

# PRO-NUCLEAR DISINFORMATION IN AUSTRALIA

Disinformation Analysis

**RESEARCH REPORT**

November 2024



Analysis conducted for

**GetUp!**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People, and the Gadigal People of the Eora nation whose lands and waters we work from.**

We pay respect to their Elders past and present, and extend this to all Indigenous people today. We thank them for sharing more than 40,000 years of knowledge about this Country with us. And recognise that our understanding of Australia's natural environment is incomplete without their voices.

The First People of the countries that make up Australia have been subjected to disinformation for over two hundred years since colonisation, and we aim to ensure our contribution to work in this space is a step towards course-correcting for these injustices.

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We also want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the many organisations and individuals who conduct similar research into disinformation activities in Australia, many of whose work ours is built on and strengthened by.

## A note on the authors

This research was prepared for GetUp! by an independent collective of analysts, researchers, and campaigners who conduct monitoring, investigations and analysis of disinformation and political influence across a range of issue areas. Their work informs the design, testing, incubation and delivery of new initiatives to tackle online threats in Australia and globally. This analysis was conducted from July - September 2024, with minor updates after this period.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Going into the 2025 election, expect a strongly resourced, multi-target audience campaign utilising events; news media campaigning; targeted social media, online and TV advertising; and social media meme-based campaigning, working to legitimise the Coalition's election position on nuclear energy, and confuse narratives and support for climate action and renewables. The campaign will build on many of the tactics from the Voice Referendum, but also from highly resourced industry campaigns, such as the Minerals Council's campaign against the 'mining tax' in the early 2010s.
- In mid-2024, this campaign began building up amongst an ecosystem of Australia's best resourced and powerful campaigning entities, including the mining/fossil fuel industry (led by the Minerals Council), News Corp, Atlas Network-aligned think tanks and lobbyists, as well as the Coalition parties. It is backed in by an aligned ecosystem of online groups campaigning for nuclear energy, including eco-modernists like WePlanet that amplify disinformation about nuclear energy being a solution to climate change.
- The tactics at play already include astroturfing (the misleading representation of grassroots or independent campaigns), targeted online advertising, and more traditional campaigning through the news media.
- The campaigning is broad-based and aims to capture mainstream media airtime and saturate social media. However, it also targets specific constituencies. A number of these campaign instances are specifically targeting younger voters and women, in addition to more traditional audiences of the conservative base: older men. They are also targeting people in regional areas named as potential nuclear reactor sites.
- The key narratives being pushed in this campaign hinge around the idea that people have been misinformed about nuclear energy, which is in fact good for the environment, is safe, and is the future of all modern economies.
- This report is intended to provide a snapshot of the various individuals, organisations and companies involved in promoting nuclear energy in Australia.

# INTRODUCTION

Proposals for nuclear energy have seen an extraordinary transformation in Australia. Evolving from a politically-suicidal policy proposal just a few years ago, polls now indicate a [weak majority support](#) for exploring its adoption, and pundits and senior politicians are dubbing the 2025 election to be a [‘referendum on nuclear.’](#) It is a rare occurrence for the overton window to shift so dramatically without some catalytic crisis or disaster. It is seemingly the work of a determined propaganda ecosystem that has taken up nuclear energy as their latest strategy to delay the phase-out of fossil fuels and undercut the update of renewables.

Through the 2023 referendum, more people in Australia were exposed to the power and influence that a well-resourced disinformation and astroturfing ecosystem can inflict on public sentiment. Democratic institutions like Australia’s weak accountability of news media, independent government agencies, and political and grassroots campaigns, failed to grapple with the intensity and array of tactics. This emboldened disinformation ecosystem is now deploying their resources and developed tactics towards a campaign for nuclear energy in Australia, to support a Coalition win at the 2025 election. The current campaign for nuclear energy in Australia has the clear goal of electing the Coalition — as to date, there has been no credible or detailed plan provided that would deliver a realistic energy transition.

For fossil fuel and wealthy elite interests (of which the Coalition is the political vehicle), the strategy seemingly has two parts:

1. Proposing nuclear power allows them to present a solutions based response to climate change, and divert attention from their pro-coal and gas positions. This allows them to run positive campaigning on climate, which is crucial in key urban seats lost to independents in 2022, as well as regional electorates grappling with the realities of extreme weather events and the ramp up in renewables development. Nuclear energy provides a means to continue harnessing negative sentiment towards renewables, which they have cultivated for years, but simultaneously insist that they do have a real commitment to emissions reduction.
2. Nuclear energy aims to wedge the environmental movement, climate independents, the Labor Party and Greens, by stoking division and bogging them down in technical explanations of why nuclear is neither desirable nor viable in Australia. Many younger voters were not present for earlier, successful campaigns against nuclear and uranium mining in Australia in the 1980s and 90s. Building on the success of their divisive 2023 Referendum tactics, a campaign for nuclear power can create confusion and division within the Coalition’s electoral opponents.

The added benefit for fossil fuel interests is that the campaign creates greater uncertainty for renewables investment. For the nuclear industry, who had little hope of progress within Australia, there is nothing to lose by backing-in the campaign and benefiting from the billions in government contracts and consulting that could eventuate, whether reactors are ever built or not.

To support GetUp and its allies to outmanoeuvre the nuclear campaign strategy, this report provides a landscape of the campaign ecosystem. Between July and September 2024 we explored, mapped and investigated the actors coordinating in their advocacy for nuclear energy in Australia. The research set out to understand those responsible and their relationships, as well as the tactics and narratives being used to mainstream nuclear power.

Explored in turn through the sections of this report, we sought to understand:

1. The make-up of the pro-nuclear propaganda ecosystem—who is involved and what are their resources;
2. The key messages they are deploying to strengthen pro-nuclear sentiment and the circulation of pro-nuclear narratives; and finally,
3. The trajectory of this campaign—where it appears to be heading.

The analysis has uncovered strong evidence of a likely-coordinated and sophisticated ecosystem of actors, think tanks, not-for-profits and political operatives generating and targeting disinformation narratives at specific audiences in Australia. This report follows two threat briefings, each focused on specific organisations within this ecosystem, and which can be found in the [Appendix](#).

## METHODOLOGY

This report provides an exploration of the pro-nuclear propaganda ecosystem using three key lenses of *relations*, *activities* and *trajectories* which related to our key questions:

1. Who is involved and what are their resources?
2. What are they doing; what are their messaging tactics?
3. Where is this going? What might we be facing as this ecosystem and campaign evolves in the coming months?

Our approach utilised an exploratory, digital ethnography-based methodology. This means gathering data on and across an array of online platforms, and exploring their connections, rather than pulling a large dataset from a single platform. The public channels we monitored included LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, X, and TikTok. In addition to direct observation on social media platforms, our primary software tools were Junkipedia, Crowdtangle (since shutdown), the Facebook Ad library, and the Wayback Machine.

This approach allowed us to discover and explore the context of specific actors, and then follow their activity across multiple platforms, channels and websites. Compared to other approaches, such as content analysis or categorisation of a specific large dataset from one online platform, we believe this approach provides a more grounded and practical sense of the challenges faced by those with a stake in the fight.

An important methodological consideration is that online activity is highly complex, occurs across private and public spaces, and is often deleted before it can be detected. This means that any study can only practically provide a partial perspective on what has occurred. Our approach to this challenge is to provide further depth on what we believe are important cases and actor networks, rather than attempt to summarise an entire national or international information ecosystem. Our account is only one collection and interpretation of events, and readers should consider it in combination with other accounts and analysis.

From July to September 2024, we conducted monitoring across publicly accessible online sites to detect pro-nuclear activity and trace the relationships between the actors. Once key actors and narratives were identified, we produced two threat briefs (provided in the [Appendix](#)) on specific actors that provided significant angles to consider how the pro-nuclear campaign was evolving. Following these briefings we conducted further network analysis and collected material to flesh out a broader picture of the make-up, activity and trajectory of the pro-nuclear propaganda ecosystem, presented in this report.

# THE FACTS ABOUT NUCLEAR ENERGY

While nuclear energy may be fiercely debated in the political arena, when it comes to the science, economics and practicalities of the technology, it is clear that nuclear energy is not a viable option for Australia's future energy mix. Advocacy efforts for nuclear energy are not only misaligned with the science, but also have a negative impact on investor confidence in renewables, which are critical - with or without nuclear - in order to meet our climate goals.

Based on the CSIRO's [GenCost 2023-24 Report](#), which is published in collaboration with the Australian Energy Market Operator, the following is clear:

- 1. Nuclear energy costs more and will increase bills and cost-of-living pressures.** This means nuclear not only will hurt Australian households but is also not the most cost-effective means of reducing emissions in our electricity sector. And the GenCost report does not include the cost of storing nuclear waste.
- 2. The development timeline for nuclear energy in Australia would deliver too little too late for meeting our carbon reduction targets.** The best-case scenario is that nuclear energy would take at least 15 years to establish in Australia, resulting in the burning of fossil fuels for far longer than all credible science-aligned decarbonisation pathways allow for. AEMO's modelling shows that the latest possible closure of existing coal-fired power plants is 2038, which is earlier than nuclear energy can realistically be developed.

Further analysis has been conducted that makes clear the following:

- 3. The claim that Australia is 'being left behind' other developed economies that use nuclear, is misinformation on several fronts.** Firstly, global investment amongst advanced economies is [moving away from nuclear energy](#), not toward, meaning that an investment in nuclear energy would put Australia out of step with the rest of the world - counter to the claims of the LNP and nuclear advocates. The claim also ignores the significant cost and time blowouts of relevant projects, namely Hinkley-C in the UK and Vogtle in the US.

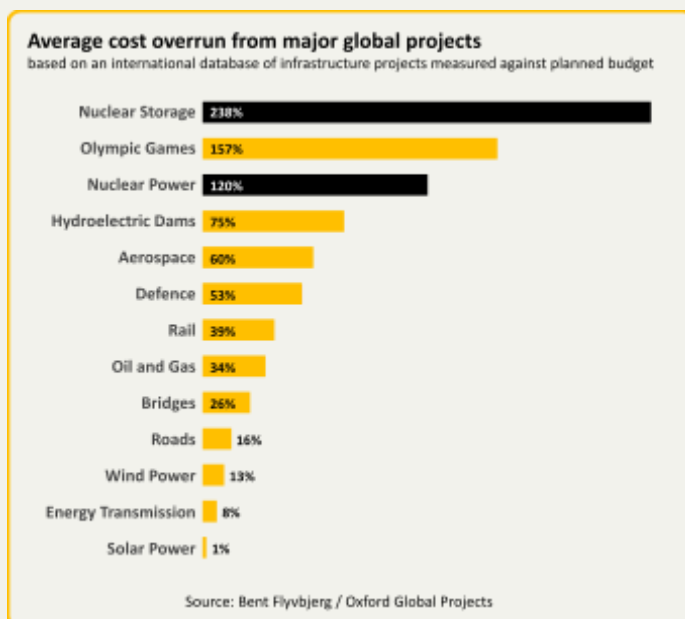
Cost and timeframe	Hinkley	Vogtle
Initial cost	\$34 billion	\$21 billion
Current cost	\$89 billion	\$54 billion
Initial timeframe	10 years	9 years
Current timeframe	23 years	15 years

Source: [ABC News](#)

- 4. The nuclear energy fantasy creates policy uncertainty and undermines investor confidence in renewables.** It has been [reported](#) that major global investors are already rethinking billions of dollars of investments in renewable energy since Dutton's announcement.



5. **We still do not have an adequate proposal for how to deal with nuclear waste.** The US Environmental Protection Agency requires the isolation of nuclear waste for 10,000 years, but some waste can remain harmful for up to one million years. The cost blowouts of nuclear waste storage is the highest of any project, according to one leading mega project analyst. To put this into context, Sweden, a country that relies on nuclear energy for about 30% of its electricity, is spending \$25 billion on its long-term storage facility.



6. **Despite claims by the Coalition and nuclear advocates, serious safety concerns remain.** The Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear power plant disasters have demonstrated the significant safety concerns of when nuclear goes wrong. They have also provided valuable learnings for the industry to improve safety precautions, however the key consideration is that when things do go wrong, the harm caused far outpaces disasters in other industries. Jim Scott, the chief regulatory officer of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, recently said that it's currently not at all clear that the Coalitions' proposed sites would be adequate for nuclear power plants - particularly in regard to the potential of natural disasters. In August this year there was a 4.7 magnitude earthquake close to one of the proposed sites. Nuclear advocates have repeatedly downplayed the impacts of the Fukushima disaster as the levels of increased cancer rates from radiation exposure turned out to be less than initially feared. However there was a significant social and economic impact on civilians, noted impacts on local wildlife, and there remains significant uncertainty about the long term impacts including a potential increase in the rates of thyroid cancer among children. The overestimation of short term health impacts and the uncertainty of likely long term impacts is not evidence that nuclear power plants are safe, rather they serve to illustrate the significant risk that nuclear power plants pose to public safety - especially in a warming world where worsening natural disasters are a certainty.

## References and Further Reading

1. [GenCost 2023-24 report](#), CSIRO (2024)
2. [Nuclear in Australia would increase household power bills](#), IEEFA (Sep 2024)
3. [Why the evidence suggests nuclear won't work for Australia](#), The McKell Institute (Jun 2024)
4. [We don't need nuclear power – the path to cheaper electricity is renewables](#), TAI (Sep 2024)
5. [Dutton's energy war spooks global investors](#), The Age (Jun 2024)
6. [Why nuclear energy is not worth the risk for Australia](#), Climate Council (May 2024)
7. [Six reasons why nuclear is bad for Australia](#), Australian Conservation Foundation (Jun 2024)

# THE PRO-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN ECOSYSTEM

**Our findings strongly indicate the presence of a coordinated astroturfing and disinformation campaign ecosystem operating in Australia to shift public sentiment on nuclear energy.**

A campaign ecosystem is a network of aligned actors that are coordinating, responding and amplifying the activities of one another. The activities of such an ecosystem can involve direct and deep collaboration, and often has the appearance of a single cohesive strategy. While we believe some version of that is likely to be the case here, we caution that these types of analyses can often foster a tendency to focus on uncovering ‘smoking gun’ evidence that proves there is a designed and cohesive strategy with a single entity masterminding its delivery and activities. This type of evidence is almost always unattainable, and in the rare instances where it might, rarely generates a different approach to undermining the influence of the ecosystem.

We instead focus on illustrating the level of coordination and symbiosis between different parts of the ecosystem, which provides greater insights into identifying opportunities for the multiple strategic actions and responses required. That said, it is useful to outline the key entities and actors that may be driving such a cohesive strategy, and that is best understood by understanding those who would benefit most from the achievement of the ecosystem’s goals. This particularly supports understanding the intention behind specific tactics - for example, the targeting of women is a curious element of the pro-nuclear ecosystem that makes more sense, as explained below, if considered in the context of the Coalition’s electoral ambitions.

There are three entities that have the most to gain from the push for nuclear energy being successful, and each have shown up through this analysis in different ways. These key entities include the Liberal-National Coalition, the nuclear energy industry, and the fossil fuel industry, which are all playing a critical role within the ecosystem alongside a number of others who are also important to understand if we are to undermine the ecosystem’s influence. In some cases, there is strong indication of collaboration, in others it is more difficult to discern coordination from a mere alignment due to shared goals.

**This analysis of the pro-nuclear ecosystem, including the most active actors and those set to benefit most from its success, strongly indicates that the Liberal-National Party plays a primary role in driving the campaign and disinformation activities. With their shared goals, there is undoubtedly a significant level of support from parts of the fossil fuel industry, while the nuclear industry is most likely a key collaborator, though unlikely to be the primary drivers.**

In order to understand how these actors might build and coordinate the pro-nuclear ecosystem, we analysed the connections between actors and groups involved. The findings are reminiscent in a number of ways of research conducted during the rise of Advance (Australia), which is also a key actor in the current nuclear ecosystem. Firstly, Advance demonstrated the opportunity and the tactical advantage in establishing the organisation as a publicly-non-aligned entity while blatantly advocating almost solely for LNP-aligned policies (including anti-LGBTQI+, anti-Greens, anti-Labor,

immigration and anti-climate), and sharing [many of the same funders](#) as the LNP. The ecosystem is similarly also testing a broad set of messaging through varied brands and voices to identify the most effective to funnel more resources toward. Advance strengthened this tactic during the referendum through the creation of multiple Facebook pages each campaigning for a 'no' vote with a distinct angle and target audience.

With this in mind, the pro-nuclear ecosystem is best understood through outlining the complementary strategic and tactical pillars that currently contribute to the impact and success already seen in building credibility and public support for nuclear energy. Through analysis of a range of actors and tactics, the ecosystem can be broken down into the following components:

## APPARENT STRATEGIC PILLARS OF THE PRO-NUCLEAR ECOSYSTEM

Objective	Liberal Party wins Government at 2025 Federal Election and establishes Australia's nuclear energy trajectory				
Apparent Goals	1) Build political cover (credibility + public support) for the Coalition's Nuclear Energy Policy			2) Undermine and/or wedge the Labor Government on climate action and renewables	
Tactical Pillars of Influence	'EXPERTS'	YOUTH	WOMEN	CLIMATE	ANTI-RENEWABLES
	<p>Experts from different fields of science (often unrelated areas) are used to elevate particular arguments, discredit anti-nuclear colleagues, and mislead the public on safety, viability and waste.</p> <p><i>E.g. Dr Ziggy Switkowski, Dr Adrian (Adi) Paterson</i></p>	<p>Use youth 'ambassadors' as champions to engage younger generations less familiar with and susceptible to the safety and security concerns of nuclear energy.</p> <p><i>E.g. Will Shackel, Seth Kayser</i></p>	<p>Platform women nuclear advocates as a 'purple-washing tactic' to engage women voters while potentially enabling a defence that opposition to nuclear is anti-women.</p> <p><i>E.g. 'Women in Nuclear', 'Mothers for Nuclear'</i></p>	<p>Champion nuclear energy as critical to achieving our climate and net zero goals, further bolstered by the anti-renewables pillar and campaigns.</p> <p><i>E.g. Coalition key messages, 'WePlanet'</i></p>	<p>Generate doubt and confusion around the credibility and reliability of renewables in the energy transition, and wedging the Labor Government's climate agenda.</p> <p><i>E.g. 'Reckless Renewables'</i></p>
	<p><b>Messaging frames:</b></p> <p>Nuclear is safer now, provides energy security, makes economic sense etc</p>	<p><b>Messaging frames:</b></p> <p>'grown up conversation', eco-modernism, future generations etc</p>	<p><b>Messaging frames:</b></p> <p>caring for future generations, women's empowerment, equality</p>	<p><b>Messaging frames:</b></p> <p>nuclear is the cleanest and most reliable energy source for decarbonising</p>	<p><b>Messaging frames:</b></p> <p>renewables have a negative environmental impact, are unreliable etc</p>

Outlined below is the involvement and presence of various groups, entities and actors. While there are clear connections to, and activities from, major players like the Coalition and the fossil fuel industry, there is also significant evidence of the involvement of other actors, such as the Atlas Network, throughout the ecosystem. While it may be difficult to establish the full scale of their role and impact, their presence is notable, important, and warrants further investigation.

## THE COALITION

The Coalition is the primary source of nuclear misinformation that the Australian public is exposed to, and provides the political tailwinds and media attention that the broader ecosystem leverages. With Peter Dutton and Ted O'Brien key spokespeople establishing much of the narratives, along with various members of both the Liberal and National Parties falling into line, there is significant evidence that **the primary driver of the pro-nuclear ecosystem is the Coalition's 2025 election strategy.**

Despite strong public support behind renewables, the Coalition has continually worked to undermine the transition narratives for years - from the '[wind turbines are an eye-sore](#)' tropes, to amplifying established disinformation on the [threats posed to whales](#) from offshore wind turbines. Given this legacy and the strong public support for renewables and climate action generally, the Coalition faces a difficult challenge to win key electorates where climate remains a higher priority issue with voters. The Coalition's strategy has seemingly been to pivot the conversation away from renewables toward promoting nuclear as key in mitigating climate change. This achieves several electoral advantages for the Coalition:

1. **The youth vote:** At the 2022 federal election, '[more than one in three voters \[34.9%\] under 55 who voted for the Coalition in 2019 ended up voting for someone else](#)', and this included losing two Queensland seats to The Greens. With little to offer younger voters, the Coalition is in need of a new angle to sway Gen-Z and younger millennials. Nuclear energy, when (mis)represented as a modern, safe and clean solution to climate change, provides the Coalition with a new avenue of engagement with this cohort, who also did not grow up amongst the anti-nuclear campaigns of the 80s and 90s.
2. **The women's vote:** Women were 7-10 percentage points less likely to vote for the Coalition compared to men in the 2022 federal election, and winning back women voters is key to the LNP's electoral hopes. This is no small task given the long running issues and repeated failures to address the needs of Australian women, and while nuclear energy may seem a strange strategy, with little to offer and questionable credibility, enabling 'women in nuclear' to champion a key election promise without mentioning the Liberal Party is worth attempting. Our analysis has exposed the pro-nuclear ecosystem's persistent focus to target and engage women.
3. **Fossil fuel backers:** The fossil fuel industry has always been a major funder of both major parties, but typically enjoyed greater support and profits under Coalition Governments. With the necessary phase out of fossil fuels well-established, it is clear that the fossil fuel industry is lobbying in support of nuclear energy (see the Minerals Council of Australia's '[Get Clear on Nuclear](#)' campaign) given its adoption would further diminish investor confidence in renewables and require the burning of coal and gas for longer. At the recent 2024 Bush

Summit, mining-magnate Gina Rinehart, a long-time [Coalition-backer](#) and [Atlas Network funder](#), [began public advocacy](#) for the adoption of nuclear energy.

The Liberal Party was one of the most concentrated organisations in parts of the network analysed, meaning amongst all organisations and companies, more Liberal Party-connected individuals were found than from any other. The Opposition remains the primary source of pro-nuclear content and misinformation, and the apparent strategy is reminiscent of the distraction politics that the Coalition has used in previous campaigns - including its proven willingness to [wield disinformation](#) that served (by-design or not) to power a network of aligned organisations during the 2023 Referendum.

The sole messaging and campaign platform for the Coalition dedicated to its nuclear policy is their basic and seemingly under-resourced '[Australia needs nuclear](#)' website (published June 2024, with political authorisation included from both Liberal and National Parties). The site lacks design and has the appearance of a rudimentary template, which may be due to it serving as a placeholder for future campaigning, or potentially as a means to provide the appearance of the LNP directly campaigning for nuclear energy - the absence of which would be suspicious given its significance and priority for the party. Such a basic campaign website is out of step with previous LNP campaign sites and strengthens the hypothesis that resources are being funnelled into the ecosystem as a more effective strategy.

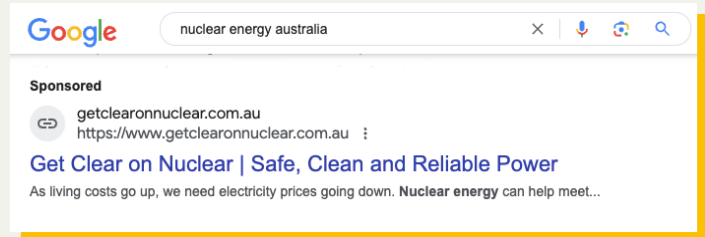
Our [analysis and threat briefing](#) on Nuclear for Australia, which is a central node within the ecosystem, explored the professional network of the organisation's founder, Will Shackel. The analysis uncovered a disproportionate representation of Coalition MPs and advisors, suggesting some level of coordination occurring - despite Shackel's repeated claims of having no affiliation with the party. A number of [media reports](#) have further exposed the connections between Nuclear for Australia and the Liberal Party. Any successful astroturfing campaign requires the entities to maintain distance and avoid exposing evidence of their collaboration, in this way the near total lack of public engagement of Shackel with Dutton and O'Brien appears out of step with how both sides would be expected to engage in a typical setting.

## FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY

A commitment to nuclear energy will require the burning of coal and gas for a significantly longer period of time. And with strong public support for renewables and increasing acceptance of the need to phase out fossil fuels, the industry has been seeking avenues to prolong its relevance. The protracted development time of nuclear energy in Australia - and expected delays like those that have [beleaguered nuclear power plants](#) in the UK, France and the USA - along with the damage it does to investor confidence in renewables, provides a greater justification for the continued burning of fossil fuels. The adoption of nuclear energy in Australia is perhaps one of the best avenues for the fossil fuel industry to maintain and prolong profits and relevance.

For decades, the fossil fuel industry has been driving sophisticated disinformation and astro-turfing campaigns to diminish the urgency of climate change, undermine the transition to renewables, and discredit health concerns of coal and gas. The industry peak-body, the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) has consistently funded high-production value campaigns and content to advocate for the continued use of fossil fuels. The latest initiative from the MCA is the [Get Clear on Nuclear](#) campaign,

which has been produced with conservative PR firm Topham & Guerin, whose previous clients include Scott Morrison, Boris Johnson and Rio Tinto. The Get Clear on Nuclear campaign is newly launched (September 2024) and includes a highly-produced website, with accompanying [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts. While the social media channels all include an authorisation by MCA (though currently buried on the website), the campaign uses messaging aligned with the ecosystem, while also shaping the campaign as a ‘movement’. The campaign is currently conducting ad tests on Facebook, Instagram and Google - including by adwords.



Alongside funding numerous [astroturfing campaigns](#), [industry associations](#), and [greenwashing campaigns](#), perhaps the most powerful tactic of the fossil fuel industry has been establishing the Atlas Network of think tanks, which have deceptively influenced public debate, politics and the media in Australia for years.

## ATLAS NETWORK

The Atlas Network is a US-based organisation that builds, funds and trains libertarian, free-market, and conservative groups all over the world. Atlas was founded by, and continues to be largely driven by the [fossil-fuel lobby](#) to stall progress on climate change, as well as being active across a wider range of issues. We recommend reading the [work of Dr Jeremy Walker](#) on Atlas’ influence globally and in Australia. The known Atlas members in Australia include the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), Australian Institute for Progress, Australian Taxpayers’ Alliance, Mannkal Economic Education Foundation, and the now defunct Liberty Works, with the two most prominent, IPA and CIS, actively promoting nuclear energy in Australia. Further to this, individuals working at all of these Atlas think tanks appeared within the professional network of the co-founder of Nuclear for Australia, Will Shackel. While LinkedIn connections do not indicate collaboration, the sheer number of connections Shackel has to employees, directors and funders of the Centre for Independent Studies (at least 11 individuals), alongside the Institute of Public Affairs (at least 5 individuals), does suggest the presence of a working relationship and potential collaboration between the organisations.



While the presence of the Atlas Network in the ecosystem was expected, the scale of its activities is concerning given the outsized influence of these organisations, the regular platforming of their representatives and ideas by the mainstream media (including the ABC), as well as the wealthy funders backing their operations. Countering or undermining the influence of the Atlas Network is critical, but will require considerable resources and the development of a robust strategy, but recent

efforts in [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#) have demonstrated [how sensitive the Network is to scrutiny](#) particularly as its underpinning ideology and fossil fuel backing presents strong opportunities for delegitimising their presence and exposing their deceptive practices with public audiences.

## NUCLEAR INDUSTRY

The industry is obviously set to benefit from a Coalition victory at the next election, transforming Australia from an impossibility into a huge new market opportunity. The Australian nuclear energy industry largely consists of a number of relatively recently established companies and consultancy firms, alongside longer-existing uranium mining companies, and its small presence and lack of credibility with the Australian public limits their capability to heavily influence public attitudes. So to effectively shape public debate necessitates the industry working through proxy-organisations - like Nuclear for Australia - and politically-aligned organisations - like the Centre for Independent Studies.

There are a number of key nuclear companies and individuals that repeatedly emerged through this analysis, including high-net worth individuals who own or are major shareholders in nuclear companies, including uranium mining. Perhaps most prominent amongst these is billionaire Trevor St Baker who made his fortune in fossil fuels. St Baker is Director of [SMR Nuclear Technology Pty Ltd](#), alongside Technical Director Tony Irwin who is a member of Nuclear for Australia's Expert Advisory Group. St Baker was the catalyst for the [nuclear backflip of the LNP-aligned Coalition for Conservation](#) since joining as a patron, and has been a major funder of Advance Australia. Another prominent individual is Dr Adi Paterson, who was the former CEO of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), and is now the Chair of Nuclear for Australia, while also sitting on the Scientific Advisory Board of fusion company [HB11 Energy](#). As Australia's government agency for nuclear technology, the role of ANSTO within the ecosystem may be expected, however the organisation has come under fire for [sponsoring an event](#) that hosted a series of critics of the Labor Government, while also sponsoring key entities active in the ecosystem including Women in Nuclear (Australian Chapter) and the Australian Young Generation in Nuclear.

There is also a concerted effort to platform nuclear industry representatives across events, podcasts and the news media, likely with the aim of humanising and mainstreaming the industry.

## NEWS MEDIA

Traditionally, news media played a crucial role in delivering reliable and balanced information to the public. However, due to changing habits in news consumption, evolving business models and increasingly concentrated ownership structures, news media companies now rely heavily on social media platforms to reach audiences. Additionally, as clicks and views have become significant for business, some news media companies have become more focused on reporting topics that attract more attention, often platforming controversial narratives and actors to piggy-back on their online engagement, resulting in the legitimisation of their fringe and often harmful narratives.

Even before the Coalition's nuclear energy policy announcement in June this year, a number of outlets had been increasing their coverage of the issue, in particular Sky News has been, and continues to be, a key amplifier of pro-nuclear messaging. In addition to their typical programs, Sky News' late night shows have regularly platformed a range of pro-nuclear actors, examples include the



Chair of Nuclear for Australia, [Dr Adi Paterson appearing on Outsiders](#), Ian Plimer, a controversial scholar who [appears](#) to be a climate change denier has featured on Rita Panahi's show, and Will Shackel, founder of Nuclear for Australia, has made numerous appearances, including on the [Steve Price](#) segment.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is obviously one of the key domains for the pro-nuclear ecosystem to amplify their narratives. With politicians, the fossil fuel and nuclear industries, and even news media, all reliant on their social media networks to communicate with their supporters or expand their audience base, it offers a rich opportunity for cross sharing and amplification of one another's messages. Social media enables an 'information chain' where some well-resourced actors work with PR professionals to translate difficult language into simplified messages in order to target multiple and specific audiences with a comprehensive content strategy. For example, Nuclear for Australia has scientists and engineers from the nuclear industry such as Dr. Adi Paterson and Jasmin Diab provide scientific explanations and endorse its campaign; with Will Shackel's content targeting younger audiences, while aligned news media outlets provide legitimacy for those messages in engaging the general public. Different from most conventional campaign groups, Nuclear for Australia also runs a Facebook Group providing rooms for its members to share their opinions on the matter. This tactic also becomes an important organising space for other pro-nuclear actors on social media, to further spread and amplify messages, further building their own pro-nuclear audience base.

Through our monitoring of pro-nuclear actors' activities on major social media platforms, we found that unlike convoluted academic or scientific reports, when communicating on social media platforms, pro-nuclear actors are fairly adept at using simple but appealing language to convey their ideology with their audiences. This assists them in avoiding the nuance and complexity of the nuclear energy push which is where the proposal has its greatest weaknesses. Alongside some of these social media groups using issues like cost of living or national security as bait to capture their audience's attention, some groups appear to be specifically targeting women, youth and mothers.

### Women

'Women in Nuclear Australian Chapter' is part of the global [Women in Nuclear \(WiN\)](#) network, which has the aim of 'promoting diversity in nuclear through networking, advocating for women in nuclear'. Besides the Australian Chapter, its network spans at least 13 jurisdictions around the world. SMR Nuclear Technology and ANSTO are both sponsors.

The Coalition's '[Australia needs nuclear](#)' public-facing campaign has launched a new targeted Facebook campaign: '[Women for Nuclear Australia](#)'. Aside from self-categorising the Facebook page as 'lobbyist', there has been little information revealed since its creation date in early September 2024. However, all the content shared on the Page has already been used by several Coalition MPs, such as [Tony Pasin](#), [Andrew Wallace](#), [Melissa McIntosh](#), and [Dean Smith](#) in early August.

## Mothers

Nuclear for Australia has launched a new campaign to cultivate a constituency of pro-nuclear women, recently launching a [Facebook Page](#) and an [Instagram account](#) called, 'Mums for Nuclear', categorising it as an 'Environmental Conservation Organisation'. Although both accounts have yet to make any posts, it is clear that targeting Australian mums will be their next campaign.

Although it does not appear that the active pro-nuclear groups are orchestrating large campaigns together, it is clear that they are sharing resources by promoting and platforming each others' social media content and key personnel both online and offline. For example, in July 2023, Australian Young Generation in Nuclear, Australian Nuclear Association and Women in Nuclear Australian Chapter held an event for nuclear professionals and those interested in nuclear energy. Nuclear advocates like Jasmin Diab who works for the pro-nuclear eco-modernist outfit, WePlanet, recently featured on [co-branded content](#) with Mothers for Nuclear Australia.

Alongside pro-nuclear actors targeting audiences working in the fossil fuel and nuclear industry, or working on various nuclear-related issues, there are also some astroturfing Facebook groups actively engaging in the pro-nuclear narratives ecosystem. These groups often portray themselves as nuclear experts without substantiation, and are usually reposting or regenerating content and memes supporting the Coalition's nuclear policy, and sharing conservative views by criticising the Labor's broader renewables policy. For example, a private Facebook Group with 950 members called '[Nuclear Power Australia](#)' is 'grouped' by 'Brodders Blast - Not the News (broddersblast)', a Facebook Page that claims itself as an advocate for free speech and its aim is to expose 'media hypocrisy & lies'. While the Nuclear Power Australia Group portrays itself as citizens advocating for nuclear power in Australia, its activities primarily piggyback on nuclear issues as a way to reach out to more audiences seemingly with the aim of gaining more members. While some admins appear to be inauthentic accounts, other group admins appear to be accounts all owned and run by David Brodtmann.

Other than Nuclear Power Australia, David Brodtmann also owns another public Facebook Group [Nuclear v Renewables](#). With only 362 members, the size of the group is relatively small with little notice from the general public. However, Sandra Bourke from Advance, has been sharing Advance's posts with the group on several occasions, and so we expect groups like this to grow in prominence and the campaign scales in the lead up to the election.

## KEY MESSAGES

The messaging deployed by the ecosystem are overlapping and broadly aligned with tailoring to specific audiences and voices. All of the messages build off years of framing renewables as unreliable, chaotic and utopian, presenting nuclear as the safe, sensible option 'for grown-ups'. Unlike the complex scientific terms and information found in formal reports or academic papers, the key narratives amplified within the ecosystem are closely tied to issues most relatable to the general public, for example 'the economy', 'cost of living', 'safety' and 'security'. Besides the general framing strategy, fear mongering and disingenuous discrediting of nuclear-opponents are commonly used tactics to capture the audience's attention.

Below we have outlined the major key messages through three thematic categories:

- "Modern economies use nuclear, Australia is being left behind"
- "Nuclear is the cheap, reliable and sensible climate solution"
- "Nuclear is safe: you've been fed a scare campaign by hysterical greenies"

## “MODERN ECONOMIES USE NUCLEAR, AUSTRALIA IS BEING LEFT BEHIND”

‘The economy’ is one of the key narrative framings in pro-nuclear campaigns, especially in the Coalition’s messaging. They are frequently attached to claims that Australia is losing its economic importance in the international community and cannot further develop its industries because of the ban on nuclear energy; or how developing nuclear energy can bring more lucrative job opportunities for Australians. For example, claiming ‘*Australia is out of step with other advanced economies.*’, ‘*Australia’s development is being held back by our ban on nuclear energy*’, and ‘*A multi-billion dollar facility guaranteeing high-paying jobs for generations to come.*’

**Peter Dutton** @PeterDutton\_MP · Jun 19  
 This is the concept design of a zero emissions small modular reactor.

Nuclear energy has proven to get electricity prices and emissions down all over the world.

**Out of the world’s 20 largest economies, Australia is the only one not using nuclear energy or moving towards it.**



3.1K 1.4K 6.9K 890K

### Nuclear offers high quality, long term jobs

Jobs include:

- Reactor operators
- Technicians
- Engineers
- Safety officers
- Mechanics

Number of jobs:

- 10,000 construction jobs\*
- 500–800 ongoing jobs\*

**We Planet AUSTRALIA**



**Legalise Nuclear Energy in Australia**  
 Alex Sharp · July 22

‘According to @NEI, nuclear worker salaries are 50% higher on average than those of other electricity generation sources.’, US office of nuclear energy.  
<https://x.com/GovNuclear/status/1761576268825293018>

## Nuclear Works

- Nuclear energy supports nearly **475,000 U.S. jobs**
- One nuclear power plant employs between **500 to 800 workers**
- Nearly **1 in 4 workers** are veterans



### THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMIES RELY ON NUCLEAR POWER

- 1st United States**  
Nuclear is the largest source of electricity in the US.
- 5th United Kingdom**  
Nuclear provides 35% of the United Kingdom's electricity.
- 7th France**  
France receives 70% of its electricity from nuclear power.

Let's add Australia to that list...

Reference: US Energy Administration, "National Energy System Overview 2014"

**OF THE WORLD'S 20 LARGEST ECONOMIES**

# AUSTRALIA

**IS THE ONLY ONE NOT TO USE ZERO EMISSIONS NUCLEAR ENERGY**  
 (OR BE MOVING TOWARDS IT)



**Atomic Australia**  
 Angus Ladyman · May 3

We already have a nuclear industry making Radiopharmaceuticals, we should lift the ban as not only will it help this part of the industry but open us up to use nuclear power among other benefits.



(Infographic: A.Vargas/IAEA)

## Future of Australia's Radiopharmaceuticals

**Fusion Party Australia**  
 May 2

Australia is poised to take center stage in the global radiopharmaceutical industry according to a new discussion paper by MTPConnect. This exciting developme... See more

# “NUCLEAR IS THE CHEAP, RELIABLE AND SENSIBLE CLIMATE SOLUTION”

Cost of living has been a dominant discussion point when it comes to the energy transition debate. While the fact that the energy transition may put pressure on cost of living in the short-term, some pro-nuclear actors, especially those in the Coalition who undermine renewable energy, have disproportionately played up the impact of the transition to renewables, amplifying the already existing misinformation and further weaponising them into disinformation. The Coalition, for example, believes that nuclear energy is necessary for a balanced energy mix while Australia is undergoing the energy transition. They continue to amplify disinformation that renewable energy is expensive, unreliable, and unclean, while nuclear energy is the opposite. Narratives such as *‘the expensive renewables-only approach is failing’*, *‘zero-emissions nuclear energy will complement renewables and gas to get prices down and keep the lights on as we decarbonise’*, and *‘nuclear reactors take less than 10 years to get energy into the grid’*, have been repeatedly circulated by different actors across platforms.



# “NUCLEAR IS SAFE: HYSTERICAL GREENIES FEEDING SCARE CAMPAIGNS”

There are significant safety concerns around nuclear energy, typically informed by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster and 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident. Pro-nuclear actors recognise that these safety concerns need to be neutralised, and are attempting to dominate the narrative that nuclear power is safe. To tone down the general public’s concern around nuclear energy, the Coalition has been accentuating the narrative that Australia is already a nuclear nation. Alongside the safety concerns, the issue of nuclear waste and whether nuclear energy is clean, are other counter narratives that pro-nuclear actors frequently face and are working to address. As such, to play down people’s concerns on developing nuclear energy, a key narrative we observe is that **‘Australia is already a nuclear nation’**, which has been one of the key campaign slogans used by the Coalition. Other narratives like, **‘nuclear waste is “tiny” and “not green sludge”**’, **‘zero-emissions nuclear’** alongside reinforcing lines ad nauseum like **‘nuclear energy is clean’**, **‘nuclear energy is safe’**, **‘modern nuclear power plants with the latest technology are incredibly safe’**, are also frequently amplified by pro-nuclear actors.

**Senator David Fawcett** June 26

Australia is already a nuclear nation.

We have world-class nuclear expertise, an existing nuclear regulator, a nuclear reactor operating in Sydney—and the world’s largest uranium reserves. Under AUKUS, we will become just the seventh nation on earth to operate nuclear-powered submarines—to be built here in Adelaide.

Yet Australia still has a legal barrier preventing investment in this cheap, reliable source of clean energy. We are the only G20 nation to maintain such a ban. The Coalition will change that.

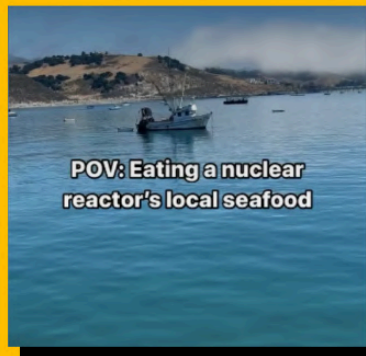
Read more about the Coalition’s energy plan: <https://www.australianeedsnuclear.org.au/>

**Australia is already** using a nuclear reactor for life saving medicine.

**Australia is already** acquiring nuclear propelled submarines for our defence.

**Australia is already** exporting uranium for zero-emissions nuclear energy.

**It’s time for Australia** to use zero-emissions nuclear energy



Nuclear waste "is not toxic green sludge": T...

Watch Later Share

Watch on

**The most dangerous nuclear power plant is... not what you think!**

**WePlanet** July 9

The most dangerous nuclear power plant is not what you think!

What is the world's most dangerous nuclear power plant? Fukushima? Chernobyl? Zaporizhzhya? The answer is none of these. It is the one closed prematurely. Because when a nuclear plant closes down, it's typically a coal plant that opens, contributing not only to climate change but also to poor health.

The Germans complained about Belgium's nuclear power plants and wanted them closed, even though the Belgian re... See more

25 1 8

Most relevant

Write a comment...

**ROBERT DEAN** EMISSIONS REDUCTION INSANITY HURTS FARMERS

Australia is already a 'nuclear nation'

Sky News Australia 4.12M subscribers

162 Share Download

# TRAJECTORY

**Going into the 2025 election, expect a strongly resourced, multi-target audience campaign utilising events; news media campaigning; targeted social media, online and TV advertising; and social media meme-based campaigning, working to legitimise the Coalition's election position on nuclear energy, and confuse narratives and support for climate action and renewables. The campaign will build on many of the tactics from the Voice Referendum, but also from highly resourced industry campaigns, such as the Minerals Council's campaign against the 'mining tax' in the early 2010s.**

In mid-2024, this campaign began building momentum amongst an ecosystem of Australia's best resourced and powerful campaigning entities, including the mining/fossil fuel industry (led by the Minerals Council), News Limited, the Atlas Network-aligned think tanks and lobbyists, and the Coalition parties. It is backed in by an aligned ecosystem of online groups campaigning for nuclear energy, including eco-modernists like WePlanet, each of which are likely to grow in their presence and influence.

WePlanet and other ecosystem members that have positioned themselves as having legitimacy on environmental and climate issues are expected to become more prominent to further undermine and confuse the anti-nuclear climate argument, while shifting the public support for renewables toward 'renewables + nuclear.' If successful, this element of the ecosystem will accrue more passive allies, fuelled particularly by science, technology and business professionals voicing their sympathies and support for nuclear power. This may exacerbate divisions facing the climate independent MPs in the key wealthier electorates, which the Coalition is desperately attempting to win back in 2025.

A major risk to the ecosystem lies in not being able to generate or demonstrate support from communities around proposed reactor sites, and we expect to see a continuing and strengthening focus building on the town halls hosted by Nuclear for Australia. It is likely that the handful of policy details from the Coalition between now and the election, will include other incentives for those communities in an attempt to bolster local support.

Overall, as the pro-nuclear campaign swings into full gear given its sense that success is near, expect to see:

- Millions of dollars spent on slick, prime time ads.
- News media saturation featuring both core-campaign members like Will Shackel and seemingly legitimate political by-standers like scientists, business figures and regional community members.
- Astro-turf online campaigns, purporting to represent young people, women and professionals, generically and in key electorates, spending hundreds of thousands on targeted advertising.
- Potential buckling of the outright rejection of nuclear by the ALP and climate independents, and a huge distraction of their campaign focus and resources being funnelled into disputes with the Greens and environmental groups over the position

# APPENDIX

1. Threat Briefing Vol. 1: WePlanet
2. Threat Briefing Vol. 2: Nuclear for Australia



# PRO-NUCLEAR DISINFO THREAT BRIEFING

# WEPLANET AUSTRALIA

26 July 2024

## Key Points

- WePlanet Australia is the local arm of a global group that is increasingly active in its advocacy for nuclear energy.
- The organisation positions itself as an environmental organisation, often supporting and ‘piggybacking’ on the activities of other climate organisations
- Its primary known funder is Quadrature Climate Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Quadrature Capital which holds significant investments in fossil fuel and nuclear companies (valued at ~\$260 million AUD)
- Their key messaging is based on the organisation’s ‘ecomodernist’ ideological foundations, and focuses largely on nuclear energy being safe, clean and a job creator.
- The WePlanet team includes a number of individuals with backgrounds in nuclear energy advocacy and the industry

## Key Links:

- [WePlanet Australia website](#)
- [WePlanet Australia Facebook](#)
- [WePlanet Australia X account](#)
- [WePlanet Australia YouTube](#)
- [WePlanet Global website](#)

## WHAT IS THE THREAT?

The pro-nuclear discourse in Australia has recently ascended, instigated by the Coalition in mid-2024 as a major component of their 2025 Federal Election campaigning. The discourse fits within a bigger, international trend of resurgent pro-nuclear lobbying and campaigning by the nuclear industry and its allies that has gained momentum in Europe and the US over the last 5 years.

While the Coalition has dominated pro-nuclear discussion in the last few months, a number of pro-nuclear actors have been waiting for this moment. These actors have not only nurtured a supporting ecosystem to share resources and keep the nuclear debate alive within the general public, but also collaborated with international pro-nuclear actors to build their credibility. These actors include well-funded organisations such as self-proclaimed scientific-based organisations, political groups, nuclear industry entities, public affairs think tanks, and astroturfing groups, as well as ‘community-based’ Facebook Groups or Pages that have been involved in the pro-climate nuclear debate in Australia. They have amplified pro-nuclear narratives using tactics like cherry-picking and polarising public discussion.

Pro-nuclear narratives threaten to undermine public support for credible clean energy policies and projects in Australia. They do this by delaying the phase-out of fossil fuels and the uptake for more democratic, cheaper and less dangerous wind and solar alternatives; and distracting from the urgency of the energy transition in meeting Paris Agreement targets. In other contexts, they have particularly divided and undermined support from specific constituencies, such as young people who were born after the major nuclear disasters and anti-nuke campaigns of the past.

This threat brief focuses on WePlanet, an international astroturfing group initially started in Belgium in 2021, which has since grown its presence in multiple countries, including establishing WePlanet Australia. WePlanet is considered an emergent threat because it is well-organised, well-funded, and seems to have strong connections with Australian pro-nuclear actors across multiple jurisdictions. Alongside these connections, WePlanet poses a potentially more significant threat through its positioning as a pro-climate organisation, often supporting other progressive climate campaigns. This strategic approach risks ‘white-anting’ the broader climate movement and provides oxygen for those attempting to align climate and nuclear energy in the Australian debate.

## WHO IS BEHIND THE THREAT?

- ‘WePlanet’, previously called ‘RePlanet’, according to their [founding story](#), was first started in 2021 in Belgium. The organisation first [appeared on the EU lobbyists register](#) in March 2022 as ‘RePlanet’ and recently updated its name to ‘WePlanet’ in March 2024.
- According to the [information disclosed by WePlanet](#), there are 8 founding member organisations of the alliance and 8 growing branches across countries in different continents, including Bangladesh, Australia and a regional Africa branch.
- WePlanet has its ideological basis within the Ecomodernist movement, a techno-positivist movement that views climate change as a technical problem to be mitigated through large scale deployment of experimental and yet-to-be developed technologies. One of the initial national level members is WePlanet Nederland, which has strongly promoted the ideology.
- Before the current branding, WePlanet Nederland was called the ‘Ecomodernist Foundation’. It was started by a group of journalists and a climate sceptic Marcel Crok, who believe in ‘ecomodernism’, with a [manifesto](#) that the development of technology and science can help resolve environmental issues. Ecomodernism believes that the protection of the environment and the growth of the economy can happen concurrently. According to the [report](#) published by the World Information Service on Energy (WISE), the strategy of ‘Ecomodernist Foundation’ has been following Michael Shallenberger, ‘promoting technopositivism’ to support development of nuclear energy and GMOs. The foundation rebranded to ‘RePlanet Nederland’ in December 2021.
- There are a number of WePlanet funders, including Rodel Foundation, The Dreamery Foundation, the Anthropocene Institute, the Mycelium Foundation, Climate 2025 and the Winkler Foundation, but the grant sizes have never been disclosed. Quadrature Climate Foundation, however, is the only funder that has been revealed on the European Union Transparency Register and has appeared to be a consistent sponsor since the start of the

organisation. According to the most recent update, in 2023, WePlanet received €904,173 (EUR or roughly AU \$1.48M); and in 2021, Ecomodernist Foundation, before changing its name to RePlanet Nederland, had also received a €900,000 Euro grant from Quadrature.

- Quadrature Climate Foundation is an initiative of billionaires Greg Skinner and Suneil Setiya through their investment fund Quadrature Capital. Quadrature Capital holds investments of over a quarter of billion Australian dollars (\$170m USD) in fossil fuel companies (45 in total), including ConocoPhillips, Cheniere Energy, and Cenovus Energy. An initial rapid analysis has also uncovered investments in at least 4 US-based nuclear energy companies.
- WePlanet first [appeared](#) in Australia as RePlanet Australia in 2022, founded by environmentalists Tyrone D'Lisle and Riani Perrin based in Brisbane. In April 2023, RePlanet Australia was officially launched. On the launch day, the event was also joined by the Finnish Green politician, Tea Törmänen, who has worked in the roles of Executive Director and International Coordinator for both RePlanet and WePlanet iterations. RePlanet Australia officially [rebranded](#) as WePlanet Australia in January 2024.
- Since launching Replanet Australia in 2022 until its rebranding, the organisation has been tirelessly campaigning in line with ecomodernist themes. In addition to local deployments of WePlanet global campaigns, such as '[Dear Greenpeace](#)' and '[Reboot Food](#)', WePlanet Australia has also launched pro-nuclear petitions. These include: '[Lift the ban on Nuclear in Australia](#)', a Submission tool for the 2022 Senate Inquiry into Nuclear Power; and, a '[Rethink Nuclear Australia](#)' campaign with a live petition: '[Overturn Australia's Nuclear Energy Ban](#)'.
- There are currently three key organisers in WePlanet Australia, including Tyrone D'Lisle as the Treasurer, Co-Founder and Communication Director for WePlanet Global; Riani Perrin, as Secretary and Co-Founder, and Andrea Leong as President. Ben Heard, who is listed as a Member on WePlanet Australia website, is the founder of 'Bright New World', a pro-nuclear NGO that suspended its operations in 2021. Heard has worked as a consultant for Adelaide-based uranium company Heathgate Resources, the Minerals Council of Australia, the global Frazer-Nash Consultancy, which consults across a number of nuclear industry areas, and he now remains as an advisor for Terrestrial Energy, a Canadian nuclear technology company.
- Among the three key organisers, Tyrone D'Lisle and Andrea Leong both have a strong presence in the public sphere. D'Lisle was the spokesperson for 'Australian Greens for Nuclear Energy - unofficial' before his current role. According to his LinkedIn, he was previously affiliated with the Queensland Greens as a Social Media Coordinator and was a 2013 Federal Candidate. 'Australian Greens for Nuclear Energy - Unofficial' Facebook page is not affiliated with the Australian Greens, the name of the group had [raised concerns](#) with some online audiences over its potential implication of a link to the party. In December 2023, the 'Australian Greens for Nuclear Energy - Unofficial' made its last post announcing plans to discontinue and encouraging its followers to join RePlanet Australia.
- Besides his social media presence mentioned above, D'Lisle also controls an [Instagram](#) account of another group called 'Australians 4 Nuclear Energy', although the last post was made in October 2022. The current Facebook Page is administered by Hendrik Elshoff, who is

also an active member in the [Atomic Australia](#) Facebook Group, which has links to a number of other pro-nuclear Facebook groups.

- Before her role as President of WePlanet Australia, Andrea Leong was the leader of the Science Party before it merged with the Pirate Party, Secular Party, Vote Planet and Climate Change Justice Party, to become Fusion Party Australia. Andrea Leong contested the Wentworth 2018 by-election, and Kingsford Smith in the 2016 federal election.

## WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

- While it is yet to receive significant public or media attention, WePlanet Australia and the global WePlanet network are an increasingly important part of the pro-nuclear ecosystem in Australia. Unlike other homegrown organisations, it has a strong global network of experts with numerous connections in the nuclear power space that it leverages to build credibility on the issue. For example, Tea Törmänen, the International Coordinator for WePlanet Global has been on Nuclear for Australia's [podcast](#), talking about why Australian Greens should follow Finnish Greens on supporting Nuclear Energy, as well as on 3AW [claiming](#) that Australians should 'embrace nuclear energy'.
- Besides having an international figure to advocate for the pro-nuclear campaign domestically, WePlanet Australia also attempts to platform key actors from other grassroots and industry organisations. For example, Jasmin Diab, a Nuclear Security Expert and President of the Australian chapter of Women in Nuclear (WiN Australia), was recently featured in WePlanet Australia's Facebook [post](#). She has also been on Nuclear for Australia's [podcast](#), talking about nuclear security.
- Whether or not WePlanet Australia and Nuclear for Australia are actively collaborating, it is clear that the groups share content and messaging. A Facebook Group called '[Legalise Nuclear Energy in Australia](#)', 'grouped by' Nuclear for Australia, has become a space for Tyrone D'Lisle, the Treasurer and Co-Founder for WePlanet Australia and Communication Director for WePlanet Global to cross post content from their Facebook Page and receive strong engagement. [Alex Sharp](#), who is one of the administrators of the [Atomic Australia](#) Facebook Group, is also an active participant in cross-sharing posts, including WePlanet Australia's, to the Legalise Nuclear Energy in Australia group. WePlanet has also reposted Nuclear for Australia's [content](#) on numerous occasions.
- At the COP28 Summit in Dubai in 2023, WePlanet's Andrea Leong was present promoting nuclear energy. Present at the summit with the same objectives were Will Shackel and Ted O'Brien MP, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy.

## WHO ARE THE AUDIENCES BEING TARGETED?

- WePlanet presents itself as a progressive, grassroots and science based organisation. It actively engages with a wide range of stakeholders including government sectors, industry

experts, participation in political parties and elections, as well as the climate movement. It appears that it is targeting audiences that believe in the emergency of climate change issues and support fossil fuel phase-out, but oppose renewables such as wind and solar power. In 2023, WePlanet demonstrated this support by often piggy-backing or 'supporting' anti fossil fuel activities by other local climate organisations including [350 Australia](#), [#GamilMeansNo](#), School Strike's [#ClimateStrike](#) ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), and [Rising Tide's #PeoplesBlockade](#), potentially in an attempt to target the environmental movement's base.

- The Fusion Party Australia has no current active campaign supporting nuclear energy. However, its '[Climate Rescue](#)' policy has explicitly stated their commitment in developing 'innovative technologies that can contribute to a sustainable future and a dynamic economy', demonstrating their support for lifting the nuclear power ban for fusion energy research. Due to its Party values, the Fusion Party Australia has an audience of more libertarian, techno-positivist, tech savvy and STEM enthusiasts that shares similar values with WePlanet. For example, in early June, Tyrone D'Lisle was [invited](#) to give a lightning talk on lifting the nuclear energy ban for an event hosted by the party. Building on the shared values of both groups, Fusion Party Australia supporters are likely to become another cohort for WePlanet's target audiences.

## WHAT ARE THEIR KEY MESSAGES?

The key messages and narratives that WePlanet uses align with the positivist framing of others in the pro-nuclear ecosystem, primarily around safety, jobs and clean energy. WePlanet has maintained a strong focus on diminishing the public's concerns around the safety of nuclear energy, presenting such concerns as misled or misinformed e.g. "not what you think". Their positioning of nuclear energy as clean mirrors that of others, including framing bans on nuclear as 'outdated', akin to the Coalition's messaging around the need for a "mature" and "grown up" conversation on nuclear energy. This is undoubtedly a strategy attempting to position nuclear energy as modern or future-facing, and framing opposition as old fashioned - which poses a particular threat in the targeting of younger audiences.

**Key Message**

**Examples links and screenshots**

“Nuclear power plants are not dangerous”



[Link](#)

“Nuclear offers high quality long term jobs”



[Link](#)

“Nuclear energy is clean with a small land footprint”



[Link](#)

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

### Current Reach: **Low**

This threat is assessed to have 'low' current reach, based on the relatively minimal spread of WePlanet content across mediums and platforms not run by the organisation itself. However, it should be noted that while WePlanet currently has low reach, the key messages it uses enjoys significantly further reach from other pro-nuclear advocates.

### Potential for Impact: **Moderate / long term**

This threat is assessed to have 'moderate or potential for severe' impact based on the positioning of WePlanet and its clear targeting of the environmental movement's base. While their current impact is low, this positioning - along with the organisation's likely considerable funding - poses a significant longer term threat that may result in undermining the cohesion of the environmental movement, and the likelihood that other pro-nuclear advocates will seek to platform WePlanet as a legitimate voice on nuclear energy being clean and positive for the climate.

#### Update: 20 November 2024

On 15th November 2024, WePlanet Australia co-founder and lead campaigner, Tyrone D'Lisle, gave evidence to the parliamentary 'inquiry into nuclear power generation in Australia' leveraging the climate crisis to make a number of misinformation statements including:

*"The climate crisis isn't in the distant future, it's here, driven by fossil fuel use and ecosystem destruction. The science is clear. We're heading for two degrees of warming, and how far we go beyond that and how resilient we are to that future depends on the decisions we make now. [...] People need access to energy, but it needs to be clean, meaning it needs to have minimal impacts on human health, our climate and biodiversity. [...] While wind and solar are already making great contributions, betting everything on these variable, weather dependent sources is risky, especially as our climate changes. **Nuclear, on the other hand, is a proven, clean and reliable solution.** Studies show its environmental footprint is similar to or even lower than that of wind and solar, and it provides power around the clock. [...] Australia's nuclear ban, introduced in 1998, is outdated. It was created before the urgency of the climate crisis was fully understood. [...] This ban is morally and politically unjustifiable and no longer reflects our values or our needs in a warming world.*

(Source: [Hansard, 15 Nov 2024](#))

This is further evidence of the increasing influence WePlanet is playing as a "pro-climate" voice in support of nuclear energy.

# PRO-NUCLEAR DISINFO THREAT BRIEFING

# NUCLEAR FOR AUSTRALIA

27 August 2024

## SUMMARY

- Nuclear for Australia appears to be the central node of a concerted and coordinated strategy to advocate for nuclear energy in Australia. It plays the role of legitimising Coalition policy, as an apparent non-aligned civil society voice; is a vehicle for online and offline campaigning driven by PR firms; and is working to organise and expand a pro-nuclear base across a number of constituencies.
- Analysis of the organisation and its founder, Will Shackel, has unearthed numerous connections into the Liberal Party, the nuclear industry, the fossil fuel and mining sectors, as well as to known disinformation and Atlas Network entities. Its funding sources have not yet been disclosed, with the exception of Dick Smith, however Shackel is connected to known high net worth funders of Advance & other organisations.
- The organisation's strategy includes multiple pillars of campaigning and organising, online and offline, to build support with specific audiences, at this stage: young people, women and older men (core liberal party base). It is also conducting offline organising in the regional areas named by the Coalition as potential reactor sites.
- Its key messaging is focused around misleading narratives that normalise and de-risk nuclear energy as safe, environmentally friendly, and essential for future technological development (see [Facts about Nuclear section](#)), which Australia risks being 'left behind' on, compared to other nations.

**Key Links:** [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [X/Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

## BACKGROUND

Pro-nuclear discourse in Australia has significantly escalated in recent months, primarily instigated by the Coalition as a major component of their strategy leading up to the 2025 Federal Election campaign, and backed by a well resourced network fighting the uptake of renewable energy. There is a diverse ecosystem of pro-nuclear groups and organisations that are seizing upon pro-nuclear political tailwinds to promote their campaigns and expand their influence and supporter base.

Through an analysis of the connections between groups in the pro-nuclear network, we identified that the pro-nuclear actors ecosystem—and the strategy driving its evolution—is best thought of as having complimentary pillars, each with its own goal and audience. Together these pillars form a



strategy designed to build credibility and public support for nuclear energy, while undermining the support for renewables and the Labor Government's credentials on climate.

This threat briefing focuses on the activities of Nuclear for Australia, a central element of a distributed and multi-dimensional pro-nuclear astroturfing and propaganda campaign, and an important bridging node within the pro-nuclear ecosystem.

## THE THREAT: NUCLEAR FOR AUSTRALIA

Nuclear for Australia is publicly positioned as a non-partisan, youth-led civil society organisation, championing nuclear as critical in the fight against climate change. It has a driving role in the pro-nuclear ecosystem, having rapidly received resources to drive media, digital and on the ground organising in parallel to the Coalition's campaigning. This is demonstrated through its significant spending on advertising, PR and media strategy, as well as global travel, alongside its connections into many other pro-nuclear advocacy groups. Its strategic approach appears to be to serve as a bridging node, an element of a network that bridges between communities or constituencies, allowing for the circulation of resources and influence into new areas. The strategic positioning of Nuclear for Australia as part of 'civil society', its narrative framing aligned with the Coalition, and its swift rise to prominence over existing and longer-running nuclear advocacy groups are tell-tale signs of large injections of resources that are typical of astroturfing and propaganda operations - see [Lits' work](#) on detecting astroturf movements. The Opposition and the fossil fuel lobby likely intended to keep a strategic 'safe distance' from the leading pro-nuclear group, seeking to enable a non-politically aligned source to advocate for the issue with more legitimacy, potentially misleading the public on its origins and backers.

While the organisation's media and online presence has rapidly grown in recent months, its funding sources, political ties, and connections into the established disinformation machinery are less well known. Launched in late 2022, Nuclear for Australia came to prominence in mid-2023 after the organisation's young founder and spokesperson, then 16 year old Will Shackel, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and appeared before the Senate Committee on Nuclear Power. This was followed by a strong media push platforming Shackel across all major media outlets, often alongside humanising interviews with his parents.

Nuclear for Australia [registered as a charity](#) with the ACNC in October 2023, using a Brisbane base warehouse complex as its registered address. Nuclear for Australia has not yet had to submit financial reports to the ACNC (due December 2024). In November 2023, Shackel attended COP28 in Dubai, with a significant media and [social media strategy](#) misleadingly promoting nuclear energy as key to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement (see [Facts about Nuclear section](#)).

## NUCLEAR FOR AUSTRALIA'S POSITION IN PRO-NUCLEAR AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL ECOSYSTEMS

Analysis of Will Shackel (now 18 year old founder) and Nuclear for Australia's online network shows that the group has numerous connections to the Liberal Party, nuclear and mining industries, and conservative campaigning networks. These connections are present across the coordination and interaction in digital spaces, and mirrored in Shackel's professional network on LinkedIn.

On Shackel's LinkedIn, we identified concentrations of industry and political influence amongst roughly 900 connections, 843 of which were included in the analysis. It is important to note that LinkedIn connections do not represent collusion between actors, as there is no way to assess who made the connection request, at what time or the reasons for doing so. However, analysing this network does provide useful data points in understanding the professional ecosystem Shackel is immersed in, including where numerous or concentrated connections exist with specific organisations.

### Connections to Nuclear and Mining Industries

More than half (50.7%) of Shackel's professional connections work, or have worked, in the nuclear (28.9%), mining (14.9%) or energy sectors (6.9%). A significant number of Shackel's connections are part of the pro-nuclear industry - working or having worked in the industry (from power plants to research to advocacy and more).

Those individuals grouped as part of the nuclear industry are associated with some of the biggest nuclear entities and advocates in Australia and from around the world, such as Westinghouse, Bruce Power, Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, Electrolux Asia Pacific, Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation, Frazer-Nash Consultancy, HB11 Energy, Helixos, Hinkley Point, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), ITER Organization, NuEnergy, NuScale Power, Ontario Power Generation, Rolls-Royce SMR, Samsung, Sizewell C, SMR Nuclear Technology, Southern Nuclear, TerraPower, Women in Nuclear and more.

Given Shackel's role, it is expected that the network would consist of many of these companies, however the second highest industry representation was 'resources and mining' which includes fossil fuel and minerals extraction, constituting about 15% of Shackel's total network. This is a sizable and notable representation, raising questions about the mining and fossil fuel industry's interest in Shackel and Nuclear for Australia - one that warrants further investigation and analysis. Over two-thirds of the network are based in Australia, followed by the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, India, United Arab Emirates, France and South Africa.

### Liberal-National Party Connections

Although Crikey has previously [identified](#) Will Shackel's links with the Liberal Party, Shackel has formally denied his and Nuclear for Australia's affiliation with any political entities. However, through analysing connections to political parties in Shackel's LinkedIn network, we found political party affiliation leaned heavily towards Liberal Party MPs, Senators and advisors. There were at least 36

individuals, including 11 current or former politicians, who were directly connected to the Liberal Party - making the Liberal Party the highest concentration of current employees from a single organisation in the network. This is a considerable representation compared to the 7 Labor Party connections identified (with only 3 Labor MPs). The Liberal Party connections within Shackel's network include notable individuals like:

- **Ted O'Brien MP**, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, and the Opposition's chief nuclear advocate.
- **Senator Susan McDonald**, Shadow Minister for Resources and Northern Australia
- **Fiona Simpson MP**, Shadow Minister for Finance and Better Regulation, and Integrity in Government
- **Keith Pitt MP**, the former Minister for Resources and Water
- **Warren Mundine**, former Liberal Party MP, also a key driver of Atlas Network's Centre for Independent Studies, alongside a number of mining interests including uranium.
- **Christopher Pyne**, former Liberal Party minister
- **Caroline Di Russo**, President of the WA Liberal Party

There are also other key advisors including Peter Dutton's speechwriter, as well as current and former Ministerial Chiefs of Staff—some of whom are now working within the nuclear industry or for conservative PR and campaign firms like Topham Guerin and Overton Solutions.

The involvement of the Liberal Party in Nuclear for Australia's work goes beyond just professional connections. It was exposed earlier this year that the [privacy policy page on the organisation's website included mention of the Liberal Party](#), and was quickly removed once exposed in the media. Similarly, Crikey exposed that [Nuclear for Australia shared a Google Analytics ID](#) with NSW Liberal Party MP, Tim James, as well as notable anti-abortion activist Joanna Howe. This indicates, at a minimum, that the same, or a similarly positioned company set up these different websites, likely a LNP aligned PR firm. It was mentioned to us through our investigations that when Shackel was approached about the Liberal Party appearing in the organisation's privacy policy, he defended his non-partisan commitment by claiming that Nuclear for Australia had just hired an individual to build the website who had then made the error, claiming this as proof that there was no collusion with the Party. Likely this individual was James Flynn, an advisor to NSW Liberal Party MP, Anthony Roberts; James was separately [exposed](#) as the author of part of Nuclear for Australia's website, was previously an advisor for Katherine Deves' failed 2022 election campaign, and has also [appeared multiple times](#) on Sky News Australia as a 'digital political strategist'.

### High-Net Worth Individuals

The question of Nuclear for Australia's funding remains unanswered, as a new organisation it has not yet had to make reporting disclosures to the ACNC (due in December 2024). However **Dick Smith** has publicly stated financial support for the organisation, with reports varying from \$40,000 to \$150,000. Meanwhile, we identified connections to **Sam Kennard** and **Trevor St Baker**, both of whom are major funders of **Advance Australia**. Kennard is on the Board of Atlas Network's **Centre for Independent Studies**, and St Baker is a patron of the prominent pro-nuclear and Liberal Party-aligned advocacy group **Coalition for Conservation** - alongside his ownership of **SMR Nuclear Technology**.

## Disinformation Ecosystem and the Atlas Network

Nuclear for Australia's network also includes members of the news media, advocacy and think tanks that use their influence to amplify pro-nuclear, anti-renewables and climate denial narratives.

The **Atlas Network** is a US-based organisation that builds, funds and trains libertarian, free-market, and conservative groups all over the world. Atlas was founded by, and continues to be largely driven by the [fossil-fuel lobby](#) to stall progress on climate change, as well as being active across a wider range of issues. We recommend reading the [work of Dr Jeremy Walker](#) on Atlas' influence globally and in Australia. The known Atlas members in Australia include the **Institute of Public Affairs (IPA)**, **Centre for Independent Studies (CIS)**, **Australian Institute for Progress**, **Australian Taxpayers' Alliance**, and **Liberty Works** (which previously hosted the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC)), all of which showed up within Nuclear for Australia's network.

The organisation with the most significant presence in Shackel's LinkedIn network (including individuals linked, though not necessarily directly employed) is **CIS**. With direct connections to 11 employees, [collaborative content produced](#), and [speaking engagements](#), this suggests a significant level of collaboration and/or partnership with CIS. Alongside CIS, there are also 6 individuals connected to, or working for, the **IPA**. We also observed significant re-sharing and amplification of social media content between Shackel and employees of both IPA and CIS.

As the primary spokesperson for Nuclear for Australia, it is expected to find journalists and other members of the media in Shackel's network. One-third of his 26 media connections work at **News Corp** outlets - making it the largest representation of the industry. A quarter of the 26 are employees of **Nine Entertainment**.

Shackel's network includes notable connections to a number of individuals associated with **Advance (Australia)**. Those connections include two of Advance's key donors Sam Kennard and Trevor St Baker, as mentioned above, as well as Advance's new spokesperson, **Sandra Bourke**. Besides sharing and amplifying one another's content on social media, it is unclear if the organisations are engaged in deeper collaboration.

Although Nuclear for Australia is the centre of pro-nuclear discussion in Australia, there are a number of other groups operating through a symbiotic relationship in the pro-nuclear ecosystem. Collectively, this ecosystem appears to target specific audiences including youth, women (from those working in science to mothers) - alongside broader engagement of the general public. These groups either have direct connections with Shackel and Nuclear for Australia, or regularly seek to leverage the profile of the organisation in fuelling their pro-nuclear messaging and advocacy.

## Mums for Nuclear

It appears that Nuclear for Australia is building a new campaign to cultivate a constituency of pro-nuclear women. It recently started a [Facebook page](#) and an [Instagram account](#) called, 'Mums for Nuclear'. Although both accounts have yet to make any posts, it is clear that targeting Australian mums will be their next campaign.

In fact, targeting mums is a tried and tested tactic within the nuclear campaign. In 2016, Heather Hoff and Kristin Zaitz based in the US started 'Mothers for Nuclear', which was introduced to the Facebook Group **Atomic Australia** by the long-running nuclear advocate, **Terje Petersen**, back in 2020. In 2022, Mothers for Nuclear started an [Australian branch](#), and the current lead is [Astrid Morris](#), who serves as a Communications Strategist for nuclear energy consultancy, Helixos.

Several pro-nuclear actors in Australia have been featured and platformed by Mothers for Nuclear. Jasmin Diab, who is the President of the Women in Nuclear Australian Chapter, shared her story and was [highlighted](#) on the homepage of Mothers for Nuclear website, and has often been promoted by Nuclear for Australia and other pro-nuclear groups in Australia. Riani Perrin, who is Secretary for WePlanet Australia was also [featured](#) on WePlanet's Facebook, with the Mothers for Nuclear Australia branding.

### Nuclear Advocate Ecosystem

Nuclear for Australia administers a Facebook Group with 2.5K members called '[Legalise Nuclear Energy in Australia](#)', which has seen several prominent actors in pro-nuclear debates join. For example, Andrea Leong and Tyrone D'Lisle from WePlanet; Sandra Bourke from Advance; and Alex Sharp, one of the admins of Atomic Australia, a public Facebook Group with 970 members. Terje Petersen, who ran as a failed senate candidate for the Liberal Democratic Party, has been a strong advocate for nuclear energy and is also actively engaging with these group members. Petersen has made numerous submissions to Federal and State parliamentary inquiries advocating for nuclear energy, including the 2019 '[Inquiry into the prerequisites for nuclear energy in Australia](#)', and runs a website called '[Legalise Nuclear Energy](#)' which has 2.5K followers on [its Facebook page](#) where Petersen co-admins with Alex Sharp, admin for Atomic Australia. Robert Parker, who previously served as the President of the Australian Nuclear Association and is the founder of [Nuclear for Climate Australia](#), is another in Nuclear for Australia's orbit. He recently featured in IPA's [event](#) and appeared on SkyNews Australia talking about nuclear energy.

## CAMPAIGN RESOURCES: ONLINE ADVERTISING STRATEGY

Nuclear for Australia runs targeted social media ad campaigns on Facebook and Instagram, but not yet on YouTube or Google Search. After running two very small ad campaigns in 2022 and 2023, spending just a few hundred dollars combined, they have deployed a more significant campaign in the last few months, from May 2024, indicating an injection of resources and collaboration with professional communications/PR firms in their campaign practice.

Since May, Nuclear for Australia has spent between \$23,800 and \$34,328 on Facebook and Instagram ads, targeted geographically broadly but heavily weighted towards Queensland males over 55 years of age. It also used targeted location advertising to promote a local information session in Lithgow in mid August.

## Nuclear for Australia Facebook + Instagram Advertising (Jan 1st to Aug 15th 2024)

Campaign Period	Spend Range (AUD)	Targeting of Instagram and Facebook Accounts	Messaging	Call to Action
May 2024	\$3,700 to \$5,783	Ads shown in all states, but heavily weighted towards <b>Queensland</b> compared to the population spread. 62% of audience accounts labelled <b>male over 55 years old</b> , and very limited views accounts labelled female across any age range. Less than 8% of views from accounts in the under 45 age range.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Australia is being left behind.’ Other countries have reliable nuclear power.</li> <li>• Nuclear is ‘safe’, ‘clean’ and ‘reliable’.</li> <li>• ‘New technologies require more energy to drive their potential further.’</li> <li>• Labor’s Bob Hawk believed in nuclear for Australia</li> </ul>	Sign petition to ‘remove the ban’, links to main campaign website.
18th to 19th June 2024	Up to \$1,287	Brief campaign targeting Victoria.	Same messages as May.	Same call to action as May.
June through August 2024	\$19,800 to \$26,111	Continuation and increased investment in May’s campaign targeting, resulting in 2.8M impressions.	Same messages as May.	Same call to action as May.
9th to 13th August, ongoing	\$200-\$500	Ads only shown in NSW (presumably targeted to Lithgow area, but Meta only provides state level audience data). 71% of audience accounts labelled male; 62% over 55 years old.	‘...join us for a special information evening in Lithgow, where we will explore the potential for nuclear energy to transform our community and Australia's future.’	Register for <a href="#">Lithgow, NSW event</a> , August 15th

## AUDIENCES TARGETED

In addition to its broader reaching mainstream media campaign strategy, there are a number of key audiences that Nuclear for Australia and its allies are investing in targeted outreach to:

- **Young people** - With Shackel continually aiming to represent young Australians who want action on climate change, the strategy is seemingly to engage young voters who are broadly perceived as having fewer concerns around the safety of nuclear energy than older generations. The aim is to legitimise Shackel’s position as a youth voice in the eyes of decision makers, likely undermining the established perspective that younger generations support renewables-led climate action.
- **Women** - Alongside the prominent platforming of a number of women directly within the Nuclear for Australia ecosystem, there are a number of connected initiatives that are

bolstered by Nuclear for Australia's support, such as **Mothers for Nuclear** and **Women in Nuclear Australia**.

- **Males over 55, particularly in QLD** - ad spend on Meta suggests Nuclear for Australia are targeting older men, particularly in Queensland. This represents the LNP base, and an important source for online support and donations for the group.

## THREAT ASSESSMENT

**Current Reach:** **High**

This threat is assessed to have 'high' current reach, based on the organisation's strong media and expanding digital presence, as well being pivotal in triggering the policy discussion and labelling of the upcoming Federal Election as a 'referendum on nuclear energy'. Further, the organisation enjoys significant support from high profile individuals, which has undoubtedly contributed to its petition to lift the ban on nuclear energy receiving over 73,400 signatures.

**Potential for Impact:** **Moderate / Potential for Severe**

This threat is assessed to have a 'moderate or potential for severe impact' based on Nuclear for Australia's prominent positioning in the ecosystem, its demonstrated ability to gain media attention, the ways in which its narratives are confusing and influencing the debate - including around renewables, and the likely impact of the escalating campaigning activities ahead of the 2025 election. Nuclear for Australia is leveraging [a trend](#) that pre-dates the organisation of increasing support for nuclear energy amongst the Australian public, and the potential impact of this threat to GetUp's objectives is heightened by Nuclear for Australia's connections with the Liberal Party (clear but at arms-length), Atlas Network think tanks, and News Corp media outlets. Potential severe impacts include:

1. **Renewables (short term):** undermining investor confidence and public support for renewables, which require significant investment and scaling in order to prevent warming above 1.5°C.
2. **Energy Transition (medium term):** slowing the transition away from fossil fuels and undermining the Government's transition plan, as a prioritisation of nuclear energy will require burning of coal and gas for longer.
3. **Building influence (short-medium term):** strengthening an established disinformation network's influence that is active on a number of key issue areas.

*GetUp!*