-samuel-gregg-cardinal-pells-intellectual-fortitude-is-refreshing.html> ; <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/cardinal-climate-and-greens-samuel-gregg/>

<sup>129</sup> DeSmog reports **Acton Institute** funding from ExxonMobil, Koch and Scaife Foundation and Atlas founded Donors Trust among other Atlas Network foundations and funders. <https://www.desmog.com/acton-institute/>  
Westervelt, A., Geoff Dembicki, G. (2023, Sept 12) Meet the Shadowy Global Network of Right-Wing Think Tanks, *New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/175488/atlas-shadowy-global-network-right-wing-think-tanks> ; Rudolf, J. (2010, Dec 30) An Evangelical backlash against

**Economic Research** in 2025. **AIER** was convenor of the Great Barrington Declaration (2020), which “explained how Covid-19 quarantine policies produced devastating effects on short- and long-term public health and overall human flourishing”<sup>130</sup>, advocating instead for the pseudo-scientific concept of “herd immunity”, a ‘let them all get infected’ policy approach to pandemic response which, if followed, would have resulted in many millions more deaths from Covid-19 than occurred even with strict quarantine measures.<sup>131</sup> Given the **AIER**’s fossil-derived funding sources,<sup>132</sup> one might be forgiven for thinking its moral sympathies for ‘human flourishing’ were less with the sick and the dying than with the oil multinationals, which suffered from ‘plummeting oil prices and oil demand’ as a result of international quarantine measures.<sup>133</sup>

As early as 1989, **CIS** obliged its fossil fuel funders with its first ‘climate policy sceptic’ piece, entitled ‘The Greenhouse effect: fact and fiction’. Whilst adopting a cautious ‘lets do more research before we rush to act’ approach, the article nevertheless gave a fairly accurate scientific overview of the catastrophic implications of global heating that **CIS** would do well to remember now, and to heed in the present:

The greenhouse effect *cannot be ignored* as it has been during the 100 years since it was first brought to the world’s attention. *That it has the potential for causing catastrophic changes in the world as we know it cannot be denied.* [...] *The greenhouse effect poses a severe potential threat to mankind.* But at this stage *it is not a crisis.* What is needed is a strong commitment *to seeking solutions, to educating society at large about the need to develop a sustainable energy policy,* and to devoting the necessary resources to researching the greenhouse effect to establish a much more reliable knowledge base on which important decisions can be made. *We appear to have between ten and 20 years in which to do this.* The challenge for all of us is to ensure that we make the most of this opportunity, *for the sake of our grandchildren and successive generations.*<sup>134</sup>

That was thirty-six years ago. We have long had the solutions ready to hand, in the form of carbon taxation and ever cheaper renewable energy technologies. We are now living through the long predicted “catastrophic changes in the world”, that the author of the **CIS** article above said ‘cannot be denied’. Similar language was used at that time in confidential internal scientific reports by Shell and Exxon’s own scientists, at the same time as they were sponsoring **CIS** and its fellow Atlas institutes, but **CIS** continues to deny this, pumping out disinformation for its hidden ‘donors’ intended to scuttle zero-emissions solar and wind energy builds whilst conspicuously ignoring the now spectacularly visible destruction caused by fossil-fuelled climate disasters.<sup>135</sup>

Turning to the smaller, more recent Atlas affiliates, there is Western Australia’s **Mannkal Economic Education Foundation**, founded by mining company owner and one-time Atlas Foundation board director Ron Manners (MPS 1998). Whilst **Mannkal** dutifully supports the anti-climate policy disinformation campaigns of fossil-funded Atlas thinktanks, it has little media presence, confining itself to training, vetting and dispatching young interns to train as future Atlas politicians or thinktank talent working overseas on various campaigns across the Network.<sup>136</sup>

---

environmentalism, *New York Times*. <https://archive.nytimes.com/green.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/30/an-evangelical-backlash-against-environmentalism/>

<sup>130</sup> <https://aier.org/the-great-barrington-declaration/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/american-institute-economic-research/>

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.autoimmuneinstitute.org/articles/debunking-herd-immunity-a-review-of-we-want-them-infected/>

<sup>132</sup> DeSmog reports **AIER** funding from “Chevron, Duke Energy, Dow Chemical, FirstEnergy, Entergy, NextEra Energy, OGE Energy, Philip Morris International, Xcel Energy, and ExxonMobil among others”. <https://www.desmog.com/american-institute-economic-research/>

<sup>133</sup> Bagchi, B. et. al (2020) Plummeting oil prices and oil demand. In: *Coronavirus Outbreak and the Great Lockdown*. Springer, Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-7782-6\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-7782-6_4)

<sup>134</sup> Walker, G. (1989, Spring) The greenhouse effect: fact and fiction, *Policy* [non-peer reviewed house journal of the **Centre for Independent Studies**]. <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/PJIPubPI/1989/>

<sup>135</sup> See the dozens of ‘research’ reports, allegations that the CSIRO is misleading the public in reporting that clean energy has the lowest cost and arguing instead that coal and /or nuclear is cheapest, submissions to public and government bodies, and various Youtube videos listed on the CIS website: <https://www.cis.org.au/research/energy/#publication-1> ; <https://www.cis.org.au/research/energy/>

<sup>136</sup> **Mannkal Economic Education Foundation** (2025, July 1) Pulling the plug on net zero: embracing energy realism and energy humanism. <https://www.mannkal.org/news/pulling-the-plug-on-net-zero-embracing-energy-realism-and-energy-humanism/>

The Atlas-affiliated **Australian Institute for Progress** (AIP, Brisbane) was directly funded by coal companies (alongside **Australians for Prosperity**) to run attack ads against the climate and clean energy policies of the ALP and Greens in the 2024 Queensland state election [Fig 16] by a new lobbying vehicle for coal companies, **Coal Australia**.<sup>137</sup> Among its supporters is the world’s largest private coal corporation, US coal giant Peabody, which also operates in Indonesia, Britain, and Bermuda. **AIP** and **AfP** were joined in their social media attack-advertising blitz by coal-billionaire funded **Advance**, and a host of short-term campaign pop-up units.<sup>138</sup> The Miles ALP government of Queensland lost the election to the LNP (or rather perhaps to coal corporations via the Atlas Network disinformation infrastructure). Claiming responsibility for this victory, Graeme Young (exec director, **Australian Institute of Progress**) announced that ‘your investment had a good return’ in the cover letter of a report provided to the ‘significant financial supporters of AIP state election campaign’ - that is, to giant coal corporations. According to Young, **AIP** “Raised and spent \$887,361 including \$746,600 from COAL Australia).<sup>139</sup> According to Electoral Commission of Queensland returns for the 2024 state election, **Coal Australia** gave **Australians for Prosperity** a total of \$495,000, and \$613,500 to **Australian Institute for Progress**.<sup>140</sup> Why the amount of money given by **Coal Australia** to the **AIP** published on the ECQ election transparency register is significantly less (by \$133,100) than the amount **AIP** reported to its ‘significant financial supporter’ Coal Australia is a matter for further inquiry.

What then, was the return on investment of Peabody, Whitehaven, Yancoal and other Coal Australia funders in an **Atlas Network** disinformation campaign, which massively outspent their opponents to flood the electorate with attack ads? <sup>141</sup> Citing ‘community anxiety’, the newly Crisafulli (LNP) Queensland government soon arbitrarily cancelled a 200 megawatt windfarm that would have delivered enough energy to power a quarter of all Queensland homes, and promised to repeal the laws that made the proposal possible.<sup>142</sup> According to NewsCorp tabloid *Courier Mail*, “more than 100 renewable energy projects across Queensland could end up in the crosshairs of laws used to justify cancelling a major \$1bn wind farm project”<sup>143</sup>. This was far from US coal giant Peabody’s first use of Atlas Network’s propaganda services to manipulate the democratic system against clean energy and climate protection to its advantage. Peabody has been a major funder of the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation** and its US network of climate obstruction thinktanks and paid science deniers.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>137</sup> [https://www.coalaustralia.com/about\\_us](https://www.coalaustralia.com/about_us)

<sup>138</sup> Trevor St Baker, who accumulated his \$1.21 billion fortune from coal and gas fired power stations, is an **Advance** donor. Klan, A. (2024, Feb 21) The \$1m secret behind the Voice “No” campaign, *The Klaxon*. <https://theklaxon.com.au/the-1m-secret-behind-the-voice-no-campaign/>; Riordan, P. & Tillet, A. (2024, Feb 1) The heavy hitters behind Australia’s biggest conservative lobby group, *Financial Review*. <https://www.afr.com/rich-list/the-heavy-hitters-behind-australia-s-biggest-conservative-lobby-group-20240201-p5f1pt>

<sup>139</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20251110035236/https://aip.asn.au/newsletter/report-to-significant-financial-supporters-on-aip-state-election-campaign/>

<sup>140</sup> Search Electoral Commission of Queensland 2024 State Election Third Party funding disclosures here: <https://disclosures.ecq.qld.gov.au/Map>

<sup>141</sup> See AIP’s (2024) coal funded anti-renewable attack ads here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/134eySYKHI6xfZPWzQMvTBTbDn4\\_PdCd/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/134eySYKHI6xfZPWzQMvTBTbDn4_PdCd/view) <https://aip.asn.au/newsletter/report-on-aip-state-election-campaign/>

<sup>142</sup> <https://reneweconomy.com.au/act-of-bastardry-queensland-lnp-government-kills-another-giant-wind-project/>  
<https://reneweconomy.com.au/industry-braces-for-more-shocks-in-queensland-as-lnp-calls-in-two-more-wind-and-battery-projects/>  
<https://reneweconomy.com.au/forest-wind-accuses-lnp-government-of-blocking-it-from-community-consultation/>  
<https://reneweconomy.com.au/queensland-lnp-to-ditch-state-renewable-targets-may-nix-wind-projects-altogether/>

<sup>143</sup> *Courier Mail* (2025, May 27) <https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/qld-politics/qld-politics-110-more-projects-in-firing-line-as-wind-farm-scuttled/news-story/2f7ae3b14b49033e7d101ca0be0445e3>

<sup>144</sup> Documents produced during Peabody’s 2016 US bankruptcy proceedings revealed invoices from veteran Atlas ‘science sceptics’ Roy Spencer, Willie Soon and Richard Lindzen, and a significant slice of US climate disinformation network, including the **Atlas Economic Research Foundation**, and Atlas-affiliates **Americans for Prosperity**, **CFACT**, **Texas Public Policy Foundation**, and the **American Legislative Exchange Council**. **ALEC** specialises in hiring corporate lawyers to draft suites of model bills to be introduced to legislatures by aligned politicians, for example, to strip the powers of the EPA to enforce regulations on frackers, or to remove solar feed-in tariffs and instead impose financial penalties upon solar PV households. Powerful US PR companies Hill and Knowlton, Berman and Co, and Burson Marsteller were also listed.: <https://www.prwatch.org/news/2016/06/13114/peabody-coal-bankruptcy-reveals-extensive-funding-climate-denial-network>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jun/13/peabody-energy-coal-mining-climate-change-denial-funding>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/04/alec-freerider-homeowners-assault-clean-energy>

## The largest chunk of third-party money has flowed to three anti-Labor campaigns

Registered third-party donation activity between March 18 and October 23.



Source: [Electoral Commission of Queensland](#)

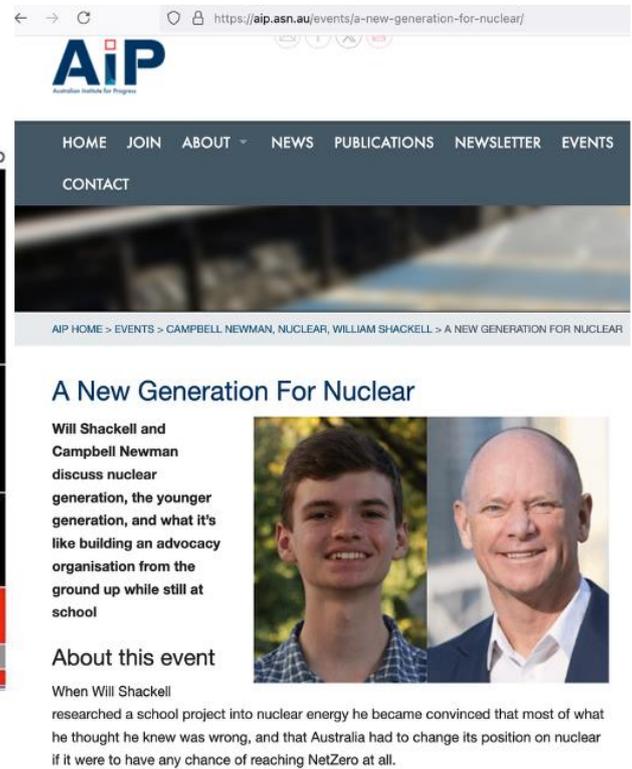


Fig 16: Brisbane’s **Australian Institute for Progress** joined fellow Atlas thinktanks **IPA** and **CIS** in their ‘we need clean cheap nuclear for net zero’ campaign, whilst being paid along with **Australians for Prosperity** by Peabody, Yancoal, Whitehaven (via Coal Australia) for their anti-renewable attack ad campaign in the 2024 Queensland election. Graph by Larrissa Waters MP, data Qld Electoral Commission (2024); AIP website (2024).

During the 2024 Queensland election campaign, a new fossil fuel-funded aggressive disinformation outlet willing to push the norms of electoral laws appeared, **Australians for Prosperity**.<sup>145</sup> One of the board members of **Australians for Prosperity** has long term connections to the **Centre of Independent Studies**, another to **CPAC Aust** and several veteran members of the **Institute of Public Affairs** ‘axe the carbon tax’ campaign (2006-2013). Although it does not appear on the AtlasNetwork.org site, **Australians for Prosperity** is a direct copy of the Atlas-affiliated **Americans for Prosperity**, which was a key player in the the fossil/Atlas disinformation campaign that successfully overwhelmed president Barack Obama’s efforts to fulfil his election promise to introduce a cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme.<sup>146</sup> Compare the two webpages shown in [Fig 17]. The font and web design is identical. Both websites are registered to the same hosting company in Arizona, USA.<sup>147</sup> Even the pseudo-nationalist rhetoric is identical, attacking clean energy on behalf of ‘our national resources’ that is, those privately owned and controlled by multinational fossil fuel interests.

**Australians For Prosperity** duly rebroadcasts the wider Australian Atlas Network pundits, thinktanks, astroturfed entities and media outlets in demanding nuclear power, and in attacking the ‘technology neutral’ CSIRO GenCost Report (2024), which even without attempting to cost the destructive effects of current and future global heating and climate disasters caused by coal, oil and gas, found renewable energy far cheaper than any fossil-fuelled or nuclear powered energy system (as has every other analysis by a credible research organisation for years).<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-11/australians-for-prosperity-removes-posts-after-aec-intervention/105156612>

<sup>146</sup> Mayer, J. (2016) *Dark money: how a secretive group of billionaires is trying to buy political control in the US*, Scribe, p. 216.

<sup>147</sup> <https://who.is/rdap/australiansforprosperity.com> ; <https://who.is/rdap/americansforprosperity.org>

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.csiro.au/en/news/All/News/2025/July/2024-25-GenCost-Final-Report>



with several of the Atlas Network climate obstruction thinktanks in the USA, such as the **Property and Environment Research Centre**, the **Pacific Research Institute**, and the **Texas Public Policy Foundation**, one of the originators of the Atlas Network’s ‘offshore wind kills whales’ disinformation program exported from the United States to Australia to destabilise the Australian government’s offshore wind industry development program.<sup>152</sup>

The main function of the Atlas-affiliated **Australian Taxpayer’s Alliance** and **Australian Libertarian Society** is to host the annual “Friedman” conferences in Sydney for the Atlas Network’s regional thinktank leaders, alt-right social media provocateurs, Mont Pelerin Society membership and aligned right wing politicians of the LNP, Libertarian, and One Nation parties. These have been held in conjunction with the **World Taxpayers Alliance** (Canada), sponsored by Kennards Self Storage, the **Institute of Public Affairs**, the **Competitive Enterprise Institute** (USA) and the central office of the **Atlas Network** (USA). They have been attended by the most senior American Atlas executives, including Matt Warner (president, Atlas Network), Tom Palmer (vice president, Atlas Network international programs), Lyall Swim (Atlas Network director of communications) and Lawson Bader (head of the single largest funding source for Atlas climate disinformation thinktanks in the US, **Donors Trust**).<sup>153</sup> These high-powered guests suggest that **ATA** conferences may serve a role in the co-ordination of fundraising and strategic campaign messaging from the Washington DC central office of the Atlas Network to its Australian, New Zealand and Asian ‘partners’. Neil Chenoweth at *Australian Financial Review* has described the **Australian Taxpayers Alliance** as “the Koch brothers’ new Australian friends”.<sup>154</sup>

The 2019 Friedman conference featured a masterclass in digital election campaigning from Ben Guerin of **Topham Guerin**, a formidable election PR company which works at the intersection of conservative parties, fossil fuel corporations and Atlas think-tanks in Australia, New Zealand and Britain [Fig 18]. **Topham Guerin** was ‘embedded’ in the Liberal Party during its election winning campaign of 2019 (and also in Peter Dutton’s losing ‘we need nuclear’ campaign 2024).<sup>155</sup> Guerin shared with the conference his technique of dominating election campaign ‘debates’ by generating the highest volume of all election-related digital content on Facebook and YouTube. Key to this was rapidly generating anger and fear intensifying “attack graphics”, dumbed-down anonymous memes pushing endless variations pushing the “same consistent message over and again day in day out” wearing down resistance to the messaging like “water on a stone”.<sup>156</sup> By such means, the Shorten ALP oppositions’ modestly pro-EV policy become a ‘Ute Tax’ which would ‘End the Weekend’. Bill Shorten’s modestly ambitious climate and energy policies were reduced to ‘Electricity Bill’.

The 2023 Friedman conference was convened during the Australian Atlas Network’s ‘NO’ campaign against the Voice referendum. The speaker list included **IPA** executives past and present Scott Hargreaves, John Roskam and Alan Moran, and politicians Moira Deeming, Angus Taylor, George Christensen, Pauline Hanson, Ralph Babet, and Craig Kelly.<sup>157</sup> Soon after, the Atlas anti-offshore wind disinformation campaign was off and running, extended from the US East Coast to Australia.

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/chris-wright/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/2025/02/17/u-s-energy-secretary-chris-wright-backs-coal-and-attacks-sinister-climate-targets-at-arc-conference/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/2024/11/19/trump-energy-secretary-pick-chris-wright-calls-climate-crisis-denier-bjorn-lomborg-a-friend/> ; <https://www.texaspolicy.com/press/lifepowered-applauds-nomination-of-chris-wright-as-secretary-of-energy> ; <https://www.texaspolicy.com/the-biden-admin-is-sacrificing-whales-to-save-the-planet/>

<sup>153</sup> <https://alsblog.wordpress.com/friedman-conference-2015/> ; <https://web.archive.org/web/20161222064630/http://www.friedman16.org/schedule> <https://web.archive.org/web/20171006230331/http://www.friedman17.org/speakers> ; <https://alsblog.wordpress.com/2013/03/> ; <https://web.archive.org/web/20180319102849/http://www.alsfc.com.au/speakers> ; <https://www.atlasnetwork.org/articles/atlas-network-training-in-australia-asks-whats-your-orgs-core-focus> ; <https://conservativeweasel.blogspot.com/2017/03/sun-mar-12th-todays-news.html> ; <https://alsblog.wordpress.com/libertarian-friedman-conference/>

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.afr.com/rear-window/koch-brothers-new-australian-friends-20190528-p51rx3>

<sup>155</sup> <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2024/12/07/exclusive-dutton-hires-morrison-disinformation-team>

<sup>156</sup> For a master class in digital propaganda methods given to an Atlas Network audience, see: Guerin, B. (2019) Using social media effectively. Friedman ’19 conference, **Australian Taxpayers Alliance & World Taxpayers Federation**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QeHsjnGcpg> at 32.00 mins.

<sup>157</sup> See **Australian Taxpayers Alliance** Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/AusTaxpayers>, and deleted pages of the **Australian Libertarian Society’s** Friedman Conference, e.g.: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230713024349/https://www.alsfc.com.au/2023-speakers> <https://web.archive.org/web/20230713024406/https://www.alsfc.com.au/sponsors>

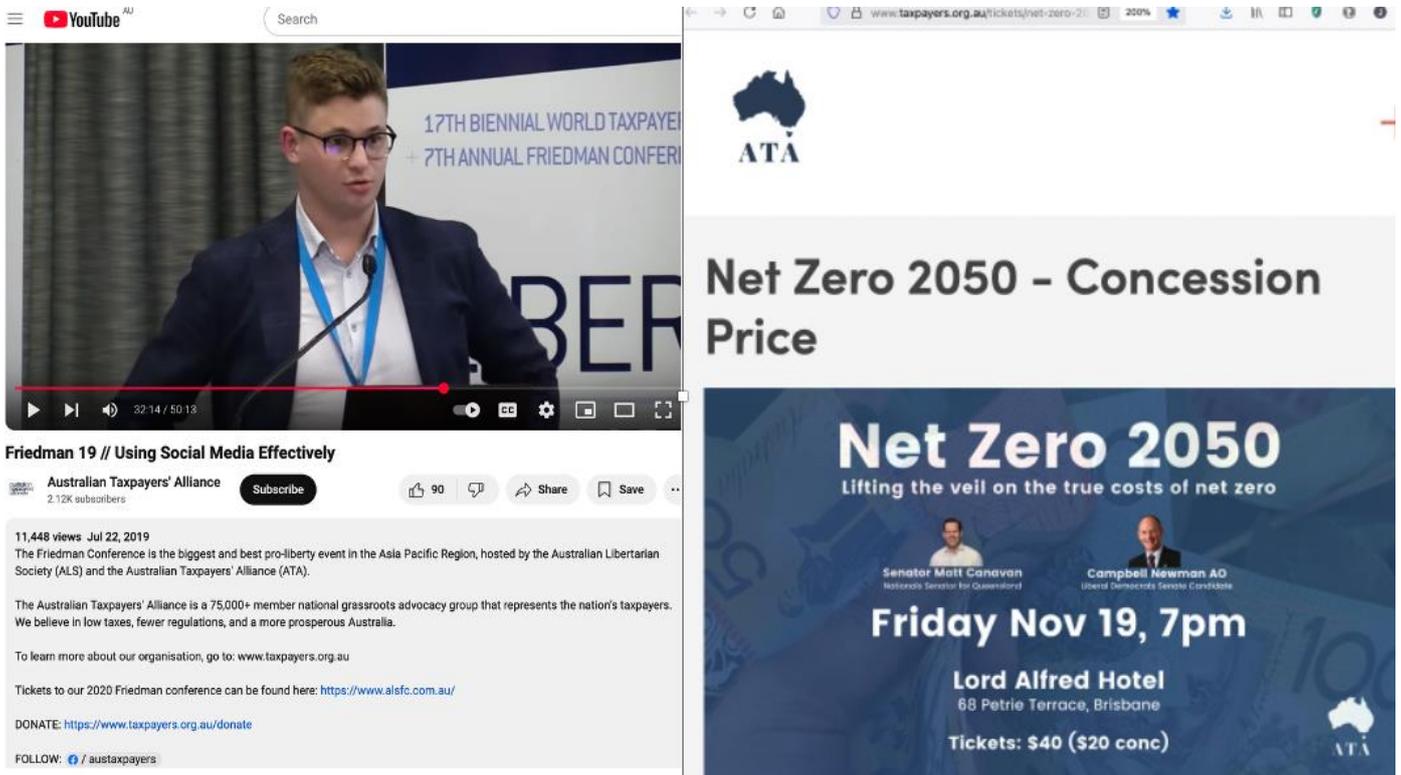


Fig 18: Ben Guerin of dark ‘strat comms’ agency Topham Guerin gives a masterclass in social media election propaganda methods to the regional conference of the Atlas Network’s “grassroots” **Australian Taxpayer’s Alliance** (2019); a more recent **ATA** event (2024).

Although it too has campaigned against climate policy and clean energy for its unknown financial backers, the main function of now dormant **LibertyWorks**, once led by Andrew Cooper and Warren Mundine (**Centre for Independent Studies, Advance**) with Alan Moran on its board,<sup>158</sup> was to host the Australian conferences of the international American Conservative Union, the **Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC)**. Whilst **CPAC Aust** is unlikely to be ‘officially’ part of the Atlas Network, its speaker lists are rich with veteran Australian Atlas think-tankers and pro-fossil fuel activists, such as **Advance** founder Maurice Newman, and politicians long associated with Atlas institutes like ex-Shell executive Liz Truss. Her catastrophic premiership of the UK ended after a mere 44 days in office, having instantiated a run on the pound and near collapse of UK superannuation funds with an ultra-libertarian policy program of unfunded tax cuts for billionaires and corporations and a ban on solar farms threatening £20bn of investment. This program was to be implemented with advisors drawn from the **Institute of Economic Affairs**, the **Taxpayer’s Alliance**, **Adam Smith Institute** and **Policy Exchange**.<sup>159</sup> When *Guardian* journalist George Monbiot asked ‘Has Liz Truss handed power over to the extreme neoliberal think-tanks?’, the **IEA**’s communications director, earlier an “adjunct fellow” at the **Institute of Public Affairs**, replied with a simple ‘yes’.<sup>160</sup>

**LibertyWorks** attempted to overturn the Attorney-General’s Foreign Influence registration scheme on constitutional grounds in the Supreme Court. The bid was lost, and **LibertyWorks** has gone dormant, refusing to pay the costs of the Australian government, courts and taxpayer as ordered by the court.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>158</sup> **LibertyWorks** (2018) Advisory board. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180311100339/https://libertyworks.org.au/advisory-board/>

<sup>159</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/think-tanks-institute-economic-affairs-liz-truss-economy-crash/> ; <https://www.ft.com/content/736a695d-61f6-4e84-a567-fb92ed2a3dca> ; <https://reneweconomy.com.au/liz-truss-hires-climate-sceptics-and-delayers-with-ties-to-libertarian-think-tanks/>

<sup>160</sup> <https://ipa.org.au/read/a-catch-22-defeated-peter-ridd-but-theres-still-hope-for-academic-freedom>  
<https://x.com/JolyonMaugham/status/1741090757505638670>

<sup>161</sup> Taylor, J. (2023) Conservative group LibertyWorks has not paid more than \$172,000 it owes government over failed legal cases, *Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/10/conservative-group-libertyworks-has-not-paid-more-than-172000-it-owes-government-over-failed-legal-cases>



Figure 19: Veteran founder of the Australian branch of the Atlas Network: ‘climate sceptic’ Maurice Newman (MPS 1976, co-founder **Centre for Independent Studies**, **Advance** and **ADH-Newsmax**).  
Source: **CPAC Australia** 2023 conference website.

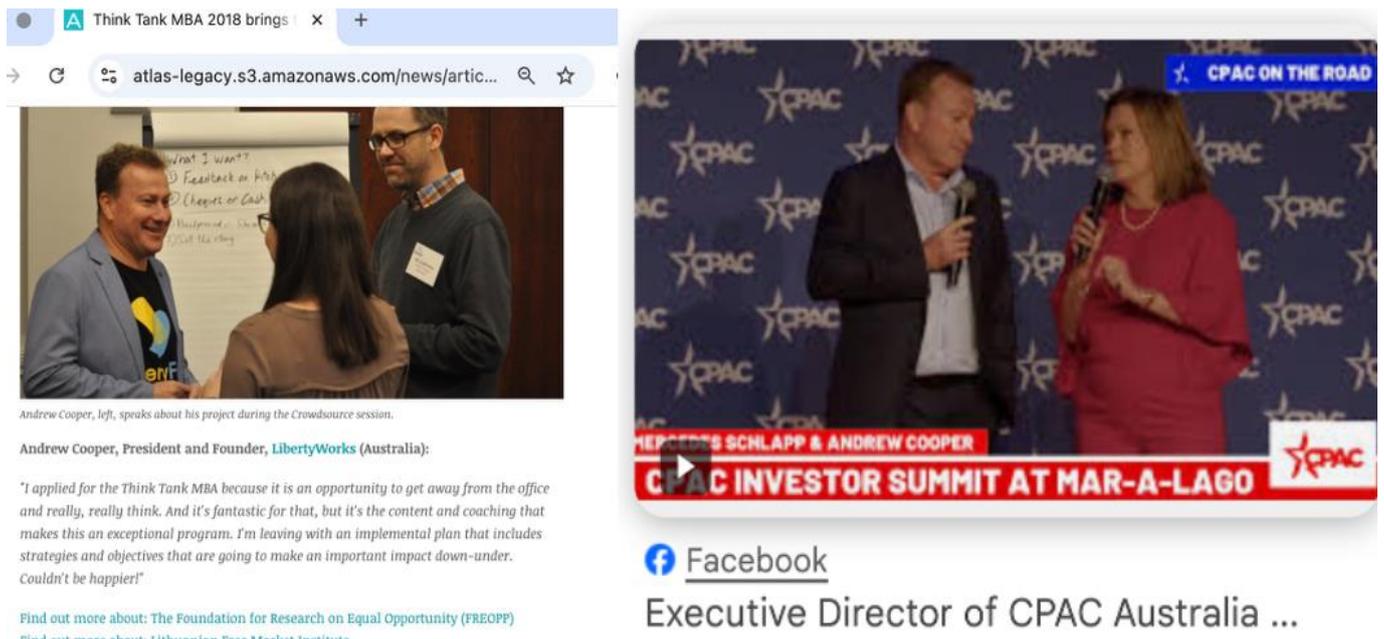


Fig 20: Founder of **LibertyWorks** Andrew Cooper at an Atlas Network ‘Thinktank MBA’ event (2018), fundraising as **CPAC Australia** executive director at a CPAC ‘investor summit’ at President Trump’s Florida compound (2024).

Andrew Cooper, who in 2018 completed the two-week ‘Atlas Thinktank MBA’ program, is now convenor of **CPAC Australia**, in which capacity he has been fundraising at a ‘CPAC investor summit’ hosted at President Trump’s compound at Mar-a-lago, Florida USA [Fig 20]. **CPAC Australia**’s connections to authoritarian leaders with a record of supressing democracy and clean energy such as Viktor Orban, and the close relationship of the Hungarian government to **Institute of Public Affairs** ‘distinguished fellow’ Tony Abbot are concerning.

The UK based **Alliance for Responsible Citizenship**, funded by billionaire oil investor Paul Marshall,<sup>162</sup> plays a similar role in fostering anti-science, anti-climate policy, anti-immigration white/Christian nationalist sentiment in the Commonwealth countries under the guise of ‘saving Western civilisation’. Senior ex-Liberal Deputy prime minister John Anderson, whose YouTube channel is a major outlet for Atlas generated attacks on climate policy and clean energy, is one of its members. Whilst neither ARC nor CPAC have been acknowledged as Atlas Network members by the head office, like the conferences of CPAC, the ARC advisory board is populated by **Mont Pelerin Society** members (Niall Ferguson, John Howard), anti-climate policy and anti-renewables social media figures (Bjorn Lomborg, Michael Shellenberger, Jordan Petersen)<sup>163</sup>, and politicians who either owe their careers to Atlas Network thinktanks for training, publicity and promotion, or are otherwise in full alignment with the Atlas Network’s fossil fuel backers.<sup>164</sup>

Marshall’s hedge fund, based in the petro-state of Dubai, reportedly holds £1.8 billion in fossil fuel equities (as of 2023) including £175.6 million in Chevron shares, as well as shares in Shell, Equinor and 109 other fossil fuel companies.<sup>165</sup> Marshall has funded **Policy Exchange**, a UK Atlas think tank whose registered owner is ex-Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer. **Policy Exchange** has previously received money from ExxonMobil and was credited by former prime minister Rishi Sunak for helping to draft laws that have criminalised climate protestors.<sup>166</sup> Marshall is also the owner of *Spectator UK* and *Spectator Australia*, and co-owner of *GBNews*, a ‘news’ outlet for climate denial talking points of the Exxon-funded **Global Warming Policy Foundation**, which includes ex-Australian PM and Tony Abbott on its board.<sup>167</sup> One *GBNews* guests warned that the renewable energy transition is “really” a “depopulation agenda” seeking to “remove seven and half billion people from the world. If we reach zero emissions by 2050 “half of the population of the world will die”.<sup>168</sup> Her source for this conspiracy theory was “one of the co-founders of Greenpeace, Patrick Moore”. Moore is frequently called upon by oil-founded Atlas think-tanks like the **Fraser Institute** to castigate environmentalists, e.g. for opposing dirty oil ‘climate bomb’ projects such as the Athabasca tar sands.<sup>169</sup> *Spectator Australia* is little more than a vehicle for Australia’s veteran Atlas Network authors to vent their old lines against the horrors of free, clean energy - and now, this Senate inquiry.<sup>170</sup>

**ARC**’s advisory board notably includes two current parliamentary contenders for the leadership of the Federal Liberal Party opposition, Jacinta Price (**Centre of Independent Studies, Advance**) and Andrew Hastie.<sup>171</sup> In

<sup>162</sup> Geoghegan, P. (2025, March 6). Making Media Great Again, *London Review of Books*. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v47/n04/peter-geoghegan/making-media-great-again> ; <https://www.desmog.com/alliance-for-responsible-citizenship-arc/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/2024/01/18/new-conservatives-faction-donation-50000-gb-news-owner-legatum-group/>

<sup>163</sup> At a recent **ARC** event Jordan Peterson is reported to have said: “It’s time to stop our obsession with carbon altogether,” repeating the climate denial trope that more carbon in the atmosphere will cause beneficial plant growth and not climate disaster “No more carbon apocalypse mongering and terrorizing.” <https://www.desmog.com/2025/03/10/i-spent-3-days-at-jordan-petersons-anti-climate-arc-conference-heres-what-i-saw/>. Peterson’s Youtube presence includes interviews with veteran science denier Richard Lindzen, who has been working with Atlas climate denial thinktanks for decades (See [DeSmog](#)). Peterson, J. (2023) “Climate Science” with Richard Lindzen [Youtube](#). CO2 Coalition (2025) Jordan Peterson EDUCATED on U.N. Corruption by Richard Lindzen, [Youtube](#).

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.arc-conference.com/advisory-board> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LVSrTZDopM>

<sup>165</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/2023/10/30/gb-news-owner-hedge-fund-paul-marshall-wace-fossil-fuel-investments/>

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/2023/06/29/rishi-sunak-boasts-that-oil-funded-think-tank-helped-us-draft-crackdown-on-climate-protests/>

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/paul-marshall/> ; <https://www.desmog.com/2024/05/30/gb-news-gives-dozens-appearances-to-uk-main-climate-denial-group-global-warming-policy-foundation/> ; *GBNews* (2025, Jul 15) ‘Climate denial’ should be made a criminal offence, claims Labour donor Dale Vince. <https://www.gbnews.com/politics/climate-labour-net-zero-miliband-dale-vince>

<sup>168</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/2024/05/07/ofcom-refuses-investigate-gb-news-climate-conspiracy-theories-neil-oliver-show/>

<sup>169</sup> **Fraser Institute** (2012) Patrick Moore: environmentalists are wrong about Canadian oil. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_r97c\\_Oc6c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_r97c_Oc6c)

<sup>170</sup> Alan Moran (2025, July 4) Renewable energy exposed: Australia’s economy is facing a crisis fuelled by Net Zero. <https://www.spectator.com.au/2025/07/renewable-energy-exposed/> ; Ian Plimer (2025, Oct 11) Climate corruption: the Senate submissions stitch-up. <https://www.spectator.com.au/2025/10/climate-corruption/> ; Judith Sloan (2025, Oct 18) Misinformation on fire: B1 blasts off. <https://www.spectator.com.au/2025/10/misinformation-on-fire/>

<sup>171</sup> <https://www.arc-conference.com/advisory-board>

synch with the fossil fuel interests behind **Advance** and the other Atlas outlets discussed here, both Price and Hastie have successfully led the demand that the Liberal Party ‘dump Net Zero’.<sup>172</sup>

**(d) arms-length entities and spinoff campaign units founded, funded or aligned with Atlas thinktanks**

Most urgent in Australia is the aggressive, lavishly financed, and opaque social media and election propaganda engine **Advance** (est. 2018), founded and funded by a small handful of wealthy individuals including several senior members of the **Centre for Independent Studies** and the **Institute of Public Affairs**. In my ‘Silencing the Voice’ (2023), I demonstrated that the Uluru Constitutional Convention’s aim to achieve constitutional justice and recognition for First Nations via a referendum to establish a Voice to Parliament was defeated by a ‘No’ disinformation campaign initiated and run by veteran members of Atlas Network affiliated thinktanks and spinoff propaganda fronts (most notably **Advance**).<sup>173</sup> Its purpose was not to ‘end division by race’, but to engineer it. What was the founding aim of the No campaign? To block a First Nations presence in Parliament from voicing objections to expanding coal and gas extraction, as **Centre for Independent Studies** ‘fellow’, ex-**Liberty Works** director, and **Advance** ‘No’ campaign frontman Anthony Nyunggai Mundine openly states on the **Centre of Independent Studies** website, citing protests against the Adani coal and James Price Point gas projects.<sup>174</sup>

Having defeated the Voice referendum, **Advance** immediately focussed its efforts on building out the Australian Atlas Network’s four interlocking disinformation campaigns against climate policy and renewable energy: the ‘offshore wind kills whales’ campaign imported from US Atlas thinktanks, the ‘reckless renewables’ campaign, the ‘we need nuclear’ campaign and the ‘dump net zero’ campaign.

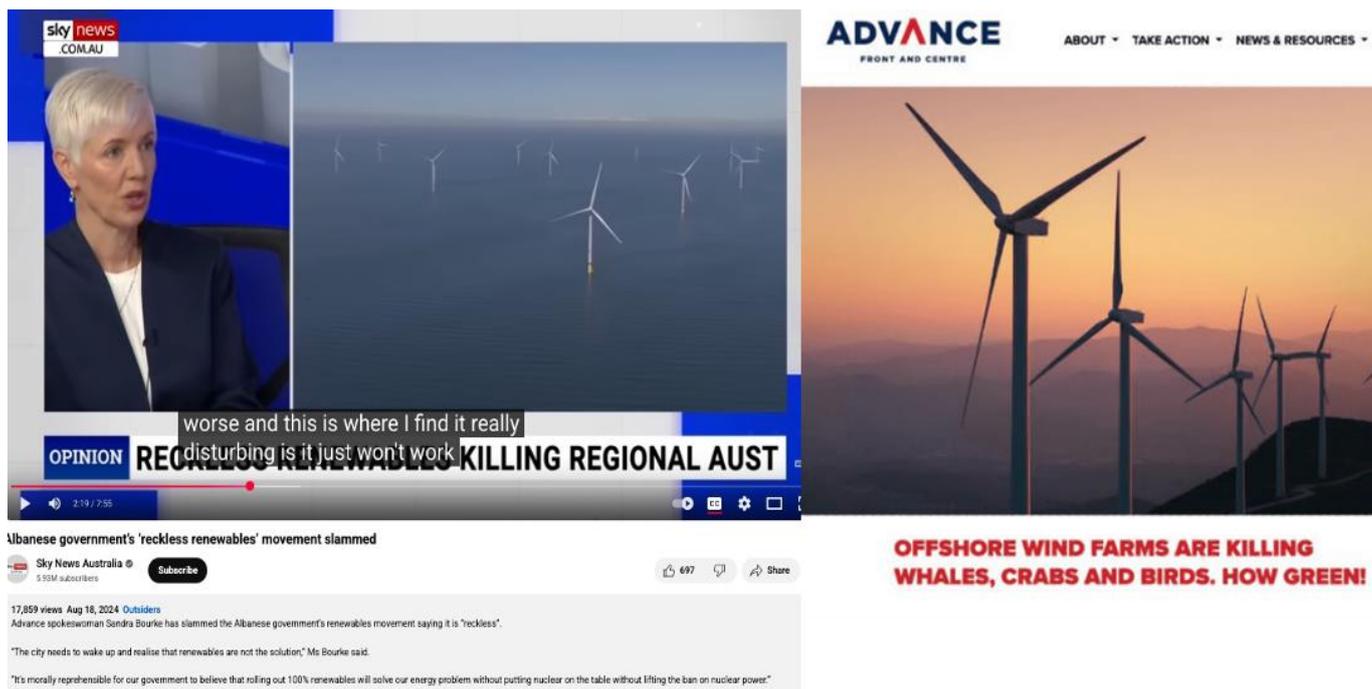


Fig 21: **Advance** anti-renewables spokeswoman Sandra Bourke on NewsCorp claiming offshore wind ‘just won’t work’, that solar and windfarms are wrecking the oceans, bush and farms (see **National Rational Energy Network, Rainforest Reserves, No Offshore Turbines**), and that we need ‘to lift the nuclear ban’ (see **IPA / Centre of Independent Studies / Nuclear for Australia**).

The inaugural advisory board of **Advance** included veteran Atlas networker and climate denier Maurice Newman (MPS 1976, **Centre of Independent Studies** co-founder and board chair, ex-ABC board chair, co-

<sup>172</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/hastie-threatens-to-quit-frontbench-issues-huge-ultimatum-to-ley-20250915-p5mv9l.html?js-chunk-not-found-refresh=true>

<sup>173</sup> Walker, J. (2023) Silencing the Voice: the fossil-fuelled Atlas Network’s campaign against constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australia, *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies* 15(2) <https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v15.i2.8813>;

<sup>174</sup> Mundine, N. W. (2022, Nov 14) [Voice will give unjust power to those who have no authority to speak for us](#), **Centre of Independent Studies**, Sydney.

founder **Australian Digital Holdings-Newsmax Australia**) and multimillionaire Matt Kennard of Kennards Hire (whose father was a **CIS** co-founder and board member).<sup>175</sup> Other wealthy funders have included Simon Fenwick (**Institute of Public Affairs**); Bryant Macfie (**Institute of Public Affairs**) and Trevor St Baker, coal-power station owning billionaire.<sup>176</sup> The largest known investment in Advance's aggressive pro-fossil fuel and anti-indigenous election propaganda was made by the Liberal Party funding vehicle the **Cormack Foundation**, chaired by Charles Goode, an ex-board director of Woodside Petroleum, ANZ bank, and the **Institute of Public Affairs**.<sup>177</sup> A previous chair of the **Cormack Foundation** was Hugh Morgan, a member of inaugural Atlas Network corporate board and key figure in the funding and political history of Australia's integration in the US based Atlas Network since he co-founded the **Centre of Independent Studies** in 1976 and joined the inaugural Atlas Network business board in 1983.<sup>178</sup>

Of concern is the constitutional law focussed **Samuel Griffiths Society**, which according to Janet Albrechtsen (MPS, ex-director Institute of Public Affairs), seeks a billionaire funder with which to take over the Australian judiciary, as Atlas member the **Federalist Society** has achieved in the US. There, its majority control of SCOTUS has rendered President Donald Trump effectively immune from prosecution under the laws made according to the Constitution by the US Congress, for provoking a mob attack on the Capitol building which sought to overturn the results of an election. What justifications does Albrechtsen offer for her call for a similar billionaire-funded judicial counter-revolution Australia? This: that Justice Bromley found in *Sharma vs. Minister [2012]* that the Environment Minister has a duty of care to consider the harm caused to children when considering the approval of yet another coal or gas mining license.<sup>179</sup> **SGS** is one of the second-tier 'unofficial' Atlas units established by Hugh Morgan (**Atlas Network** inaugural board, CIS, IPA) and his speechwriter Ray Evans (MPS 1988) in the 1990s: the climate/energy disinformation unit **Lavoisier Institute**, the anti-labour **HR Nicholls Society**, and the **Bennelong Society**.<sup>180</sup> The long dormant **HR Nicholls Society** has recently been revitalised to stalk union labour again, linked to a new **Ray Evans Centre** in Melbourne.<sup>181</sup> The science denial outfits **Lavoisier Institute** and the **Saltbush Club** have recently been revived and retooled for the current massive disinformation assault by fossil capital on renewable energy.

More comical perhaps is the **Australian Environment Foundation** run by Jo Nova (Joanne Codling) and Jennifer Marohasy, a blog spun out of the **Institute of Public Affairs** to catch internet searches for the genuine environmental NGO the Australian Conservation Foundation.<sup>182</sup> One of its more harmful disinformation efforts is to deny the patent reality the Great Barrier Reef is in terminal decline from mass coral bleaching events caused by fossil combustion and the the irreversible overheating of the ocean. Its directors have included Dr Peter Ridd, **IPA** director Mike Nahan, and [REDACTED] Alan Moran (MPS 2011, **Tasman Institute**, **Institute of Public Affairs**, now with **Heartland Institute**). According to Jo Nova's blog, 'peer review is neither essential for science nor proof of anything'.<sup>183</sup> A veteran of

<sup>175</sup> **Advance Australia**, 2019, 'Advisory council'. [https://web.archive.org/web/20190312103132/https://www.advanceaustralia.org.au/advisory\\_council](https://web.archive.org/web/20190312103132/https://www.advanceaustralia.org.au/advisory_council)

<sup>176</sup> I am indebted here to the tenacious investigative journalism of Anthony Klan for detailed accounts of Advance funding and use of opaque shell entities and false addresses: <https://theklaxon.com.au/the-1m-secret-behind-the-voice-no-campaign/> & <https://theklaxon.com.au/advance-caught-in-act/>

<sup>177</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/welcome-to-the-cormack-foundation-where-hundreds-of-thousands-is-spent-on-advancing-attack-ads/31xygt6hb> ; <https://theklaxon.com.au/howard-oversaw-500000-to-advance/>

<sup>178</sup> Chafuen, A (2021), Atlas boards in 1984. <https://web.archive.org/web/20211110004921/https://www.chafuen.com/atlas-economic-research-foundation-atlas-network-early-history/atlas-boards-in-1984>

SMH (2017) (Feb 17) Big Liberal donor withholds \$500,000 in dispute with party kingpin Michael Kroger. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/big-liberal-donor-withholds-500000-in-dispute-with-party-kingpin-michael-kroger-20170217-gufn43.html>

<sup>179</sup> Albrechtsen, J. (2024, Oct 26) The legal profession's giant lurch to the left: a return to black letter law is the welcome goal of a new university based effort, *The Australian*. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/inquirer/the-legal-professions-giant-lurch-to-the-left/news-story/914ac646d0f47dd48e5de93ef2a9bd04> ; Minister Sussan Ley, now leader of the LNP Opposition, used taxpayer funds to successfully appeal and overturn the judgement on appeal to the higher court, a victory for the right to profit of fossil fuel corporations over the right to life of all Australian children, and all children to come.

<sup>180</sup> Kelly, D. (2019) *Political troglodytes and economic lunatics: The hard right in Australia*. Black Inc, Melbourne.

<sup>181</sup> <https://www.hrnicholls.com.au/>

<sup>182</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/australian-environment-foundation/>

<sup>183</sup> <https://joannenova.com.au/2025/09/the-greens-set-up-a-senate-inquiry-to-track-down-the-funds-for-misinformation-in-climate-change/>

the Atlas Network since at least 2007, Nova has long been associated with the US oil-funded climate-denial thinktanks **Heartland Institute** and **CFACT**.<sup>184</sup> She currently blogs for the latter.<sup>185</sup> Alan Moran's anonymous anti-windfarm rage generator **StopheseThings.com**, in operation since the 'infrasound' campaign of 2008, is a useful research tool, as it aggregates weekly anti-wind disinformation outputs from a plethora of anonymous anti-wind campaign websites and from across the Atlas Network. It is now festooned with AI generated burning wind turbines, warning us that windfarms are killing whales.<sup>186</sup>

### e) Corporate and private wealth holders funding the Network.

The detail provided here demonstrates that the Atlas Network disinformation infrastructure is the largely invisible machinery through which multinational oil, coal and gas corporations act politically across hundreds of nations at once without appearing to act politically at all. The Committee should invite past and present senior executives, board members and owners of fossil fuel/mining, media and banking corporations known to have been long term supporters and amplifiers of the Atlas Network's counter-science and anti-climate policy operations in Australia, to discover the extent of their funding and coordination of the Atlas Network's organised disinformation campaigns past and present. This would involve Shell, Santos, Woodside, BHP, ExxonMobil, Woodside, Rio Tinto, Clough, Kennards, Gina Rinehart's various companies, the corporate members of Coal Australia (Peabody, Whitehaven, Yancoal, Bowen Coal, New Hope), NewsCorp, and fossil fuel investing banks represented by **CIS** board members such as Macquarie, Deutsche, JP Morgan, ANZ and others. The corporate membership list of oil and gas lobby Australian Energy Producers (ex- APPEA) and the Minerals Council of Australia would be a good place to start. Few would be better placed than veteran Atlas Network fundraisers to assist the committee than Hugh Morgan, Maurice Newman, and Michael Folie, and those who have longest overseen major thinktanks finances as executive directors, John Roskam (**IPA**) and Greg Lindsay (**CIS**). We completely lack transparency on the funding of the primary and second-tier Atlas organisations operating in Australia.

### **(7) "Cheap, clean nuclear! Windfarms kill whales! Reckless renewables!" The fossil/Atlas propaganda war on clean energy in Australia, 2023-2025**

In my submission to the (2024) Senate Environment and Communications Committee's Offshore Wind inquiry, I analysed the disinformation and astroturfing campaign rapidly and effectively mobilised against the Australian government's declared offshore wind development zones.<sup>187</sup> Here I will show how the 'wind kills whales' disinformation campaign was completely integrated with the 'reckless renewables are wrecking farms and forests' campaign and the 'we need clean cheap nuclear' campaign, all of which pre-figured and drove Peter Dutton's campaign to return the LNP to Federal government at the 2025 election. All of these were generated simultaneously out of nowhere across the Australian Atlas Network infrastructure, involving a handful of veteran thinktank operatives, a firehose of dark money, a welter of previously unheard of 'community environment groups', anonymous websites and Facebook groups, all of them calling for a halt to the environmental destruction they (falsely) alleged would result from solar farms, windfarms, batteries and electric vehicles, and also discovering that nuclear power was 'clean' and 'cheapest'. The motive for this high-volume blast of falsehoods into the Australian information environment is obvious.

The Australian anti-offshore wind media campaign was led by **Advance** spokeswoman Sandra Bourke. also a paid organiser of the allegedly 'grassroots' 2024 Canberra 'Reckless Renewables Rally' organised by a new pop-up 'grassroots' entity the **National Rational Energy Network**.

---

<sup>184</sup> <https://www.desmog.com/joanne-nova/>

<sup>185</sup> <https://www.cfact.org/author/cap-joanne-nova/>

<sup>186</sup> <https://stophesethings.com/?s=alan+moran>

<sup>187</sup> Australian Senate Select Committee on Environment and Communications (2024) Offshore wind industry consultation process. Submission No. 297: Dr Jeremy Walker ([PDF 1409 KB](#)) Attachment 1 ([PDF 306 KB](#)) Attachment 2 ([PDF 706 KB](#)) Attachment 3 ([PDF 668 KB](#)) Attachment 4 ([PDF 5127 KB](#)) Atlas Network response to Dr Jeremy Walker ([PDF 47 KB](#)) Dr Jeremy Walker response to Atlas Network ([PDF 193 KB](#))

Clearly, the ‘wind kills whales’ disinformation campaign is an extension into Australia of the petroleum-funded assault on US East Coast offshore wind development co-ordinated across part of the US Atlas Network infrastructure. As documented by Prof Timmons Roberts and the Brown University Climate Development Lab, this involved fossil funded Atlas Network affiliated orgs including the **Heartland Institute**, the **Caesar Rodney Institute**, the **Texas Public Policy Foundation** and **C-FACT** generating the same ‘save the whales from windfarms’ memes for social media we have seen here in Australia, and assisting in the formation and organising of a welter of popup ‘community environment groups’.<sup>188</sup>

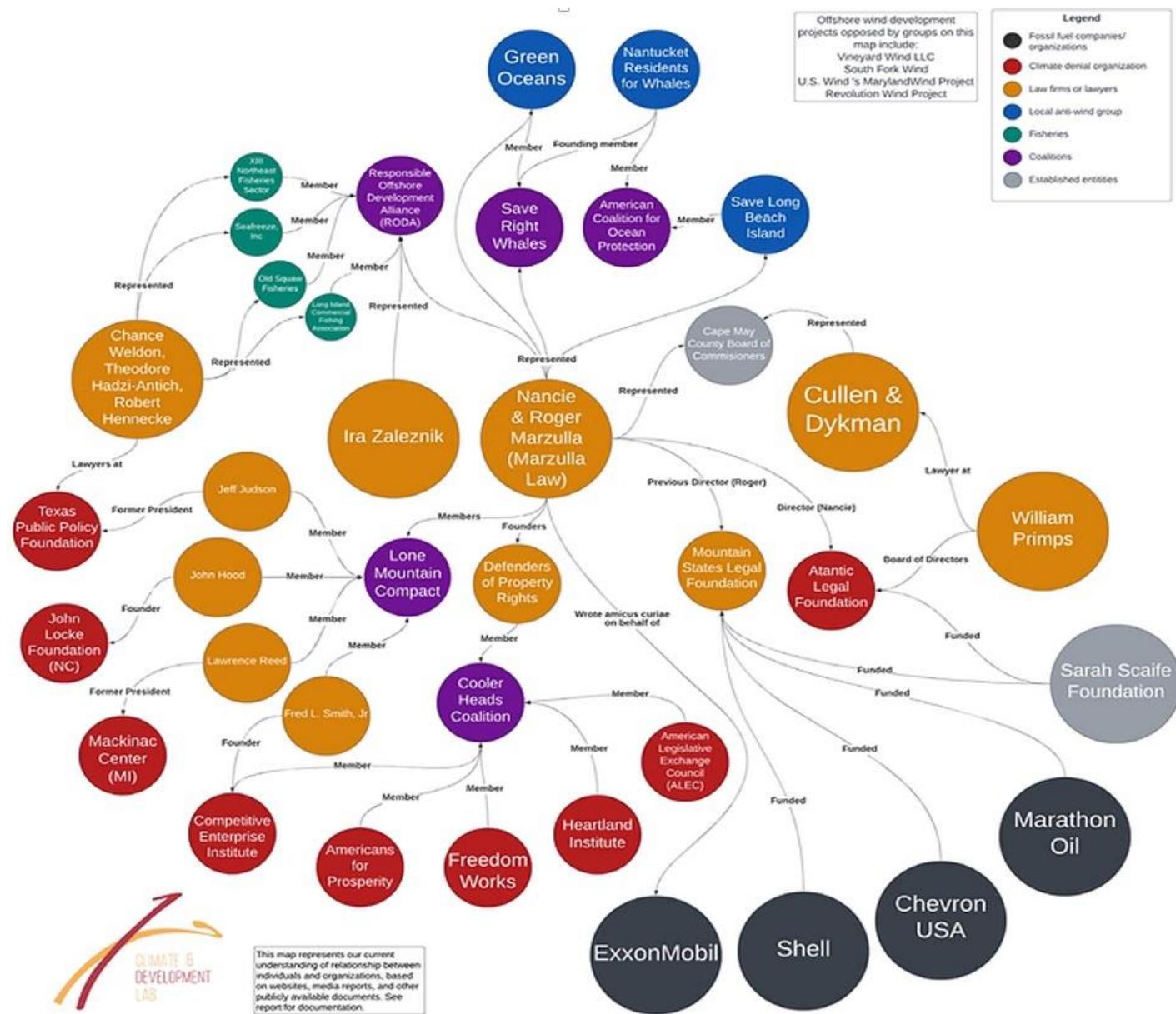


Fig 22: A map of the ‘save the whales from wind turbines’ network in the United States. The red coloured entities are Atlas Network member organisations with documented histories of anti-climate policy disinformation and fossil funding, including the Scaife foundations. Source: Climate Development Lab (2025).<sup>189</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Climate & Development Lab (2025) Legal Entanglements: Mapping Connections of Anti-Offshore Wind Groups and their Lawyers in the Eastern United States. Policy Briefing, Climate & Development Lab, Brown University, Rhode Island USA).

For membership in the Atlas Network check against: AtlasNetwork.org (2021) Global Partner Directory. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200620052651/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/partners/global-directory>

For histories of climate disinformation and fossil-derived funding of specific (red coloured) Atlas entities search DeSmog, e.g.: <https://www.desmog.com/heartland-institute/>

Two of the US Atlas entities driving the ‘wind kills whales’ disinformation in the US (and in Australia) have current Australian members, both with backgrounds in the **Institute of Public Affairs: Jo Nova (Australian Environmental Foundation, CFACT)** and Alan Moran (**IPA, Heartland Institute, Australian Environmental Foundation, StopTheseThings.com**).<sup>190</sup>

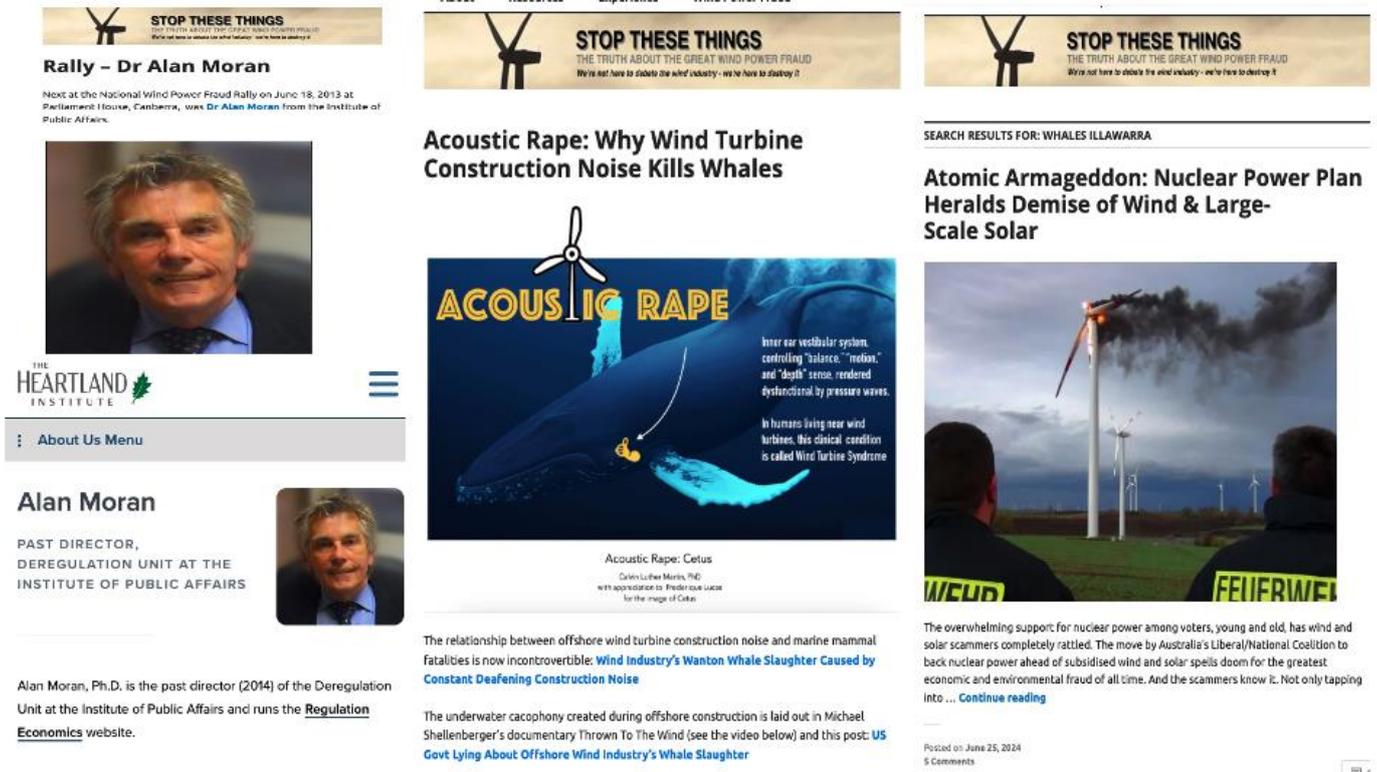


Fig 23: Alan Moran was revealed as the owner of the anonymous outrage inducing anti-wind propaganda website **StopTheseThings.com** (2013, 2024) at the 2024 Oberon ‘Climate and Energy Forum’;<sup>191</sup> his bio at **Heartland Institute** (2024).

A host of anti-offshore wind Facebook groups quickly popped up near every offshore wind precinct announced by climate minister Chris Bowen [Fig 24]. The groups were quickly flooded (usually by anonymous posters), with AI generated memes of burning wind turbines and dying whales, and with links to ‘content’ generated by ‘community organisations’ linked to the US Atlas Network thinktanks and East Coast anti-wind groups [Fig 22].

**No Offshore Turbines** was a completely anonymous website that appeared in 2023, designed to drive submissions against the Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone. It was soon followed by an equally anonymous website called **Responsible Futures (Illawarra)**, also presenting itself as a ‘responsible’ community environment organisation concerned for the conservation of the marine environment, unlike those advocating ‘reckless’ renewables. Yet surprisingly, neither website is at all concerned by the mass bleaching of Australia’s coral reefs or the collapse of the Great Southern kelp reefs due to catastrophic heating of the sea by coal, oil and gas combustion. Later, Alex O’Brien publicly met with Peter Dutton and other Liberal figures, and was revealed as ‘president’ of **Responsible Futures**, thus responsible for authorising the disinformation and pseudo-research published by both websites.<sup>192</sup> The ‘research’ page of **Responsible Futures** sends you back to the ‘research’ at **nooffshorewindturbines.com** (a page coaching the reader with ‘survey tips’ for DECCW community consultation), and presents a downloadable **Community Flyer** containing additional ‘research’. The flyer contains absurd lies about wind turbines: “no reductions in CO2 emissions... no measurable impact on climate change... more CO2 is emitted in the manufacturing of wind turbines than they’ll ever save in their

<sup>190</sup> Nova, J. (2025) Great Barrier Reef in great health while climate change kills science. **CFACT**. <https://www.cfact.org/2025/08/12/great-barrier-reef-in-great-health-whiles-climate-change-kills-science/>; Nova, J. (2023) Sceptics are saving whales while Greens lobby for Industrial Plants in the wilderness. <https://joannenova.com.au/tag/cfact/>

<sup>191</sup> Oberon Regional Climate Energy Forum (2024, Aug 26) featuring Ian Plimer (**IPA**), Alan Moran (**IPA**) and Burchell Wilson (ex-**Manhattan Institute**). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuVqtYG\\_I8I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuVqtYG_I8I) See also its associated Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/oberonagainstawindtowers/>

<sup>192</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-30/illawarra-offshore-wind-farm-misinformation-in-federal-election/105097852>; <https://responsiblefutures.com.au/meeting-with-hon-peter-dutton-mp/>

working life”.<sup>193</sup> The energy payoff period for a wind turbine rated for 30 years work is around 5-12 months.<sup>194</sup> A single 15MW wind turbine operating at 55% capacity will produce over 30 years electricity equivalent to some 985 million litres of petrol. If this electricity were used solely to power EVs, it would prevent around *2.4 billion kilograms* of CO2 emissions. The websites ‘research’ into the ‘risk factors’ of offshore windfarms include catastrophic impacts on whales and marine biodiversity. Both ‘research’ items prominently push the familiar scare tactics that offshore wind farms will cause mass unemployment in the Illawarra and crash residential property values.

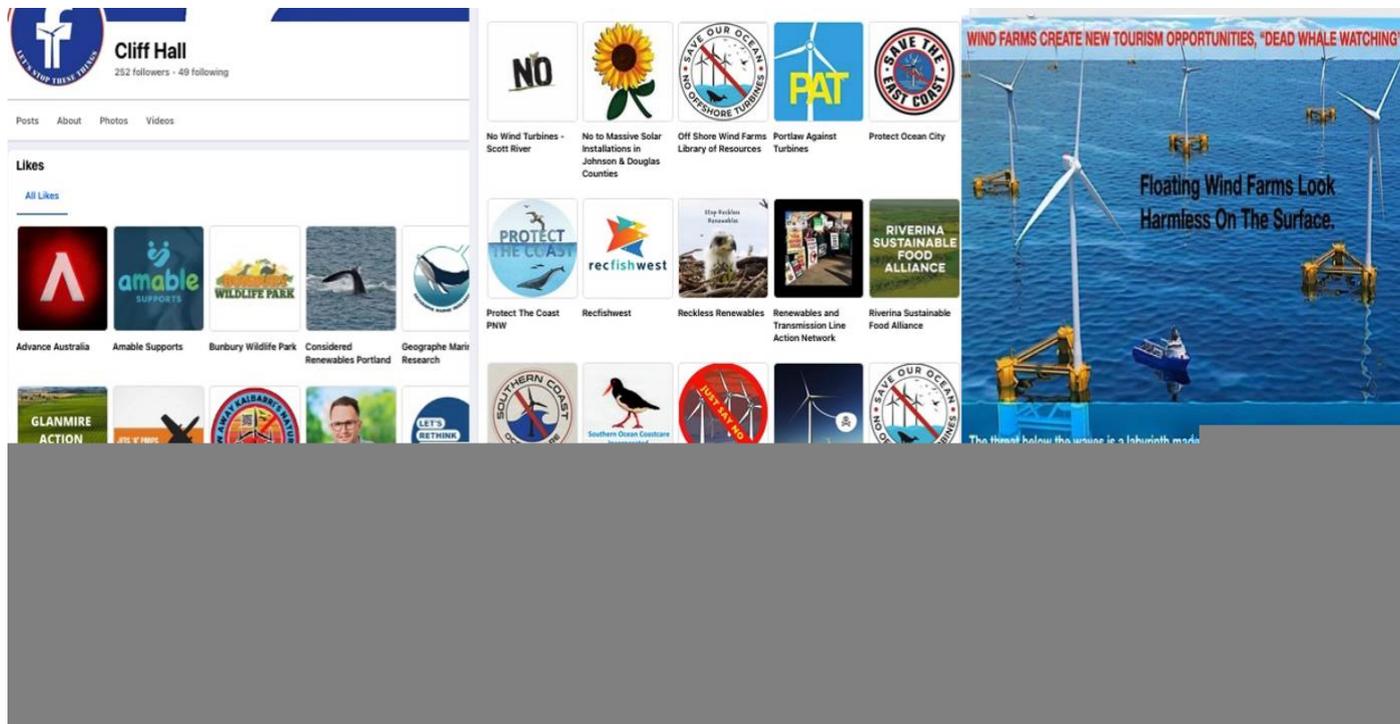


Fig 24: Facebook friends of ‘Cliff Hall’: a map of Australian anti-wind ‘community’ groups, including heavily funded **IPA/CIS** spinoff third party election campaign unit **Advance**, and his often-posted ‘labyrinth of whale death’ meme. ‘Cliff Hall’ is a frequent poster of ‘windfarms kill whales’ graphics into these anti-wind Facebook groups, which are constantly drip-fed **IPA**, **CIS**, **Advance** and other second-tier Atlas org generated memes and ‘content’, as well as cross-posts from the US anti-wind community groups also linked to US Atlas orgs. With no other friends, family or interests on his FB profile, ‘Cliff Hall’ appears to be a false identity.

If you accept **Responsible Futures (Illawarra)/No Offshore Turbines** invitation to ‘Fact Check the Information’ backing their claims, you will quickly discover the ‘research’ is entirely and intentionally falsified. *None of the references support the absurd, tendentious claims* such as “a growing number of scientists believe renewable energy is more damaging to biodiversity than climate change”. Many of the citations have no source reference (e.g. only to Science, 2020 - a journal which publishes hundreds of scientific articles per year). The false claim that surveying the sea floor for wind turbines deafens whales links to an article that doesn’t mention wind turbines at all, referring to an entirely different process that *actually does* harm whales, fish and crabs [Figs 21, 22, 23, and 24]: the seismic blasting conducted by petroleum corporation for offshore oil and gas detection. Others are deadlinks to US east coast ‘whale death’ community groups [Fig 22]. These are not honest mistakes. The ‘research’ is intentionally false and misleading propaganda, from an anonymous website designed for the emotional manipulation and mobilisation of those already unwittingly misinformed by 40 years of climate denial campaigns.

<sup>193</sup> <https://responsiblefuture.com.au/research/> ; <https://responsiblefuture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Responsible-Future-Community-Flyer-Jan-2024-Web-Version.pdf>

<sup>194</sup> Alsaleh, A & Sattler, M (2019) Comprehensive life cycle assessment of large wind turbines in the US, *Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy*, 21, 4: 887-903.  
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/renewable/offshore-wind/offshore-wind-facts#offshore-wind-farms-save-more-carbon-than-they-emit-during-their-manufacture>

Before joining **Advance** to lead its ‘wind kills whales’ campaign, Sandra Bourke was a paid organiser with the ‘grass roots’ **National Rational Energy Network**, the lynchpin connecting all the disinformation and astroturfing campaigns of Australian Atlas Network thinktanks and associated entities against renewables energy rollout from 2023 to the present. Bourke was the contact for the ‘Reckless Renewables’ rally organised by **NREN** in Canberra, Feb 2024.

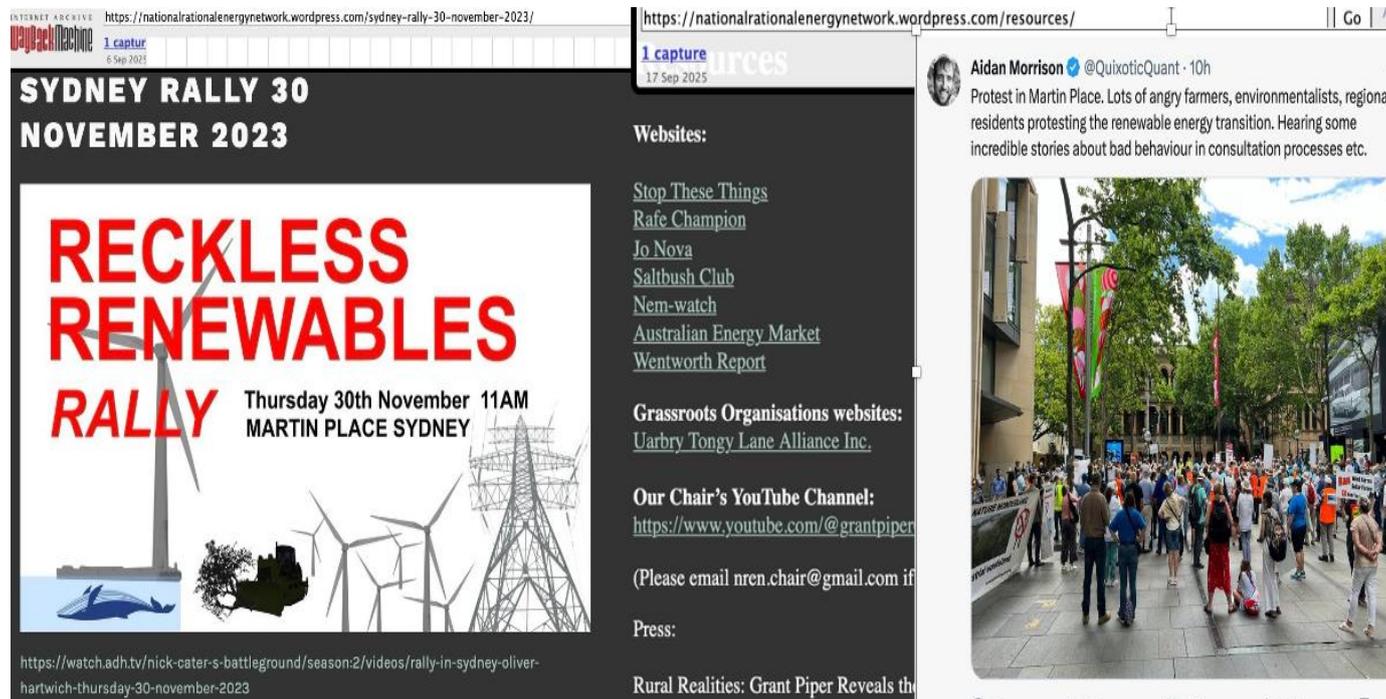


Fig 25. ‘Grassroots’ group **NREN** linking to websites of veteran Atlas Network climate disinformation activists Alan Moran, Jo Nova, Rafe Champion and the **Saltbush Club**, advertising a ‘reckless renewables’ rally to save whales from windfarms, recorded by **ADHTV-Newsmax**, enthusiastically supported by ‘energy expert’ Aidan Morrison of **Centre for Independent Studies** (2023).



Fig 26: AI images of catastrophic wind and battery fires (which unlike coal, petrol and gas, are not catastrophically burning), from ‘grassroots’ **NREN** rally and website, and an event featuring far-right politicians, Sandra Bourke (**Advance**), Peter Ridd and Daniel Wild (**Institute of Public Affairs**) and nuclear power advocate Prof Stephen Wilson (**Centre of Independent Studies, Institute of Public Affairs, Advance**), Sen. Malcolm Roberts (**Galileo Movement**).<sup>195</sup>

<sup>195</sup> <https://nationalrationalenergynetwork.wordprem/2024/06/21/from-the-chair-coalitions-nuclear-plans-june-2024/>

Led by Grant Piper, **NREN** spontaneously appeared as an allegedly “grassroots” organisation giving voice to the “diverse communities” that came together to demand the Australian government “suspend all renewable energy projects, unreliable, unaffordable, and environmentally destructive wind, solar, limited firming batteries, and high-voltage transmission lines”. What justification does **NREN** offer for this extreme call for all clean energy projects to be stopped, everywhere at once? “Our fauna and flora are facing unprecedented destruction, as hundreds of thousands of hectares of land and ocean floors are being deforested and/or damaged [...] posing a threat to our economy [...] potentially leading to mass blackouts”.<sup>196</sup> This repeats the theme of the imported US Atlas ‘offshore wind kills whales’ campaign, and of the c. 160 submissions made by **Rainforest Reserves Australia** to public inquiries opposing land based solar, wind and battery projects, each making absurd pseudo-scientific claims commonly supported by citing faked references to non-existing scientific articles.<sup>197</sup> (Steve Nowakowski of **Rainforest Reserves** was a speaker at **NREN**’s Canberra Reckless Renewables rally). Accordingly, **NREN** demands we follow the urging of the **IPA**, **CIS** and Will Shackel (who has appeared at events run by **CIS**, **IPA**, and the **AIP**) to “lift the nuclear ban”, claiming that “nuclear energy has the lowest overall greenhouse gas emissions of any power source”. The speakers list at the Canberra rally included politicians not widely known for supporting biodiversity conservation and a socially responsible energy transitions to the lowest emissions energy technology: Matt Canavan, Malcolm Roberts, Pauline Hanson, Craig Kelly, Barnaby Joyce, Ralph Babet, Ross Cadell, Gerard Rennick, and Jacinta Nampijinpa Price (**CIS**, **Advance**, **ARC**).<sup>198</sup> The audience also thrilled to speeches by Alan Moran, Peter Ridd and Daniel Wild (**Institute of Public Affairs**), Aidan Morrison (pro-nuclear/anti-renewable ‘energy expert’ at the **Centre of Independent Studies**), and Steven Tripp, convenor of **NREN**’s Energy and Environment ‘community forums’ featuring talks by these and other Atlas figures such as Ian Plimer.<sup>199</sup> At least one of these was paid for by the **Institute of Public Affairs** according to the **NREN** website.<sup>200</sup>

The **NREN** website [Figs 25, 26] links to anti-climate disinformation websites **StopTheseThings.com** (run by Alan Moran) and **JoanneNova.com**, both of whom long associated with the **Institute of Public Affairs**. Jo Nova manages to hit every note of the 2023-2025 Atlas climate disinformation campaign in a 2024 blog post entitled ‘There just might be 74 million reasons environmental charities ignore eagles and whales, and reject zero emission nuclear’.<sup>201</sup> **NREN** also links to a blog run by ‘independent engineer’ and prolific *Spectator* author Rafe Champion, where we learn that the IPCC’s warnings of intensifying heatwaves is “fake news”, that renewable energy is “neither economically nor environmentally viable”, that a poll conducted by the **Institute of Public Affairs** finds that Australians reject ‘Net Zero’ and ‘radical climate alarmists’, and that “there is no climate emergency and policies to address this non-existent threat are harmful to most of the world’s people”.<sup>202</sup> Champion has been writing for the **CIS** and other Atlas spin-off websites and projects for decades.<sup>203</sup> He is a leading figure and founding member of the **Saltbush Club**: a group of Atlas Network thinktank executive directors, funders, authors, and petroleum and mining engineers. Originally pushing climate denial with the goal of changing ‘the climate of public opinion’, **Saltbush Club** has recently been revived and retooled for the present fossil/Atlas propaganda war against renewable energy and ‘Net Zero’.<sup>204</sup> Its founding members provide a roster of the Australian Atlas Network’s fossil/mining corporate funders (Hugh Morgan, Gina Rinehart, Rod

<sup>196</sup> <https://getthewordout.com.au/press-release/press-release-press-release-national-rally-against-reckless-renewables-6-feb-2024-parliament-house-10am/>

<sup>197</sup> <https://www.rainforestreserves.org.au/submissions> ; <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NjREwFtvBPvtk2pLgWlpOfE5fk3SZxfk>

<sup>198</sup> <https://getthewordout.com.au/press-release/press-release-press-release-national-rally-against-reckless-renewables-6-feb-2024-parliament-house-10am/>

<sup>199</sup> See e.g. Oberon Regional Climate Energy Forum: Ian Plimer, Craig Kelly, Alan Moran (2024, Aug 26). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuVqtYG\\_I8I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuVqtYG_I8I) and associated Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/oberonagainstandwindtowers/>

<sup>200</sup> “The Dee Why Forum went very well with excellent discussions on the panels and speeches by the special guests. Hats-off the Steve Tripp and the Sydney NRENers for putting it all together. Must also thank our sponsorship from the IPA and livestreaming provided by **ADH-TV**” <https://nationalrationalenergynetwork.wordpress.com/>

<sup>201</sup> <https://joannenova.com.au/2024/05/there-just-might-be-74-million-reasons-environmental-charities-ignore-eagles-and-whales-and-reject-zero-emission-nuclear/>

<sup>202</sup> <https://www.spectator.com.au/author/rafe-champion/> ; <https://flickerpower.com/index.php/search/categories/general/21-17-fake-climate-alarms> ; <https://flickerpower.com/index.php/search/categories/general/the-dark-side-of-renewable-energy> ; <https://flickerpower.com/index.php/briefing-notes>

<sup>203</sup> <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/PJIPubPI/1995/81.html>

<sup>204</sup> <https://saltbushclub.com/2025/12/20/net-zero-on-energy-promises/>

Carnegie), its anti-science disinformation producers (Alan Moran, Jo Nova, Ian Plimer, Peter Ridd) and its thinktank leadership [see footnote].<sup>205</sup>

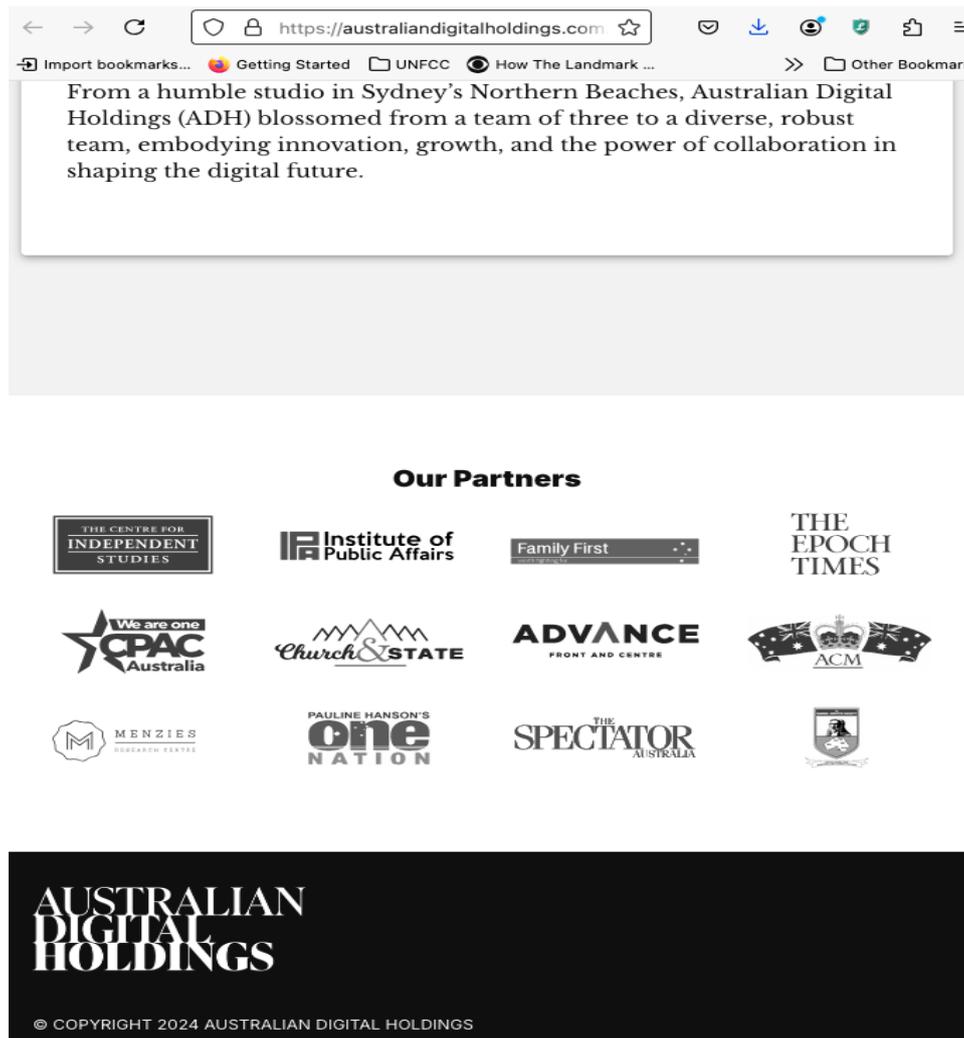


Fig 27: Atlas Network TV? Source: 'Our partners', **Australian Digital Holdings** website (2024, now defunct) which merged with **Newsmax**, a US cable service co-founded by aluminium and oil billionaire and Atlas Network thinktank mega funder Richard Mellon Scaife. Logo bottom right is **Samuel Griffiths Society**.

Finally, the **NREN** website links to a 'news' video of an **NREN** rally featuring Oliver Hartwich (MPS 2010; executive director **New Zealand Initiative**, previously of **Centre for Independent Studies**). It was broadcast online by **Australian Digital Holdings**, a media company founded in 2023 by Atlas veteran Maurice Newman and [REDACTED] shock jock Alan Jones with money from James Packer.<sup>206</sup> In 2024, ADHTV merged with 'Trumpian' US cable channel Newsmax in a failed attempt to take over Channel 7 Tasmania and Austereo regional television licences: **ADHTV** and **Newsmax Australia** are now relegated to YouTube, where much of their 'news' content consists of speeches to **CPAC Aust** and disinformation against clean energy and climate

<sup>205</sup> **Saltbush Club/Carbon Sense Coalition** (2019) Our Founding Members. <https://saltbushclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/saltbush-founding-members.pdf> These include: Tim Andrews (**HR Nicholls**, **Australian Taxpayers Alliance**) Rod Carnegie (ex-CEO Rio Tinto- major **CIS**, **IPA**, **IEA**, **Fraser funder**), Graham Haycroft (**AIP**), William Kinnonmonth (**GWPF**, **Lavoisier**, **Heartland**), Alan Moran (**IPA**, **Heartland**), Rafe Champion (**CIS**, **Spectator**, **Quadrant**), Ron Manners (**Mannkall Foundation**), Hugh Morgan (inaugural Atlas board, **IPA**, **CIS**, **BCA**, **MCA**, **Alcoa**, **Lavoisier Institute**), Des Moore (**IPA**, **HR Nicholls**), Joanne Nova (**IPA**, **AEF**, **Heartland**, **CFACT**) Robert Officer (**IPA**), Ian Plimer (**IPA**), Peter Ridd (**IPA**, **AEF**), Gina Rinehart (major funder **IPA**), John Stone (**MPS**, **IPA**, **HR Nicholls**, **Lavoisier**), Campbell Newman (**AIP**).

<sup>206</sup> <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/media/2023/08/18/adhtv-gives-alan-jones-new-platform>

policy amplifying the work of Atlas think-tankers and astro-turfed campaign entities like **Rainforest Reserves**.<sup>207</sup>

The wholly unevidenced and false claim the onshore wind and solar farms are now Australia's catastrophic and single greatest cause of land clearing, deforestation and biodiversity loss can be traced to **Rainforest Reserves**. According to the Charities Commission, the charitable purpose of **Rainforest Reserves** is the conservation of cassowaries and their rainforest habitat.<sup>208</sup> Originally a legitimate, voluntary conservation NGO in the wet tropics of far north Queensland, at some point before, during or after its successful battle to stop the proposed Chalumbin wind farm, it was captured by fossil fuel interests and incorporated into the wider Atlas Network 'reckless renewables / we need nuclear' campaign. Undoubtedly, rare and endangered old growth forests and habitats should be protected from industrial development. Leaving aside the specific merits or otherwise of the Chalumbin case, it is possible that there were good reasons in this specific case why it is was not an appropriate site for a windfarm.

Nevertheless, what was once a credible local rainforest NGO has become a national scale generator of falsified pseudo-research and media 'content' supporting the 'reckless renewables' narrative of more obvious fossil/Atlas fronts like **NREN** and **Advance**. This pre-existing legitimacy as a real grass-roots community org is what PR strategists seek to appropriate, a far more persuasive and effective form of astroturfing than simply registering multiple cheap, anonymous popup websites. For example, **StopLaborsTowers.org** and **LetsRethinkRenewables.org** each claim to represent 'locals' and 'community values', without any actual locals or community members being named on the website as responsible for the extreme, unevidenced claims and inflammatory speech calling on farming communities to rise up against renewable energy projects and the 'insane' policies of 'inner city elites'. Echoing the false claims of **Rainforest Reserves**, these sites say clean energy is "killing many rare and threatened native plants and animals". Echoing the **IPA**, they say that renewables will "ruin our way of life".<sup>209</sup> "Prime agricultural land will be lost forever", "property values will plummet". More pernicious is the oft-repeated claim that income generating solar and windfarms - which enjoy a far greater level of support amongst farmers than the constant media attention to anti-wind groups fed on Atlas disinformation would lead us to believe - are in and of themselves inherently capable of causing communities to become:

...fractured and divided, with increased depression, anxiety, guilt and suspicion spreading amongst locals. Worse still, many feel unrepresented by Government and ignored by the rest of Australia.<sup>210</sup>

Of course, this is exactly and precisely the aim of the aggressive saturation-level propaganda campaigns communities emanating from the office towers and airconditioned boardrooms of fossil capital and its Atlas Network organisations, which have systematically targeted rural communities with anti-climate and anti-renewable disinformation for decades.

Having become something of a star on Sky and **ADH-Newsmax**,<sup>211</sup> in late 2025, Steven Nowakowski released a 'Renewables Truth Map' on the **Rainforest Reserves** website, which was immediately amplified by the Murdoch press and his 'friends' at **Advance**, the campaign unit spun out of the fossil funded **Institute of**

---

<sup>207</sup> See **ADHTV-Newsmax Australia** items support fossil-fuel Atlas campaign narratives such as these videos from the last 2 years: Queensland wind turbines produced no electricity for 'a full two months'; The Cost of Nuclear Energy vs. Renewables: The Cost Showdown with Aidan Morrison; 'Queenslanders are fighting back against a forest of giant windmills'; Electric vehicles are incompatible with the Australian way of life: Judith Sloan; Climate catastrophists 'eliminate voices of caution': Benny Peiser; Bowen's Unreasonable Renewable Target; Aidan Morrison joins Nick Cater to discuss the economic flaws in the GenCost report and nuclear power. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clva2Q30q08> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgTrCCSKLeM> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89HubsLuYaQ> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clva2Q30q08> ; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxH4yY\\_9WPI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxH4yY_9WPI)

<sup>208</sup> <https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/6c32a678-4e84-ea11-a812-000d3ad1ce4e/profile>

<sup>209</sup> <https://ipa.org.au/read/the-ruinous-cost-of-free-energy-why-an-electricity-system-built-on-renewable-is-the-most-expensive-of-all-options> ; <https://australia.ipa.org.au/australias-future-with-tony-abbott-australian-energy-emergency/>

<sup>210</sup> <https://www.letsrethinkrenewables.org/>

<sup>211</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjAzYPqMGUc>  
<https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/ecowarrior-steven-nowokowski-applauds-rejection-of-queensland-wind-farm-threatening-to-destroy-500ha-of-forest/news-story/9bdc98bed924a0a9bed3bfb88bc99b9e?nk=b5539c816f64e89c0d0e2399632c3b83-1762769933>

**Public Affairs** and the **Centre of Independent Studies**. Nowakowski had already featured in the **ADVANCE** anti-RE propaganda video *Dollars and Destruction*.<sup>212</sup>

**ADVANCE** has been on the case for over a year now, revealing that the truth about renewable energy has nothing to do with the weather – it’s all about dollars and destruction. The dollars go overseas to massive corporations who build the wind turbines and solar panels, as well as to renewable companies who are getting massive government subsidies. And the destruction to our farms and coastal communities is increasing every day even as the government tries to play it down. Now, thanks to friend of **ADVANCE**, Steve Nowakowski, we have the proof of the true damage being done by renewable projects around the country.<sup>213</sup>

The ‘truth map’ is supposed to provide final proof of the shocking truth of the vast scale of the destruction of farmland and forests soon to be caused by as yet not-existing clean energy infrastructure. But if you zoom downward [on the actual satellite map](#) through the terrifying big yellow blobs, it does no such thing. As we approach ground level, the scale of the proposed solar and windfarms, even presuming the underlying data is correct and not overstated or overdramatised, appears much more realistic and decidedly non-terrifying in proper perspective.

What are the origins of the ‘truth map’? Is it really only the work of Nowakowski and **Rainforest Reserves**?



Fig 28: Steven Nowakowski (**Rainforest Reserves**) appears on **Atlas Network** outlet **ADHTV-Newsmax (2024)** YouTube ‘news’ channel, describing renewables and windfarms as ‘vandalism’, and advocating nuclear power; and, **Advance** announces the publication of their ‘friend’ Nowakowski’s ‘truth map’, suggesting it is a ‘bullshit map’. Source: [Advance \(2025\)](#).

In 2024, the **Institute of Public Affairs** was making comparable claims, citing its own ‘research’ and ‘modelling’ to the Senate inquiry on Offshore Wind to justify its outright opposition to clean energy rollout, with laughable figures. For example, according to the **IPA**, the land use necessary to completely replace hydrocarbon fuel use in Australia by 2050 will be “7.5 times the size of Tasmania”, a claim repeated by

<sup>212</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPYccZoK1eo>

<sup>213</sup> <https://www.advanceaustralia.org.au/the-truth-of-renewable-projects-exposed>

Nowakowski in the **Advance** ‘Dollars and Destruction’ (2024) video.<sup>214</sup> To fully decarbonise and electrify Australia’s energy use, says the **IPA**, “between 57 million hectares of land and 181 million hectares of land could be required by 2050”.<sup>215</sup> The upper bound of the **IPA** estimate converts to 1,810,000 square kilometres.

So how much land is really needed to fully decarbonise energy in Australia? When we switch completely to solar and wind, do we have the space for all the panels, turbines and power lines? According to Prof. Andrew Blakers (Dept of Engineering, Australian National University) who is not an fossil fuel propagandist, the correct answer is 1,200 square kilometres. The quantity of land currently in use for farming is 3,500 times greater.<sup>216</sup> If Blakers is correct, the **IPA** estimate is overstated and wrong by a multiplying factor of 1508. This is not an inadvertent one-off mistake by an organisation that enjoys a formidable budget from undisclosed fossil fuel ‘donors’, and all the privileges of a tax-exempt, tax-deductible charity registered for the ‘non-profit’ purpose of ‘public interest research’.

Elsewhere on the **Rainforest Reserves** site we find a large number of submissions authored by Dr Anne Suse Smith (by my count 160) to public inquiries at all levels of government expressing opposition to (what looks like) every proposed windfarm, solar farm, and battery installation in every Eastern state and locality: even to highly technical consultations on market rules by AEMO and other such government organisations.<sup>217</sup> The submissions are replete with multiple citations and references to peer-reviewed literature, conveying the superficial impression of academic and scientific authority. Yet each one has the same pattern of alleging that the project will cause catastrophic biodiversity losses, habitat destruction, land clearing, sedimentation and pollution of rivers, and is illegal, and must be stopped.

As it turns out, perhaps the majority of the citations to academic literature in Dr Smith’s submissions (at least in all those I read, which is not all of them) are to *non-existent articles with invented titles and falsified references*. And on the occasion that the cited articles do exist, the author entirely misrepresents what the researchers actually write. A *Guardian* investigation found multiple examples of this, including a submission to a PFAS inquiry in which references supposedly supporting claims that solar panels and wind turbines contain and release PFAS to the environment. These were invented, and do not exist.<sup>218</sup> The pattern is repeated consistently. For example, the first reference in a submission by Dr Anne S. Smith (of **Rainforest Reserves**) to the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Review, which is supposed to provide the evidence supporting her contention that “expanding wind and solar energy factories have a severe impact on the reef’s health”, is to a 55 page government report containing not a single mention of solar or wind (although there is a single line recommending farmers install renewable energy to improve on-farm incomes). The next reference, cited in support of an alleged catastrophe of wind turbine generated microplastics (“Renewable Energy Research Journal (2023) The Environmental Impact of Wind Turbine Fibre Shedding”), is entirely invented and does not exist.<sup>219</sup>

Perhaps Dr Smith’s most ambitious ‘research’ contribution to the thermal ecology and thermodynamics of renewable energy systems the fossil/Atlas anti-renewable energy disinformation campaign is a piece entitled

---

<sup>214</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPYccZoK1eo>

<sup>215</sup> Australian Senate (2024) Standing Committee on Environment and Communications. Offshore wind industry consultation process. Submission No. 43, **Institute of Public Affairs**. [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment\\_and\\_Communications/OffshoreWind](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/OffshoreWind)

<sup>216</sup> Blakers, A. (2024, May 1) No threat to farm land: just 1,200 square kilometres can fulfil Australia’s solar and wind energy needs. Australian National University. <https://iceds.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/no-threat-farm-land-just-1200-square-kilometres-can-fulfil-australia%E2%80%99s-solar-and>

Blaker says that while “mining companies are often permitted to mine land without the consent of the landowner, solar and wind farm developers do not have the same rights. They must agree on lease fees with landowners before gaining access to land. These fees are typically tens of thousands of dollars per year per turbine. In the case of transmission lines, hosts in Victoria are paid A\$200,000 per kilometre over eight years.”  
<https://iceds.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/no-threat-farm-land-just-1200-square-kilometres-can-fulfil-australia%E2%80%99s-solar-and>

<sup>217</sup> <https://www.rainforestreserves.org.au/submissions> ; <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NjREwFtvBPvtk2pLgWlpOfE5fk3SZxfk>

<sup>218</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/oct/18/queensland-anti-renewables-group-cited-nonexistent-papers-in-inquiry-submissions-using-ai-publisher-says?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/oct/18/queensland-anti-renewables-group-cited-nonexistent-papers-in-inquiry-submissions-using-ai-publisher-says?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

<sup>219</sup> Submission to the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan Review: Dr Anne Suse Smith, **Rainforest Reserves** Australia (2024) Addressing the Environmental Impact of Wind and Solar Factories on the Great Barrier Reef.  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XsuCU8Ibh3p\\_qXcUZFOsbMFvVvUoIWU/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XsuCU8Ibh3p_qXcUZFOsbMFvVvUoIWU/view)

‘The Hidden Heat: How Renewable Energy Projects are Fuelling a North-to-South Heat Island Along the Great Dividing Range’ (2024). Published on the **Rainforest Reserves** website, the article audaciously attempts to shift the blame for the mass coral bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef from fossil fuel-caused ocean heatwaves onto (as yet unbuilt) clean energy infrastructures:

*The heat generated by solar and wind farms, coupled with the sediment runoff from deforested areas, will contribute to higher sea surface temperatures, which are a key factor in coral bleaching events* the combined effect of land clearing, sedimentation, and localized warming poses a dire threat to the resilience of the reef. As these heat islands expand, the surrounding ocean's capacity to absorb heat decreases, leading to more frequent and severe bleaching events.<sup>220</sup>

Unlike burning coal or gas, which generates heat once by being burned, and vastly more by adding heat-trapping CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere, solar and wind power does NOT in fact generate any heat whatsoever, nor can it affect the climate on any scale. Apart from one actually-existing peer-reviewed article, the findings of which she entirely misrepresents, *all the other references* in this article *are to publications that do not in fact exist*, references which have been falsified in order to give the false impression that there is scientific evidence to support the systemic disinformation campaign mounted by **RRA** in c. 160 submissions to government inquiries, each purporting to cite ‘research’ proving renewable energy is environmentally destructive. This is more than a few inadvertent mistakes by an otherwise well-meaning group of volunteer environmentalists.

Apart from the obvious fact that the fake ‘research’ of **Rainforest Reserves** has been re-distributed and amplified by **Advance** and Atlas protagonists in their media outlets and throughout their astroturfed groups, are there any *direct* evidence suggesting **Rainforest Reserves** is now a political propaganda operation of Australia’s fossil fuelled branch of the **Atlas Network**, potentially funded by the same undisclosed fossil fuel interests? Indeed there is.

The signatories of an ‘Open letter to Australians’ published on the website of **Rainforest Reserves**, which include Nowakowski, Smith and Emms of **RRA**, contend that:

... expensive and irreversible decisions are being made—driven by ideology, quick profits, and political spin—not long-term thinking, scientific rigour, or transparency. ... We are being pushed into a reckless, multi-trillion-dollar energy experiment without proper planning, honest debate, or engineering oversight... The current energy plan is expensive, environmentally destructive and incapable of powering a modern and secure Australian economy.<sup>221</sup>

Demanding protection for “our farmland, our forests and oceans from reckless destruction and corporate welfare for renewable energy projects”, the letter demands:

...the lifting of the outdated and unscientific ban on nuclear energy and full transparency on funding and influence.

*All advocacy groups shaping energy policy must declare their funding from foreign groups, renewable suppliers, or other vested interests.*

I would fully support a full transparency of fossil fuel investor funding of any of the Atlas think-tanks and associated groups mentioned in this submission shaping energy policy through disinformation in Australia,. Whilst we don’t know who (if anyone) paid for the production of **Rainforest Reserves** ‘truth map’ or its c. 160 anti-RE submissions to government, the letter itself offers possible clues.

---

<sup>220</sup> Smith, A. (2024) The Hidden Heat How Renewable Energy Projects are Fueling a North-to-South Heat Island Along the Great Dividing Range, **Rainforest Reserves**, <https://www.rainforestreserves.org.au/renewables-heat-islands>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250930072258/https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61b1b504b623c840347e553e/t/66e3ef74db8e520a5dd557c9/1726214005023/The+Hidden+Heat+Dr+Anne+Suse+Smith.pdf>

<sup>221</sup> An Open Letter to All Australians: It Is Time For Energy Reality (2024) **Rainforest Reserves**. <https://web.archive.org/web/2025111011250/https://www.rainforestreserves.org.au/open-letter>

The signatories of this **Rainforest Reserves** open letter are a veritable roster of fossil fuel executives and **Atlas Network** think-tankers, past and present. They include: Alan Moran (**MPS, Institute of Public Affairs, Heartland Institute, Australian Environment Foundation, StopheseThings.com**), Aidan Morrison (**Centre for Independent Studies**), Zoe Hilton (**Centre for Independent Studies**), Stephen Wilson (**Centre of Independent Studies, Institute of Public Affairs, Advance**), Warren Mundine (**Bennelong Society, LibertyWorks, Centre of Independent Studies, Advance**), Adam Creighton (**Institute of Public Affairs**), Ainsley Kellow (**Institute of Public Affairs** author), Paul Espie, (**Menzies Research Centre**, Empire Energy), Steve Baxter (funder of **CPAC Aust**), coal billionaire Trevor St Baker (**Advance** investor/donor, **Conservatives for Conservation**), coal billionaire Rob Millner of New Hope Coal (donor to the Queensland LNP, member company of **Coal Australia**, funder of **Australian Institute of Progress** and **Australians for Prosperity**), and finally **Keith Orchison**, ex-executive director of the Australian Petroleum Exploration Association (now Energy Australia) which represents known big oil corporate funders of **Atlas Network** thinktanks including Santos, Shell, ExxonMobil, BP and Woodside.<sup>222</sup>

Finally, let us turn to the ‘we need clean and cheap nuclear’ program of the **Centre of Independent Studies**, which later became the central theme of Peter Dutton’s parallel political campaign to return the LNP Coalition to government in the Australian federal election of 2025. On the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023, then **CIS** executive director Tom Switzer announced on X that **CIS** was “entering the rink to discuss climate change with our new Energy Research Program led by @QuixoticQuant” (Aidan Morrison). Before becoming director at the **CIS**, Switzer was associated with other Atlas Network thinktanks, also with histories of fossil fuel funding and anti-climate policy activism: the **Institute of Public Affairs**, and the **American Enterprise Institute**. Announcing the **CIS** climate and energy research program, Switzer promised it would offer “tangible energy solutions to address concerns about climate change, focussing on nuclear power and the clean energy transition”.<sup>223</sup> Why would such a research program pre-emptively focus on and recommend nuclear power? A few weeks earlier, following Donald Trump’s lead, Dutton had promised that if elected he would kill off Australia’s as yet unbuilt offshore windfarm projects in order to save the whales, effectively destabilising and discouraging clean energy investors and investments from proceeding.<sup>224</sup> Dutton cited **CIS** and **IPA** ‘researchers’ in announcing his ‘we need nuclear’ election policy campaign.

The **CIS** enjoys the privilege and legal status in both Australian and NSW law of a registered charity, meaning it is exempt from paying certain taxes and approved for fully tax-deductible donations from private donors, none of which need be disclosed to the public. To be eligible for charity registration in Australian law under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act (Cth, 2012) the organisation must:

- be not-for-profit
- have only charitable purposes that are for the public benefit
- not have any disqualifying purposes (which are engaging in, or promoting activities that are unlawful or contrary to public policy; and promoting or opposing a political party of candidate for political office).<sup>225</sup>

According to the **CIS**, Aidan Morrison, the newly-appointed director of their new climate and energy research program, was highly qualified for the role, an:

*Accomplished data scientist with postgraduate academic qualifications in physics, and work experience spanning academic research, technology start-ups, as well as contracting to large corporates. Aidan is leading research into energy systems from an Australian perspective, in particular the most economically viable means to transition to a low-carbon economy, incorporating full-system cost analysis and modelling.*<sup>226</sup>

---

<sup>222</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20251111011250/https://www.rainforestreserves.org.au/open-letter>

<sup>223</sup> **Centre for Independent Studies** (2023, Dec 15) Media Release: CIS launches new energy research program. @CISOZ, X.

<sup>224</sup> O’Malley, T (2023, Nov 4) Projects hijacked by ‘political actors like Peter Dutton suddenly pretending to care about whales’, *SMH*, <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/wind-farms-misinformation-peter-dutton-climate-change-20231101-p5egvn.html>

<sup>225</sup> <https://www.acnc.gov.au/organisations-have-been-self-assessing-income-tax-exempt>

<sup>226</sup> **CIS** (2025) Aidan Morrison bio. <https://consilium.org.au/consilium-speakers/aidan-morrison/>

Unlike genuine university-based research institutes, where all such claims must be fully documented and transparent, including research funding and potential conflicts of interest arising therefrom, **CIS** provides no further information to document these claims. In order to call yourself a physicist in the world of academic science, you would need, at bare minimum, a PhD in a relevant discipline. In order to be an *accomplished scientist*, and a *leading* researcher, one would expect a history of faculty appointments, competitive research grants, and a list of peer-reviewed articles and books published in scholarly venues. Looking at Morrison’s Linked-In page, we again learn he is an “*accomplished data scientist with postgraduate academic qualifications in physics*, and work experience spanning *academic research*”. Yet he does not list these postgraduate qualifications nor any academic work experience there. Morrison claims a Bachelor’s degree in Theoretical and Mathematical Physics (Hons 1<sup>st</sup> Class) from the ANU: an undergraduate award, not a postgraduate qualification.<sup>227</sup> Google Scholar searches suggest Morrison has no author credits on peer-reviewed research publications in climate science, energy physics, energy policy, nor any other field. Given the media coverage, publicity, and citation of **CIS** ‘research’ in support of the Dutton LNP’s proposed repression of already approved clean energy projects, overturning of existing laws prohibiting nuclear power, and making massive public investments in nuclear reactors, this is hardly an encouraging CV for someone appointed as a ‘research director’ at a ‘research institute’ producing ‘research’ on the critical field of climate and energy policy.<sup>228</sup>

Where then, are the “tangible solutions to concerns about climate change” the CIS promised Australians in return for its tax-exempt status? The ‘research’ consists mostly of submissions to government inquiries published on the CIS website and a long list of ‘videos’.<sup>229</sup> Notably, climate change as a physical reality caused by fossil fuel combustion and an existential threat to life on Earth is entirely absent from the outputs of the **CIS** ‘climate and energy research program’.

A key theme of Morrison’s NewsCorp and YouTube media appearances is his claim to have discovered errors in the CSIRO GenCost Reports. As the CSIRO GenCost reports acknowledge, they make no attempt to estimate the dollar values of the accumulating costs of climate disasters caused by fossil fuel to society in its ‘technology-neutral’ cost estimates of consumer market prices for electricity. Unsurprisingly, according to the CSIRO (2024-2025) GenCost report “renewables remain the lowest-cost new-build electricity generation technology, while nuclear small modular reactors (SMRs) are the most costly.” Yet in the numerous YouTube videos put out by the **CIS**, they claimed CSIRO had in fact demonstrated the opposite: nuclear power was not the most expensive, but rather the cheapest energy technology, and that solar and wind energy was not the cheapest energy source, as has long been the case, but rather the most expensive (again, contra the CSIRO and all credible analysts). **CIS** videos also claim CSIRO had demonstrated that ‘coal is the cheapest’. All fictitious claims amplified in multiple friendly media venues.<sup>230</sup>

Elsewhere, Morrison is busy propagating the idea that if you have your own solar PV system, battery and EV, you will not be made autonomous by free, clean, self-generated solar electricity from dependency on high-cost, heavily polluting energy purchased petroleum corporations. Rather you will lose control of your power, car and autonomy to a hidden “coercive administrator” who will disallow you from driving your car to work or to pick up your kids, so they can suck the electricity out of your EV car battery and redraw it back into the grid. The main output for the **CIS** ‘climate change and energy program’ seems to be the long series of similarly tendentious claims made on ex-deputy PM John Anderson’s YouTube channel.<sup>231</sup> Anderson is an adviser to the radically pro-fossil fuel national-conservative rally **Alliance for Responsible Citizenship**.

<sup>227</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/in/aidan-morrison-23340128/>

<sup>228</sup> <https://www.csiro.au/en/news/All/News/2025/July/2024-25-GenCost-Final-Report>

<sup>229</sup> <https://www.cis.org.au/research/energy/#publication-1>

<sup>230</sup> See the **Centre of Independent Studies** official Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@CISAus> for the following video titles: What’s missing from the CSIRO’s latest GenCost draft; The CSIRO report that proves coal is cheaper than renewables; THE END of the renewable energy honeymoon; Is the CSIRO’s coal analysis neutral?; Is Australia building the lowest cost energy system? ; Can we trust the energy transition?; What Rooftop Solar is Doing to Your Power Bills; Nuclear VS Renewables: What Will It Cost?

<sup>231</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtAhgqubXus> ; <https://www.youtube.com/@JohnAndersonMedia/search?query=morrison>

For someone allegedly hired as an academic researcher with postdoctoral physics and energy policy qualifications to look into “tangible energy solutions to address concerns about climate change” it is odd to witness Morrison celebrating the Queensland government (elected following a coal-sponsored disinformation campaign run by a sister Atlas thinktank) announcing its abandonment of renewable energy targets [Fig 29].



Figure 29: ‘X’ account of Aidan Morrison (Centre Independent Studies ‘energy expert’) showing the real object of their ‘non-profit, public interest, climate and energy research program’: electing a Coalition government to block, frustrate and destabilise investment in clean energy in favour of coal, oil and gas corporations.

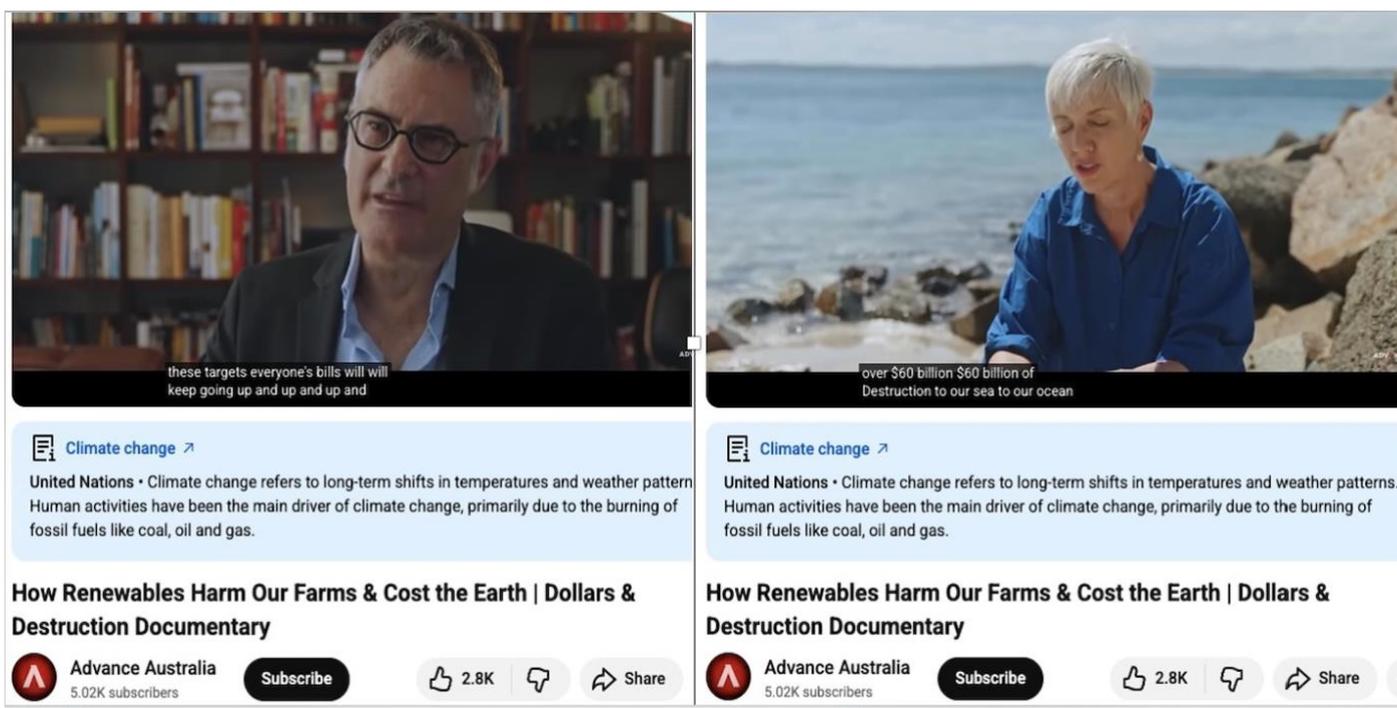


Fig 30: **Advance** (2024) YouTube ‘documentary’ *How Renewables Harm our Farms and Cost the Earth: Dollars and Destruction*.<sup>232</sup>

Another figure in the **CIS** ‘we need nuclear’ program is Prof. Stephen Wilson (**Centre of Independent Studies, Institute of Public Affairs**), who has appeared with Daniel Wild (**IPA**), Grant Piper (**NREN, CWOREZist**), Steve Nowakowski (**Rainforest Reserves**) and Sandra Bourke (**Advance**) in the anti-renewables propaganda ‘documentary’ *Dollars and Destruction* (2024) put out by coal-funded **Advance**.<sup>233</sup> Wilson is an ‘adjunct’ professor in the School of Mechanical and Mining Engineering at the University of Queensland. With few peer-reviewed academic publications, Wilson presumably owes his professorial title to an ‘industry’ appointment.<sup>234</sup> His background includes employment with RioTinto Energy (Brisbane) and a principal role in oil and gas consulting firm Cape Otway Associates.<sup>235</sup> Cape Otway is a key region for offshore oil and gas prospecting by companies like Beach Energy and US oil giant Conoco Phillips.

Wilson’s lines in the **Advance** pro-fossil fuel / anti-renewable energy propaganda piece are predictable fear based disinformation: renewable energy will make “everyone’s bills go up and up and up”, with each new price rise “steeper and steeper” than the last, causing “permanent inflation” in the Australian economy. The reality is of course exactly the opposite, which explains the huge propaganda effort by fossil fuel industry sponsored Atlas thinktanks and astroturfed entities to to persuade the electorate that the policy they have imposed on the LNP Coalition, ‘dump net zero’ for nuclear reactors, has some kind of basis in economic reality, but the policy announcement merely follows several years of fossil fuel/Atlas Network disinformation activities.<sup>236</sup> Set to an

<sup>232</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfEUZotRyLI>

<sup>233</sup> **Advance** (2024) Dollars and Destruction. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPYccZoK1e0> ; Wilson’s **IPA** and **CIS** credentials: <https://www.cis.org.au/person/professor-stephen-wilson/> ; <https://www.cis.org.au/event/net-zero-by-2050/> ; <https://ipa.org.au/author/stephenwilson> ; <https://ipa.org.au/ipa-digital/stephen-wilson-discussing-ipa-research-on-system-cost-energy-research-credlin-sky-news-australia-2-july-2024>

<sup>234</sup> <https://mechmining.uq.edu.au/profile/6114/stephen-wilson> ; <http://www.energy.gov.au/sites/default/files/the-global-oil-market-a-review-paper-2016.pdf> ; [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Vlado-Vivoda/publication/318118419\\_Australia\\_and\\_Germany\\_A\\_new\\_strategic\\_energy\\_partnership/links/595afcf5aca272f3c083fe8e/Australia-and-Germany-A-new-strategic-energy-partnership.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Vlado-Vivoda/publication/318118419_Australia_and_Germany_A_new_strategic_energy_partnership/links/595afcf5aca272f3c083fe8e/Australia-and-Germany-A-new-strategic-energy-partnership.pdf) ; <https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p285111/pdf/contributors.pdf>

<sup>235</sup> <https://publishednotices.asic.gov.au/browsesearch-notices/notice-details/CAPE-OTWAY-ASSOCIATES-PTY-LTD-605369622/9f22bbc0-318d-44bc-ab81-07d7f28ecc27>

<sup>236</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-25/wholesale-power-prices-pushed-down/103386062> ; <https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/renewables-growth-pushing-down-power-prices-aemo-20251029-p5n69s> <https://www.aemo.com.au/newsroom/media-release/renewables-push-nem-electricity-prices-down-to-historical-levels> <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/about-energy/news/news-stories/energy-facts-renewables-and-electricity-prices>

emotional background of ominous minor key piano music, and without a single reference to the environmental damage caused by fossil fuel extraction, mining and burning (global warming), among the false claims made are that wind turbine blades are “made of BPA” and will cover your crops in carcinogenic microplastics, that wind turbines could result in your rural property being burned down in a catastrophic wildfire, that offshore windfarms “can harm whales and dolphins” and that a zero-fossil energy system will cost “\$9 trillion” and require an area “7 times that of Tasmania” to be covered in solar PV panels, that RE developers and governments “just don’t care” about the ‘mental health issues’ and ‘division’ allegedly caused by the mere thought of solar and windfarms in rural communities.

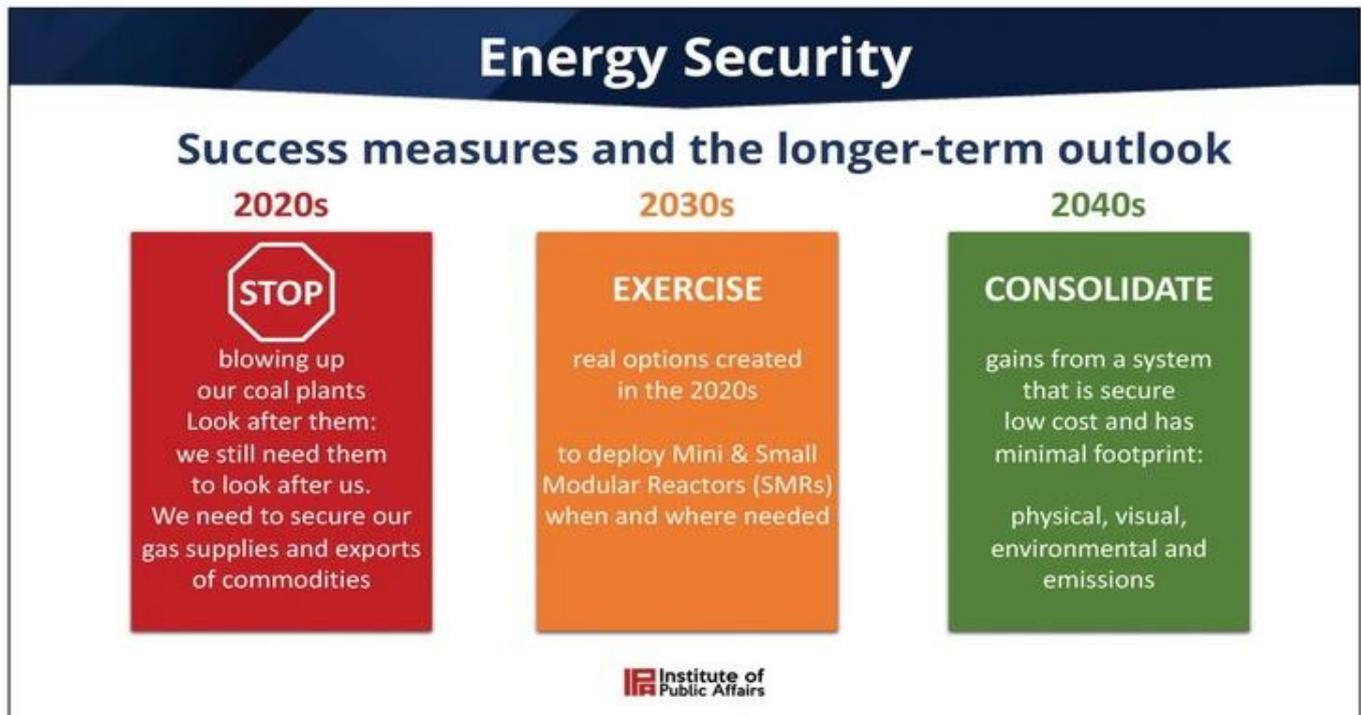


Fig 31: Slide from a 2023 presentation by Stephen Wilson (**Centre of Independent Studies**) to the **Institute of Public Affairs** ‘Energy Security Program’. Source: Murray Hogarth/Fifth Estate (2024).

As journalist Murray Hogarth has demonstrated from **IPA**’s own documents and public speeches, behind the Australian Atlas Network thinktank’s campaign to bring nuclear energy to Australia “is a deliberate agenda to prolong coal generation and disrupt the renewables rollout”. In Hogarth’s words:

In 2023, the **IPA** threw an arm around one of the favourite sons of the nuclear club, University of Queensland Adjunct Professor Stephen Wilson, making him a Visiting Fellow, as part of a big new donor-funded influence project, running over three years. [...] Documents we’ve obtained and refer to in this article are the script and slides from a revealing energy security project update to a private strategy retreat held in Canberra last year on 12 May 2023 by the **Institute of Public Affairs** (IPA) [...] The final commentary and slide in Wilson’s presentation show an **IPA**-orchestrated master plan for Australia to defend and preserve coal and gas in the 2020s; then build “mini and small modular reactor (SMR) nuclear plants in the 2030s under the mantle of reaping energy security, environmental and low-cost rewards in the 2040s.”<sup>237</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Hogarth, M. (2024, May 29) Inside the nuclear influence machine: Is the push for nuclear power in Australia more stalking horse for coal than a genuine alternative for a clean energy future? *The Fifth Estate*. <https://thefifthestate.com.au/columns/columns-columns/the-nuclear-files/inside-the-nuclear-influence-machine/>

Contra the Atlas Network’s ‘we need nuclear campaign’, there are in fact no commercially viable “mini & Small Modular” nuclear reactors in operation anywhere in the world.<sup>238</sup>

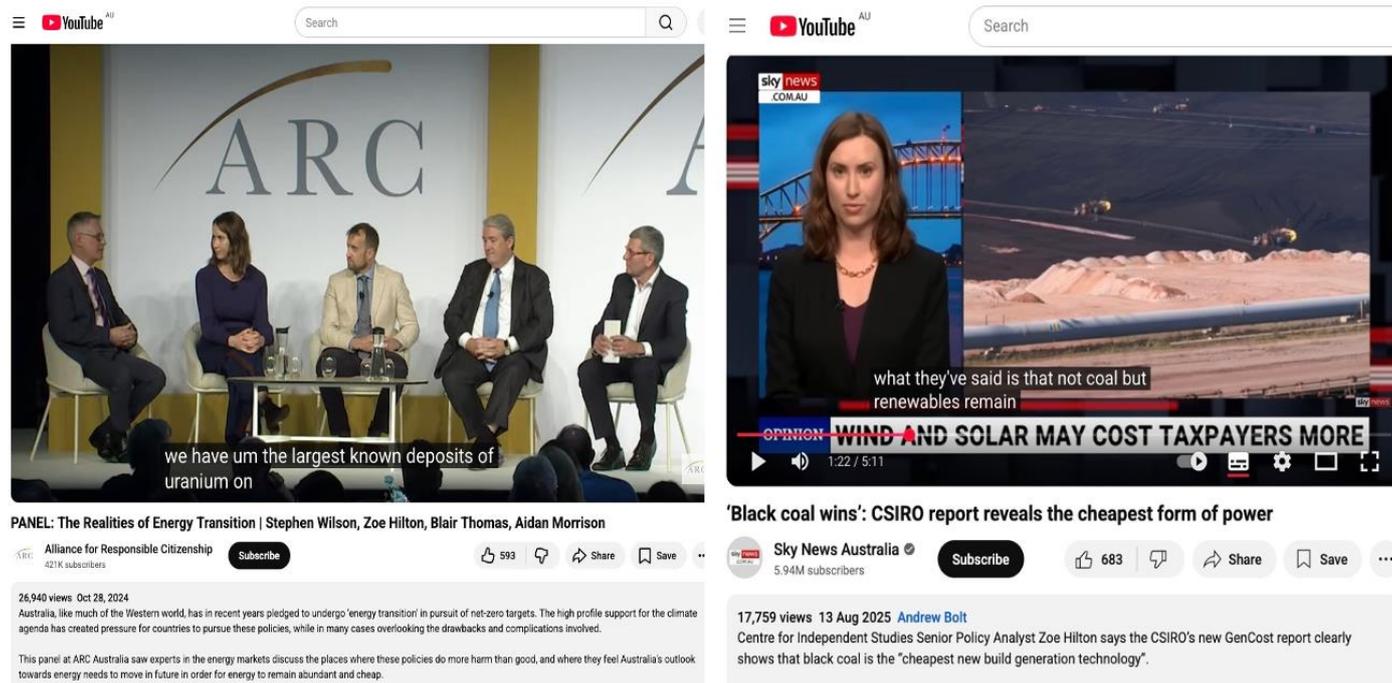


Fig 32. Two outputs of the **Centre of Independent Studies** ‘climate and energy research’ program led by Mr Aidan Morrison and Prof. Stephen Morrison (also **IPA**): YouTube videos published by oil-investor funded **Alliance for Responsible Citizenship**, and NewsCorp, long term amplifier of Atlas Network anti-climate policy campaigns.

Hogarth reports that Wilson [Fig 31] told the **IPA** audience that **IPA**’s new ‘energy security’ program was “supported and encouraged by the far-sighted group of donors that Nick Jorss is bringing together”.<sup>239</sup> Chair of now bankrupt Bowen Coking Coal Ltd, Jorss is the founder of **Coal Australia**, a lobby for Yancoal, Peabody, Whitehaven and other coal exporting corporations. An election influence funding conduit for Atlas thinktank propaganda activities, **Coal Australia** and Byerven Coal together spent \$2.78 million to influence the 2024 Queensland election, \$682 000 of which went to Atlas Network affiliate **Australian Institute of Progress**, and \$495 000 to **Australians for Prosperity**, surely a new Atlas organisation modelled on the US Atlas affiliate **Americans for Prosperity**.<sup>240</sup>

In a major LNP Coalition campaign speech given to the **IPA** on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023, only weeks after Wilson advised **IPA** that nuclear power promotion could be deployed as a rhetorical strategy to keep coal and gas profitable against the unbeatable moral and price competition of fossil-free renewables, then leader of the opposition Peter Dutton hinted at the themes of the then nascent ‘wind kills whales’ and ‘reckless renewables’ campaigns, decrying “the sheer size of solar and wind farms” which allegedly “constitute an enormous environmental footprint”.

<sup>238</sup> <https://theconversation.com/small-modular-reactors-have-promise-but-we-found-theyre-unlikely-to-help-australia-hit-net-zero-by-2050-235198>

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> <https://www.coalaustralia.com/supporters> ; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-07-30/bowen-coking-coal-appoints-administrators-amid-price-slump/105590630> ; <https://www.bowencokingcoal.com.au/nick-jorss/>

Electoral Commission of Queensland, 3<sup>rd</sup> Party entities, 2024 State Election data. <https://disclosures.ecq.qld.gov.au/> <https://www.australiansforprosperity.com/about-us/> ; <https://www.cpac.network/dr-nataliya-ilyushina-joins-cpac-2025>



Fig 33: Dutton announces the adoption of the ‘research’ of the Atlas Network affiliated **CIS** and **IPA** as the basis of the LNP’s coal, oil & gas saving nuclear election campaign policy: repress renewables in favour of ‘small modular reactors’. Source: [IPA](#) (2023).

Dutton cited Stephen Wilson of the Atlas Network’s **Centre of Independent Studies** and **Institute of Public Affairs** twice: as an authority recommending currently non-viable ‘small modular nuclear reactors’, and as an ‘expert’ allaying justifiable public concerns about the very long term mutagenic and carcinogenic effects of radioactive nuclear waste [Fig 33]:

I think the government should consider working swiftly to alter the legislative prohibitions to SMRs and MMRs so that we do not position Australia as a nuclear energy pariah and also we can better assess the merits of new nuclear technologies. Professor Wilson says that we must stop procrastinating and prepare *real options* [see Fig 31] to deploy nuclear energy in case we need them. [...] Adjunct professor Stephen Wilson has made several good points around nuclear waste. He wrote that nuclear waste is a misleading term. A more accurate description is used fuel because it can be reprocessed and used again.<sup>241</sup>

Dutton’s speech was broadcast on **ADHTV-Newsmax**, ‘Atlas Network TV’.

Once again, an Australian election campaign and LNP policy program was dominated by fossil fuel sponsored anti-climate policy propaganda, produced, distributed and amplified across the Australian arm of the Atlas Network of thinktanks, astroturfed entities, and media outlets.

<sup>241</sup> Wild, D (2023) Peter Dutton address to IPA Members on Australia’s energy security and nuclear energy – 7 July 2023. **Institute of Public Affairs**. <https://ipa.org.au/ipa-digital/peter-dutton-address-to-ipa-members-sydney-7-july-2023>

## **(8) Recommendations**

- (a) That the Australian government should inquire into whether the present tax-exempt, tax-deductible status of the **Institute of Public Affairs** and the **Centre of Independent Studies** and other Atlas member organisations in Australia as is in conformity with the law. Fossil fuel investors and corporations should be forbidden from ‘donating’ to registered charities, and registered charities should be disqualified from tax exempt status if accepting such ‘donations’ (investments).
- (b) That the Australian government should re-introduce and enact the Electoral Communications (Truth in political advertising) Bill 2025 proposed by the Hon. Zali Steggall,<sup>242</sup>
- (c) That the Australian government should re-introduce and enact the Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Climate Equity) Bill 2023 proposed by the Hon. David Pocock,<sup>243</sup>
- (d) That such bills, and/or existing laws [e.g. Election Machinery Act, Referendum Machinery Act] laws should be amended and/or new laws passed including specific measures (a) prohibiting as a criminal offence any fossil fuel company, fossil industry peak body, fossil lobbyist, or fossil fuel investor from financing any registered charity, political candidate, political party or third party election funding or campaign vehicle (b) prohibiting any such organisation from receiving or accepting any funding from a fossil fuel company, client or investor;
- (e) The Australian government should enact laws requiring any entity engaging in climate and energy communications, policy ‘research’, advocacy and media publicity to fully disclose its past and/or present funding and/or personnel relations to fossil fuel companies and investors to the public on their own websites, YouTube channels, op-eds placed in newspapers, political ads on social and legacy media, appearances on news and current affairs programs, especially of public broadcasters ABC, SBS etc;
- (f) That the Australian government should enact laws prohibiting fossil fuel corporations and investors as a criminal offence (in the same manner as tobacco control legislation) prohibited by law and standardised ethical governance requirements from: advertising owning media corporations and assets, sponsoring sporting teams, museums, schools and universities, and from funding any government scientific or research institution (such as the Bureau of Meteorology, ABARE, CSIRO etc).
- (g) On the model of tobacco control legislation, fossil fuel products (coal, oil, gas, retail coal-fired electricity and petrol, petroleum powered ICE vehicles, gas water heaters, barbecues, leaf blowers, etc) should have a public health warning regarding the direct cause and effect relationship between fossil combustion and catastrophic global heating prominently displayed at the point of sale, and on the product (just as is presently done with tobacco products) as part of a policy of complete phaseout;
- (h) That building, licensing, planning and tax codes for residential, rental, commercial and government buildings and properties should prohibit all new methane gas installations and require all new buildings to be fully powered, or to the greatest extent possible by rooftop solar PV, to incorporate EV charging stations, with incentives introduced to retrofit existing buildings and disincentives to maintaining the use of fossil energy;
- (i) That the Attorney’s-General of Australian Federal and State governments should litigate against Australian registered fossil fuel corporations, Australian subsidiaries of foreign domiciled oil, gas and coal corporations and known funders of Atlas Network disinformation and election influence activities, as well as the Australian Atlas Network member thinktanks, seeking punitive damages for the losses suffered by Australian homeowners, businesses, insurance companies, councils, state and federal government agencies and taxpayers from the catastrophic climate events caused by them (catastrophic bushfires, floods, heatwaves, coral and kelp reef die-off), in full knowledge that their business would cause such events, in light of the fact that they have spent decades actively deceiving the public about the destructive effects of their products. The

---

<sup>242</sup> [https://www.zalisteggall.com.au/zali\\_steggall\\_mp\\_reintroduces\\_the\\_electoral\\_communications\\_bill\\_2025\\_on\\_truth\\_in\\_political\\_ads](https://www.zalisteggall.com.au/zali_steggall_mp_reintroduces_the_electoral_communications_bill_2025_on_truth_in_political_ads)

<sup>243</sup> [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment\\_and\\_Communications/DutyofCareBill/Report/Dissenting\\_Report\\_from\\_Senator\\_David\\_Pocock](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/DutyofCareBill/Report/Dissenting_Report_from_Senator_David_Pocock)

numerous such lawsuits launched by US states currently being heard in the United States provide a model for such public damages claims.<sup>244</sup>

(j) That the history and methods by which the fossil fuel industry has actively obstructed and defeated climate policy worldwide through counter-science disinformation and Atlas Network ‘thinktanks’ be a foundational introductory topic of any secondary or tertiary education level subject on journalism, media literacy, civics, environmental science, economic policy, climate and energy science, engineering or related studies, international relations, etc, to inoculate students from targeted disinformation aimed at them.

(k) That the Attorney General’s Foreign Influence Registry Scheme be revived to specifically include public declarations of all fossil fuel corporations, Atlas Network member thinktanks, Atlas linked funding entities and foundations.

(l) That the fossil fuel corporations, investors and private funders behind **Atlas Network**’s Australian arm and its ‘dark money’ disinformation infrastructure be investigated, reported to the public, and effectively contained by government as a strategic threat to Australian climate and energy policy, to our democracy, to our electoral and institutional integrity, to our national security, to our international relations and UN treaty obligations;

(m) That the question of the concealed power projection of malign influence through the **Atlas Network**’s disinformation operations into Australian political institutions and media sphere be treated by Australia’s security and intelligence services as seriously as that of a foreign state’s information warfare capacities and intentions;

(n) That the Australian government should support universities and civil society at the national and international level, including through recently announced United Nations programs to establish research observatories and public information sources documenting and combatting fossil-fuel sponsored climate and energy disinformation;

(o) That the Federal government require fossil fuel corporations to pay a level of tax and royalties comparable to that received by Norway or Qatar, to support schools, universities, hospitals and the clean energy transition.

(p) That the Australia government should require coal, oil and gas extracting and retailing corporations to submit science-based plans for a complete cessation of such activities, including permanent closure and sealing of coal mines, oil and gas rigs, petrol stations, coal fired power, and methane gas distribution pipeline networks, retraining of employees for clean energy sector, and 100% reinvestment in clean energy, or winding up of business operations by 2035.

END

---

<sup>244</sup> <https://climateintegrity.org/lawsuits> ; <https://climateintegrity.org/lawsuits/case/state-of-hawaii> ; <https://climateintegrity.org/lawsuits/case/the-commonwealth-of-puerto-rico>