



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

the climate centre





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

Information integrity is key for gaining public support of relevant climate change and energy policies. It can be said as stated by global advisory firm not for profit Ripple Research that: Climate denial did not kill your policy. A Google search with no good answer did (Ripple Research 2025). This statement highlights that the internet is where people go for information but what they find is often misinformation or disinformation. While misinformation and disinformation are not usually regulated by governments, it has fallen on journalists and not for profits as well as activists to fill the gap by taking a stand against false narratives. Journalists, not for profits, scientists and public activists are often having to fight misinformation and disinformation on the same platforms and often using the same methods as those encouraging false narratives and harmful worldviews. The flurry of information from both sides can often result in a confused and overwhelmed public.

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

Research by the European Commission stated that: 83% of Europeans think disinformation threatens democracy; 63% of younger Europeans come across fake news more than once a week; and 51% of Europeans think they have been exposed to disinformation online. ("EU Code of Practice on Disinformation | European Commission" 2025).

In Australia research by Jim Reed the founder of Resolve Strategic a research company involved in the media sector found that 68% of people do believe that social media platforms are prone to above average misinformation (Reed and Resolve Strategic 2022).

Social media themes

Wind Turbines are a key part of the energy transition, especially offshore wind turbines; however, they have become the target of misinformation and disinformation linked to stopping their ongoing development and uptake across the world. A global network of journalists exposing climate misinformation and disinformation on a website DeSmog has extensively covered several of these attempts. An activist can be on either side of the debate for wind turbines or against. When a group of activists protested in an offshore wind turbine site in the US and their story made the news and posted across social media (Burns 2024) the misinformation and disinformation was spread. The same group was funded by fossil fuel companies and dark-money groups posing as charitable organizations (Burns 2024). This group has also shared counter climate change and renewable energy narratives, appeared at conferences, been interviewed on TV all since they have been given a platform to do so by funding and social media.



(e) the role of social media, including the coordinated use of bots and trolls, messaging apps and generative artificial intelligence in facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation;

Apps

The key social media apps available online around the world are important platforms for the spread of misinformation and disinformation. A report by EU Disinfo Lab investigated the six major apps (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, X/Twitter and LinkedIn).

The key actions the social media apps were graded against were:

1. Labelling of climate change misinformation
2. Downranking of climate change misinformation
3. Demonetisation of climate change misinformation
4. Strike policy
5. Removal of climate change misinformation ("Platforms' policies on climate change misinformation (V2) - EU DisinfoLab" 2025)

The study found that Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have the strongest policies covering all areas but some areas still with room for improvement. YouTube does not downrank posted climate change misinformation whilst X/Twitter and LinkedIn have none of these policies in place ("Platforms' policies on climate change misinformation (V2) - EU DisinfoLab" 2025). This makes them key platforms for misinformation and disinformation spreading across the social media landscape. A quick search for climate change and energy policies on X/Twitter and LinkedIn platforms can bring a wide variety of results that are only as true as the person posting them.

A study conducted by Professor Gunnar Schade from Texas A&M University found key LinkedIn claims made to spread misinformation and disinformation across 1,388 posts with 245,000 engagements, including likes, comments, and shares ("An Investigation Into Climate Change Misinformation on LinkedIn — Ripple Research" 2024). These claims focused on the ideas that climate solutions are not working and that climate science is unreliable. The claims were:

1. Clean energy won't work.
2. Science is unreliable.
3. Movement is unreliable.
4. Policies are harmful.
5. Climate is conspiracy ("An Investigation Into Climate Change Misinformation on LinkedIn — Ripple Research" 2024).

The study also highlighted that from their research into posts that 5% of the total authors were responsible for:

- 39% of total posts.
- 46% of total comments.
- 44% of total reshares and interactions.

Demonstrating that there are few actors with big voices on LinkedIn.



AI Chatbots

AI chatbots such as Chat GTP, Copilot and Google Gemini are a rapidly growing way to find information from the internet. Like social media these are mostly unregulated and only rely on the company's policies and pose another way to find misinformation and disinformation. A study by EU DisInfo Lab investigated eleven of these leading Chatbots and found key information about their regulation, policies and processes. Often chatbots will react when misinformation is posted on the platform to trigger a "deletion" or "termination" to remove the misinformation or disinformation when the Chatbot can pick it up. But the misinformation is not always found by the platform and not every platform has this process. Most platforms see that fact checking is the user's responsibility rather than the Chatbot ("Terms of (Dis)Service: Comparing Misinformation Policies in Text-generative AI Chatbot - EU DisinfoLab" 2025). For example, Google Gemini has been integrated into Google search to increase uptake of the AI system. This same system has been criticised for its faults in spreading misinformation such as creating images that are historically inaccurate (Milmo and Hern 2024). This is another form of misinformation that is more the Googles fault for not testing the platform and coming under criticism. There is little evidence of these platforms trying to follow policies or move to a position where they are working to reduce misinformation and disinformation, but some are encouraging it by removing warnings or an uncensored mode. If this trend continues the platforms will become less regulated and an easier way to spread misinformation and disinformation.

The Climate Centre has experience in developing and releasing artificial intelligence chatbots, with its environmentally focused chatbot Eco. During testing it became clear that it is very difficult to implement proper controls on large language models, and that there are few companies operating within this sector being driven by ethics rather than profit. At the same time, burdening small companies and startups who indicate the desire to develop ethical controls on chatbots will likely struggle to compete with larger profit-driven companies.

(f) the efficacy of different parliamentary and regulatory approaches in combating misinformation and disinformation, what evidence exists and where further research is required, including through gathering global evidence;

European Commission

Few countries have been able to implement policies and legislation into misinformation and disinformation. The European Commission started a push in Europe to combat misinformation and disinformation in 2018. A Code of practice that supports European countries to self-regulate misinformation and disinformation and published twenty-one commitments on issues such as:

- Scrutiny of ad placements.
- Transparency of political and issue-based advertising.
- Integrity of services.
- Empowering consumers.
- Empowering fact checkers and researchers.



- Measuring the Code's effectiveness. ("EU Code of Practice on Disinformation | European Commission" 2025)

The code of practice became more important during the COVID pandemic in response to misinformation and disinformation on vaccines as well as Russian propaganda aiming to counter support during Russia's invasion of Ukraine. During the pandemic social media platform reported monthly to the European commission on activity on their platforms ("EU Code of Practice on Disinformation | European Commission" 2025).

In 2022 legislation was introduced to co-regulate very large online platforms under the Digital Services Act. The number of signatures more than doubled and led forty-four commitments and 127 specific measure to:

- Stronger measures to demonetise disinformation.
- Increasing the transparency of political and issue-based advertising.
- Ensuring a comprehensive coverage of current and emerging manipulative behaviour.
- Broadening and strengthening tools that empower users, e.g. to detect and flag false or misleading content.
- Increasing the coverage of fact-checking across EU countries and languages.
- Providing researchers with increased access to data.
- Establishing a robust monitoring and reporting framework, with qualitative and quantitative information at EU and Member State level.
- Setting up a Transparency Centre.
- Creating a permanent Taskforce to evolve and adapt the Code ("EU Code of Practice on Disinformation | European Commission" 2025)

Whilst most countries are yet to formally introduce measures to support country focused misinformation and disinformation processes, Germany and Portugal have made progress.

German policies

In Germany, the digital services act was mostly applicable under German law by 2024 and managed by the Bundesnetzagentur, a federal department which held responsibility for digital platforms. Another key legislative code that primarily focuses on antisemitic and disinformation action is part of the criminal code against the incitement to hatred (Miguel 2023).

Portuguese policies

In Portugal, the 2018 code of practice was implemented into law. Now the digital services act is being put through parliament starting in 2024. The legislation puts the responsibility under the ANACOM the national communication agency. The legislation creates obligations for Portugal based linkages of social media networks to moderation and remove illegal content, create transparency of algorithms, and protect users' rights on their platforms. The legislation describes a sanctions framework outlining penalties for non-compliance with the digital Services acts provisions (Pardal 2025).



Australian policies

Australia is becoming a key player in the digital safety area. The eSafety commissioner website is key to spread awareness of issues such as misinformation and disinformation as well as many other issues. The eSafety guide is key to helping users understand the concerns someone may have using common social media platforms, games, apps and sites focusing on protecting personal information and reporting harmful content ("The eSafety Guide | eSafety Commissioner" 2025) which could include misinformation and disinformation. The Australian government is putting out a world first ban to delay under 16 years old access to social media sites until they are older ("Social Media Age Restrictions | eSafety Commissioner" 2025). The ban seeks to protect this higher risk group of youth from the dangers of social media sites.

Leveraging research

The Climate Centre is undertaking analysis of perceptions of climate change and related issues amongst Australian volunteers. Preliminary results from this study indicate that the internet is the most likely source of information for learning about climate change, while the Federal government and scientists were the most trusted sources of information, with social media considered the least trusted; and, government was considered one of the most responsible institutions for addressing climate change. This indicates that, at least amongst people who volunteer for environmental causes, social media is identified as untrustworthy, the internet is used for sourcing information, and the Federal government is trusted but also identified as being responsible for regulating issues relating to climate change.

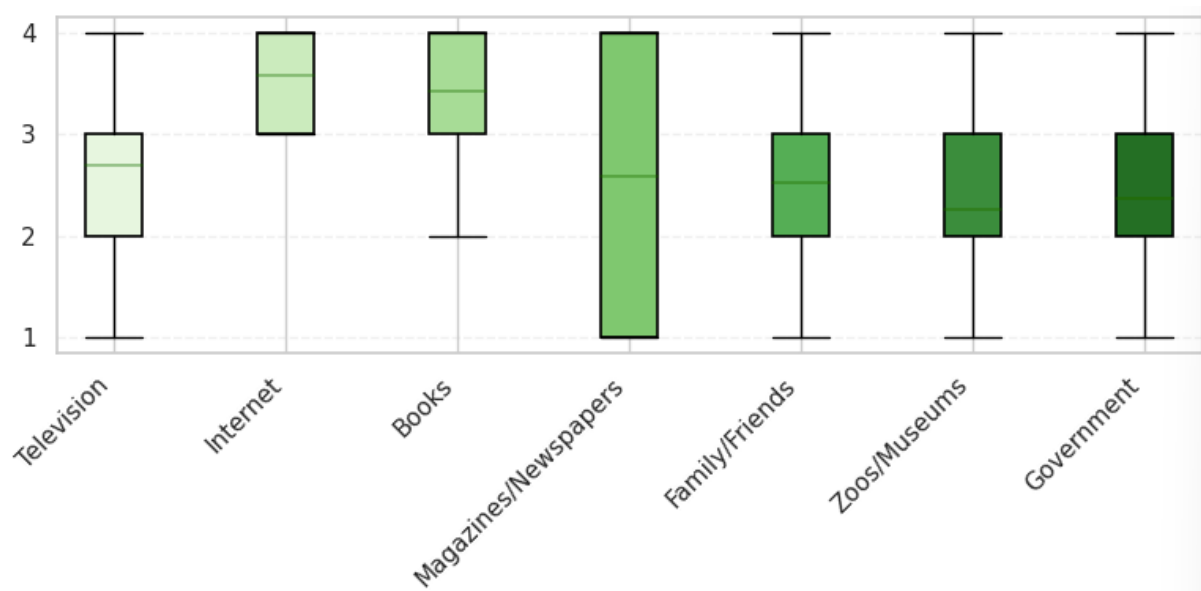


Figure 1: Preliminary results from the Climate Perspectives survey question "How much have you learned about climate change from these sources?" ranging from not at all (1) to very much (4).

The Climate Centre therefore considers that it is highly important for the government to take action as it relates to climate misinformation and disinformation. There are several academic institutions undertaking research as it



relates to misinformation and disinformation which the Climate Centre has engaged with and the Federal government could partner with, for example the Australian National University or Melbourne University (Jiang et al. 2024). The Climate Centre encourages the Federal government to work with these and other experts to address this issue using the most reliable evidence-based approach, and also with community engagement and buy-in.

References

"An Investigation Into Climate Change Misinformation on LinkedIn — Ripple Research." 2024. Ripple Research. 2024. <https://www.ripplesearch.ai/climate-change-misinformation-linkedin>.

Burns, Rebecca. 2024. "Climate-Science Deniers, Right-Wing Think Tanks, and Fossil Fuel Shills Are Plotting Against the Clean Energy Transition." DeSmog. March 16, 2024. <https://www.desmog.com/2024/03/16/climate-denial-marc-morano-droz-wind-energy-whale-deaths-solar/>.

"EU Code of Practice on Disinformation | European Commission." 2025. European Commission. 2025. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy/strengthened-eu-code-practice-disinformation_en.

Jiang, Yangxueqing, Kate Reynolds, Norbert Schwarz, and Eryn Newman. 2024. "Repeating aids believing: climate misinformation feels more true through repetition - even if you back climate science." August 7, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.64628/aa.m935yc55k>.

Miguel, Raquel. 2023. "Disinformation Landscape Germany." Report. https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/20250714_Disinfo-landscape-in-Germany-v2-2.pdf.

Milmo, Dan, and Alex Hern. 2024. "'We definitely messed up': why did Google AI tool make offensive historical images?" The Guardian, March 8, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/mar/08/we-definitely-messed-up-why-did-google-ai-tool-make-offensive-historical-images>.

Pardal, Filipe. 2025. "Disinformation in Portugal: Trends, Challenges, and Countermeasures." EU DisinfoLab. https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/20250519_Disinfo-landscape-in-Portugal-V2.pdf.

"Platforms' policies on climate change misinformation (V2) - EU DisinfoLab." 2025. EU DisinfoLab. 2025. <https://www.disinfo.eu/platforms-policies-on-climate-change-misinformation-v2/>.

Reed, Jim and Resolve Strategic. 2022. "Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation | Annual Report." <https://digi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Misinformation-perceptions-research-.pdf>.

Ripple Research. 2025. "Climate denial didn't kill your policy. A Google search with no good answer did." Track Changes (blog). May 23, 2025. <https://ripplesearch.substack.com/p/climate-denial-didnt-kill-your-policy>.



"Social media age restrictions | eSafety Commissioner." 2025. eSafety Commissioner. 2025. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions>.

"Terms of (dis)service: comparing misinformation policies in text-generative AI chatbot - EU DisinfoLab." 2025. EU DisinfoLab. 2025. <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/terms-of-disservice-comparing-misinformation-policies-in-text-generative-ai-chatbot/>.

Ownership

Copyright © The Climate Centre 2025

Creative commons licence

Copyright in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons BY Attribution 4.0 International licence. Further information on the licence terms is available from <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.

Attribution

Use of material contained in this publication under a Creative Commons BY Attribution 4.0 International licence requires you to attribute the work, without modification or transformation, and not in a way that suggests that the Climate Centre endorses you or your use of the work. This report can be cited as (or equivalent):

Brice, B. (2025). Submission to the Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy. The Climate Centre.

Cover image attribution: March for Science 2017 in Heidelberg by Sebastian Wallroth, 2017.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:March_for_Science_2017_Heidelberg_002.jpg

About the author

Benjamin Brice is a volunteer Policy Analyst at the Climate Centre; he holds a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning (Honours) and is studying a Master of Environment and Climate Emergency. He has experience in Infrastructure economics and real estate in a professional services firm as well as internship experience across the government, not for profit and university sectors.

About The Climate Centre

The Climate Centre is a volunteer-run charitable not-for-profit focused on building bridges between research, policy and communities. It achieves this by undertaking research relevant to local communities, providing digital materials and outreach initiatives that make it easier to interpret climate information and apply it to a local scale, as well as engaging in policy analysis and advocacy to government, and

fostering conversations and understanding at individual, community, and national scales through its various projects.