

Dr Jeremy Walker

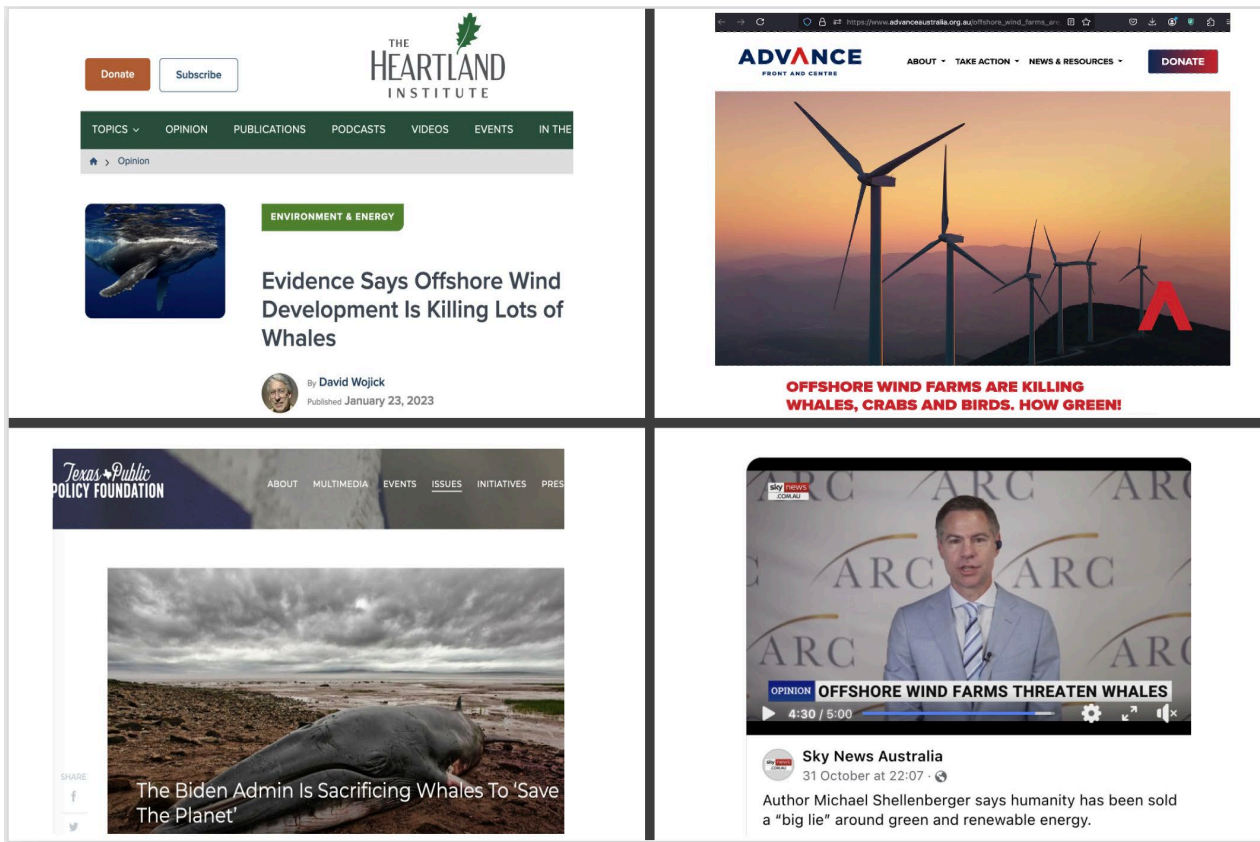
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Submission to: Offshore wind industry consultation process

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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Who says ‘offshore wind kills whales’ and why?

Funded by Big Oil and Coal, the co-ordinated disinformation and astroturfing against offshore wind development is a trans-national project of the Atlas Network.



Terms of reference:

- (a) the efficacy of community engagement and benefit in planning, developing and operating the offshore wind industry*
- (b) community engagement within the existing Australian Government offshore wind industry regulatory and legislative frameworks*
- (d) the impact of the offshore wind industry on marine life and marine environments in Australian waters, including strategies for impact minimisation and management; and*
- (e) any other related matters.*

Introduction:

This submission addressed to the Senate builds on my September 2023 submission to DECEEW Proposed offshore wind area [Big Oil, Whales and Offshore Wind: Fossil-funded Atlas Network 'think-tank' disinformation is driving misinformed community opposition to the Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone](#), as well as my peer-reviewed publications. My research findings have been widely quoted in Australian and international news sources such as ABC Radio National, NITV-SBS, TVNZ's Mata Reports, the *Washington Post*, and the *New Republic*.¹

I write as an expert on the history and philosophy of science, politics and economics, a faculty member of the School of Communications, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney. My current research, supported by the Climate Social Science Network (based at Brown University, Rhode Island USA) and the 2024 E.G. Whitlam Research Fellowship (Whitlam Institute, Western Sydney University) concerns the political history, organisation and methods of climate policy obstruction deployed by fossil fuel interests via the US-based global Atlas Network, the permanent infrastructure of 500+ 'public policy research institutes' or 'free market thinktanks' in 100 nations through which the global counter-revolution against social, environmental and parliamentary democracy was launched and consolidated.

It is to the Atlas Network, as it turns out, that we can almost invariably trace efforts to deceive the public about climate science, to manipulate public opinion and elections against effective climate policy and clean energy rollout, to capture key public institutions and governments, and to obstruct, delay, repeal or defeat public interest legislation, regulation and international laws and treaties intended to protect us from the unstoppable and irreversibly catastrophic effects of fossil fuel combustion. These have been well known, researched and understood by fossil fuel industry research scientists and its senior leadership since at least the the1950s. Global oil corporations have known since the late 1950s that unrestricted fossil fuel combustion would have irreversible and utterly catastrophic effects upon human civilisation and indeed ultimately

¹ See e.g.: Walker, J (2023) [Silencing the Voice: the fossil-fuelled Atlas Network's campaign against constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australia](#), *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies*,15(2); Walker, J (2022) [Freedom to burn: mining propaganda, fossil capital and the Australian neoliberals](#). In Slobodian, Q & Plehwe, D (eds) *Market Civilisations: Neoliberals East and South*, Princeton University Press; Walker, J (2020) [More Heat than Life: the Tangled Roots of Ecology, Energy and Economics](#), Palgrave.

For a list of media, resources and articles quoting this research see: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385214029_List_and_links_to_media_appearances_interviews_quotes_mentions_re_my_research_on_fossil_fuel_disinformation_the_Atlas_Network_last_updated_July_2024

upon all life on earth. This they kept quiet about, until the global public learned from worldwide news headlines in 1988 that CO2 driven global heating was underway. Led by Exxon public affairs executives, the American Petroleum Institute then began the fossil industry's permanent campaign to deceive the public and to delay, defeat or repeal effective climate policy measures (e.g. direct carbon taxation, moratoria on extraction, direct government support for wind, solar, batteries, EVs, feed-in-tariffs) at local, regional, national and international scales. Preventing an effective, binding United Nations climate treaty has been foremost among its objectives. This is amply demonstrated in the collection of primary fossil fuel industry documents available at Climate Files, which form the basic evidence for multiple lawsuits against fossil fuel corporations currently underway in the United States.²

Organised around the constant repetition by Atlas thinktanks and associated entities of the false claim that 'windfarms kill whales', the highly organised, professional, dark money disinformation campaign against Australian offshore wind development targeting community consultation processes as well as council, state and federal elections can be traced to Atlas organisations and individuals with long term associations with its various anti-climate policy campaigns.

Beyond what I can convey here, I would welcome the opportunity to appear in person to assist the Senate Committee's investigation with the insights gained from many years of studying the relevant peer-reviewed academic literature and the extensive primary documentation that demonstrates what I explain below, that fossil fuel interests have invested billions of largely untraceable dollars to construct this global network of ostensibly 'independent' free-market 'think-tanks' or 'public policy research' institutes around the world. Arguably the primary purpose of the Atlas Network's rapid expansion since 1988, when the global public was finally alerted to the reality of global warming on the front pages of the international press, is to saturate the public sphere from multiple seemingly disparate sources with constantly repeated and co-ordinated political messaging intended to prevent governments from acting in the public interest to protect and secure citizens (and indeed, the very survival of the human species and much of life on Earth in the coming centuries) from the utterly catastrophic and irreversible global heating of the Earth.

Targeting community consultations and council, state and federal elections, the systemic disruption of democratic process evident in the dark money disinformation and astroturfing campaign against offshore wind development in Australia is only the most recent theatre of the Atlas Network's permanent campaign to immunise fossil fuel investors from parliamentary sovereignty, public interest democracy, and competition from low cost, pollution-free clean energy systems.

What is the Atlas Network?

The shadowy global infrastructure of 'thinktanks' driving disinformation and opposition to clean energy and climate policy since 1988 has a little-known name: the Atlas Network. At the centre of this web sits the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, founded by wealthy English businessman Antony Fisher in 1981, and since 1987 based near the US capitol Washington DC, by the campus of George Mason University. Fisher prototyped the first neoliberal thinktank, the Institute of Economic Affairs (est. 1955, London). Its goal was to generate, disseminate and

² Primary fossil fuel industry climate documents are archived at: <https://www.climatefiles.com/>
For a list of US litigation against fossil fuel corporations based on this evidence of deliberate public deception and disinformation see: <https://climateintegrity.org/lawsuits>

publicise to the general public the research of the radical right-wing neoliberal economists and constitutionalists of the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) est. 1947 by Friedrich von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman), and to translate their proposals into legislation and concrete policy outcomes. It was the IEA that created the 'climate of opinion' to which Margaret Thatcher credited her 1979 election victory, the first elected government committed to the radical program of privatisation, deregulation and globalisation first conducted in Chile under conditions of state terror by the Pinochet regime. The funding of the IEA has long been rigorously concealed from the public, but it's now clear this has been provided on a long-term basis from at least the early 1960s by Shell, BP, Rio Tinto and other global corporations in oil, mining, banking and other sectors.

So effective was Fisher's method of influencing mass public opinion to accept 'free market economics' on behalf of hidden corporate donors, that he was quietly commissioned by fossil fuel and mining interests to found the Fraser Institute in Vancouver in 1974, and the Centre of Independent Studies in Sydney in 1976. Both of these, like the IEA received founding grants from local subsidiaries of Shell and Rio Tinto, among other fossil fuel, uranium, mining and related financial consultancies and corporations. Fisher responded to the rising demand from private billionaires and corporations for his services by forming the Atlas Foundation in 1981, which now trades under the name of the Atlas Network. Not itself a thinktank, the Atlas head office keeps a low profile in pursuing its vocation to 'litter the world' with an ever-growing roster of ostensibly 'independent' thinktanks: to vet and train executive staff to run them to arrange funding from private billionaires, foundations and corporations, and to some unknown extent, to centrally supervise, plan and co-ordinate the execution of transnational influence campaigns serving the strategic interests of these investors ('donors') in its radically for-profit network of tax-deductible 'non-profits'. Essential to its world-transforming shaping of public opinion, policy and election outcomes in country after country is the deliberate deception of the public that the Network constantly seeks to influence.

The individual member orgs never declare their (often shared) funding sources in their public facing publications, submissions to government, or media interviews, neither do they acknowledge their membership of the global Atlas Network. The intensely private, invite-only Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) forms the 'inner sanctum' of the international Network. Its elite membership is comprised of professors of economics and constitutional law, the senior executives of Atlas thinktanks, the odd fossil fuel billionaire (such as Charles Koch), and senior politicians. The MPS meets at least annually in fancy hotels in locations around the world. In 1983, the Atlas Network began convening parallel meetings alongside the MPS, to train thinktank leaders from a growing list of countries and to introduce them to key funders. Among the Australian MPS membership we find, for example, the founding board director of the Centre of Independent Studies and one-time MPS President Greg Lindsay, as well as executives, directors, alumni and board members of the Institute of Public Affairs (est. 1943), such as lead NewsCorp writer Janet Albrechtsen, Alan Moran, John Roskam, Tim Wilson, and George Michael Folie, senior executive of Shell Australia from 1979-1997.³

According to the 'global partner directory' last published on the Atlas Network website (now removed from public view), as of 2021 the Network was comprised of over 515 'institutes' in 99 countries around the world.⁴ It includes well known anti-climate policy voices with well-

³ The 2013 MPS member directory was obtained by DeSmog. See: https://www.desmog.com/wp-content/uploads/files/MPS-2013-membership-listing_Redacted.pdf

⁴ For a list of the organisations as of 2021 comprising the global Atlas Network see: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210824142756/https://www.atlasnetwork.org/partners/global-directory>

documented fossil fuel funding sources, such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, and the Heritage Foundation. Heritage has published volumes containing the detailed legislative and policy programs pursued by every incoming GOP president since Ronald Reagan in 1981, and is running the now notorious Project 2025, among the key aims of which is the elimination of US climate policy, public education and the establishment of a kind of presidential dictatorship in which the Army is called out to crush citizen protest if Donald Trump’s Republican Party win the 2024 election.⁵ Also affiliated is the Federalist Society, whose membership provided some 86% of the 251 judges appointed to higher US courts by ex-President Trump, leading to a radically conservative super-majority on the US Supreme Court.⁶

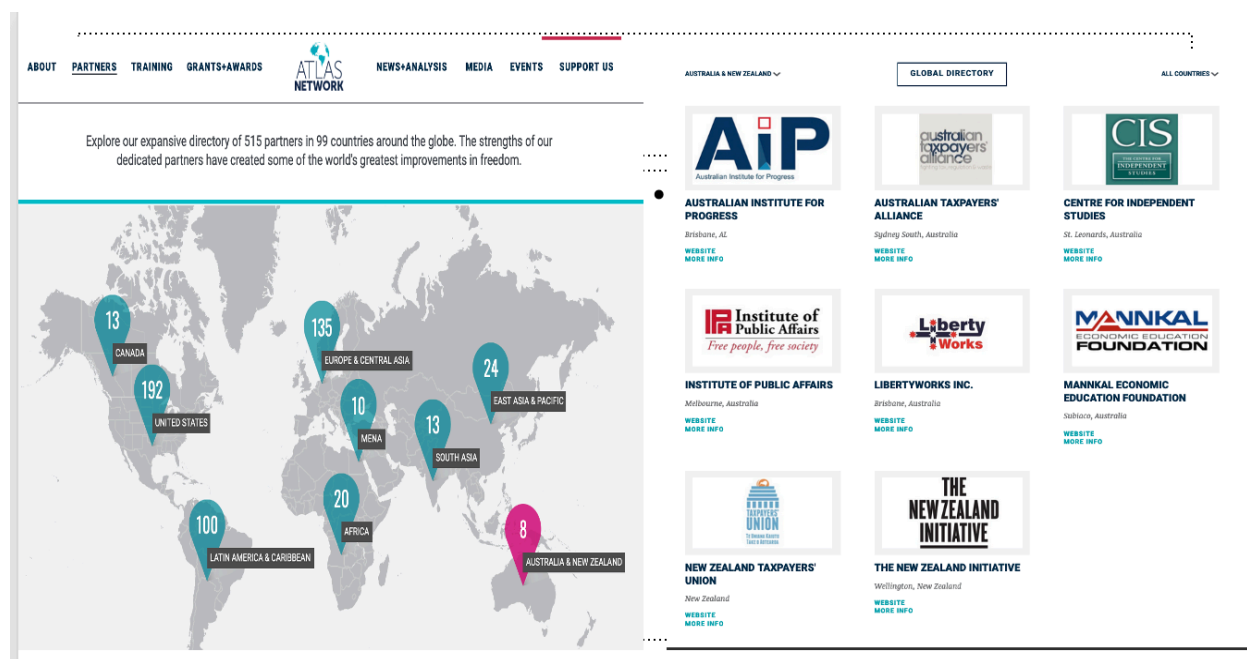


FIG 1: Australia-New Zealand ‘partner organisations’ - 8 of the 515 orgs comprising the Atlas Network as of 2021. Source: Atlas Network (2021) ‘global partner directory’.

Atlas in Australia

The Atlas Network’s Australian arm consists of the belligerent and bellicose Institute of Public Affairs (IPA, est. 1943), the Centre of Independent Studies (CIS, 1976), Liberty Works, Australian Institute of Progress, Australian Taxpayers Alliance, Australian Libertarian Society, and the Mannkall Institute, which have campaigned in varying ways at different times against climate science, climate policy and renewable energy.

A team of researchers based at DeMontford University (UK) have published a downloadable database containing the names and roles of board members, supervisory board members, academic advisory boards, and CEO's of all think tank organizations that are as part of the Atlas Network/Atlas Economic Research Foundation between January 2021 and December 2022. See: https://figshare.dmu.ac.uk/articles/dataset/Atlas_Think_Tank_Main_Employers/22217050?file=39486961

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/aug/14/trump-project-2025-climate>

<https://climate-reporting.org/undercover-in-project-2025/>

⁶ According to ProPublica: <https://www.propublica.org/article/we-dont-talk-about-leonard-leo-supreme-court-supermajority>

Atlas Network's formally affiliated 'institutes' routinely generate spinoff single-issue, temporary arms-length entities (which nevertheless share common board members, personnel, funding) and act more or less in concert on major campaigns. These include the now defunct Tasman Institute, the Sydney Institute (ex-NSW branch of the IPA), the Bennelong, HR Nicholls, Samuel Griffiths, and Lavoisier Societies. The most recent and important of these is 3rd party election campaign and disinformation unit Advance. As I have demonstrated (Walker 2023), Advance and its multiple sub-entities led the overwhelming disinformation campaign across the Australian arm of the Network which defeated the 2023 referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition and a Voice to parliament. As Warren Mundine (ex-director of Liberty Works) clearly indicates on the website of the Centre of Independent Studies, the motivation of the NO campaign through which the Australian arm of the Atlas Network crush First Nation's hopes for constitutional justice in Australia, was due to their fear that First Nations voices might gain greater capacity to express resistance to massive new coal and gas projects.⁷

In Australia Atlas orgs quite legally obscure their funding sources from view of the public whose opinions, government policies, elections and referenda they constantly seek to influence. Where funding is known, there are clear connections to fossil fuel billionaires, corporations, investors, and downstream consultancies. That the Australian Atlas affiliates work together on behalf of hidden fossil fuel investors can, in any case, be reliably inferred from corporate board crossovers and constant campaigns against climate science, climate policies, and political actors that stand to reduce the profitability and power of the fuel industry, such as Indigenous rights, carbon taxation, windfall taxes, resource rent taxes, clean energy rollout, feed in tariffs, or formal regulation and control under environmental laws of carbon dioxide and methane as pollutants which threaten Australian people, ecosystems, and indeed the very survival of the human species.

The relentless disinformation campaign against the pro-renewables and carbon pricing policies of the Rudd/Gillard government was run by the Institute of Public Affairs, when Tim Wilson (MPS) was IPA climate policy lead. The 2013 defeat of the Gillard government over the 'carbon tax' – bitterly opposed by the fossil fuel industry as carbon taxation is highly effective in shifting energy demand to low/zero carbon sources - was celebrated by the Atlas Network as the achievement of the IPA.⁸

The manipulation of public opinion by the mass production of publications, media outputs and messaging co-ordinated across multiple nodes of the Network, complements Atlas key aim to infiltrate and capture organisations, institutions and state power. The MPS/Atlas have worked to capture LNP policy-making and pre-selection processes, effectively purging the party of the democratic, non-liberal 'wets' pushing the party ever further to the illiberal far-right of science denial, authoritarianism and Christian Nationalism. The Cormack Foundation, which influences pre-selection of Liberal candidates, has been chaired by global mining powerbroker Hugh Morgan, at various times a board member of the IPA and the CIS.⁹ LNP governments have routinely appointed MPS/Atlas protagonists to the leadership and board roles of public institutions- such as the ABC, the Reserve Bank of Australia, the Productivity Commission, the

⁷ <https://www.cis.org.au/commentary/opinion/the-indigenous-voice-will-give-unjust-power-to-those-who-have-no-authority-to-speak-for-us/>

⁸ Institute of Public Affairs' Repeal the Carbon Tax Campaign - Finalist: 2015 Templeton Freedom Award. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_M6eyoD_1M

⁹ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/big-liberal-donor-withholds-500000-in-dispute-with-party-kingpin-michael-kroger-20170217-gufn43.html>

Clean Energy Finance Corporation- and to public authorities which recommend approvals of new coal and gas extraction projects for (e.g. the NSW EPA and Independent Planning Commission).

Advance says ‘Wind Kills Whales’ and it’s funded by Big Coal

Advance, openly propagating the false claim that offshore windfarms are killing whales, has been described by investigative journalist Anthony Klan as a “murky network of at least six interconnected entities...run from a [fake national headquarters](#) in Canberra’s CBD, by directors stating [fake residential addresses](#).” Lavishly financed by a small handful of multi-millionaires and billionaires connected to fossil fuel interests and the Australian arm of the Atlas Network, third party election campaign org Advance led the ‘No’ campaign against the 2023 Voice referendum, conducting millions of dollars of ‘donations’ through shell companies intended to hide funding sources from Australian electors and the Australian Electoral Commission. Advance is also running the ‘we need nuclear’ campaign, as are other Atlas orgs in Australia, and in other countries.¹⁰

The founding ‘Advisory Council’ of Advance included multimillionaire Sam Kennard, current CIS board member, and Maurice Newman (MPS),¹¹ a founding board member of the CIS, who with Hugh Morgan, arranged its founding grants Murdoch’s *Adelaide Advertiser* and oil, coal, gas and uranium multinationals Santos, Shell, BHP, Rio Tinto and Western Mining, Advance has funding relationships to wealthy members of the IPA (Bryant Macfie, Simon Fenwick), and the owner of privatised NSW coal generators, Trevor St Baker.¹² Both the IPA and CIS were founded by fossil fuel, uranium and mining companies. The CIS was established in 1976 at the instigation of Santos gas co-founder John Bonython, who invited Anthony Fisher to run private tours in Australia, where he spoke to senior executives of local subsidiaries of corporations such as Shell, Chevron, and Rio Tinto. The initial grants to the CIS, arranged by Maurice Newman (MPS member and co-founder of Advance) and Hugh Morgan (who joined the inaugural Atlas Network business advisory board in 1983) came from Shell, Rio Tinto, Santos, Western Mining, BHP and News Corp’s *Adelaide Advertiser*. The connections of the IPA to fossil/mining multinationals are too numerous to mention; take for example Geoffrey Michael Folie (MPS), has served on the IPA board since 2000 to the present. He was a senior executive with Shell Australia and its coal division from 1979 to 1997.

¹⁰ A 2023 presentation to the IPA obtained by journalist Murray Hogarth clearly describes the aim of the nuclear push, “to defend and preserve coal and gas in the 2020s”. Hogarth, M. 2024 May 29. ‘Inside the nuclear influence machine’. *The Fifth Estate*. <https://thefifthestate.com.au/columns/columns-columns/the-nuclear-files/inside-the-nuclear-influence-machine/>

¹¹ Advance Australia, 2019, ‘Advisory council’. https://web.archive.org/web/20190312103132/https://www.advanceaustralia.org.au/advisory_council

¹² Anthony Klan. 2024, Feb 1, ‘[The \\$1m secret behind the Voice “No” campaign](#)’. The Klaxon.
Anthony Klan. 2023 Oct 13, ‘[Why is the No Campaign so afraid to be found](#)’, MichaelWestMedia

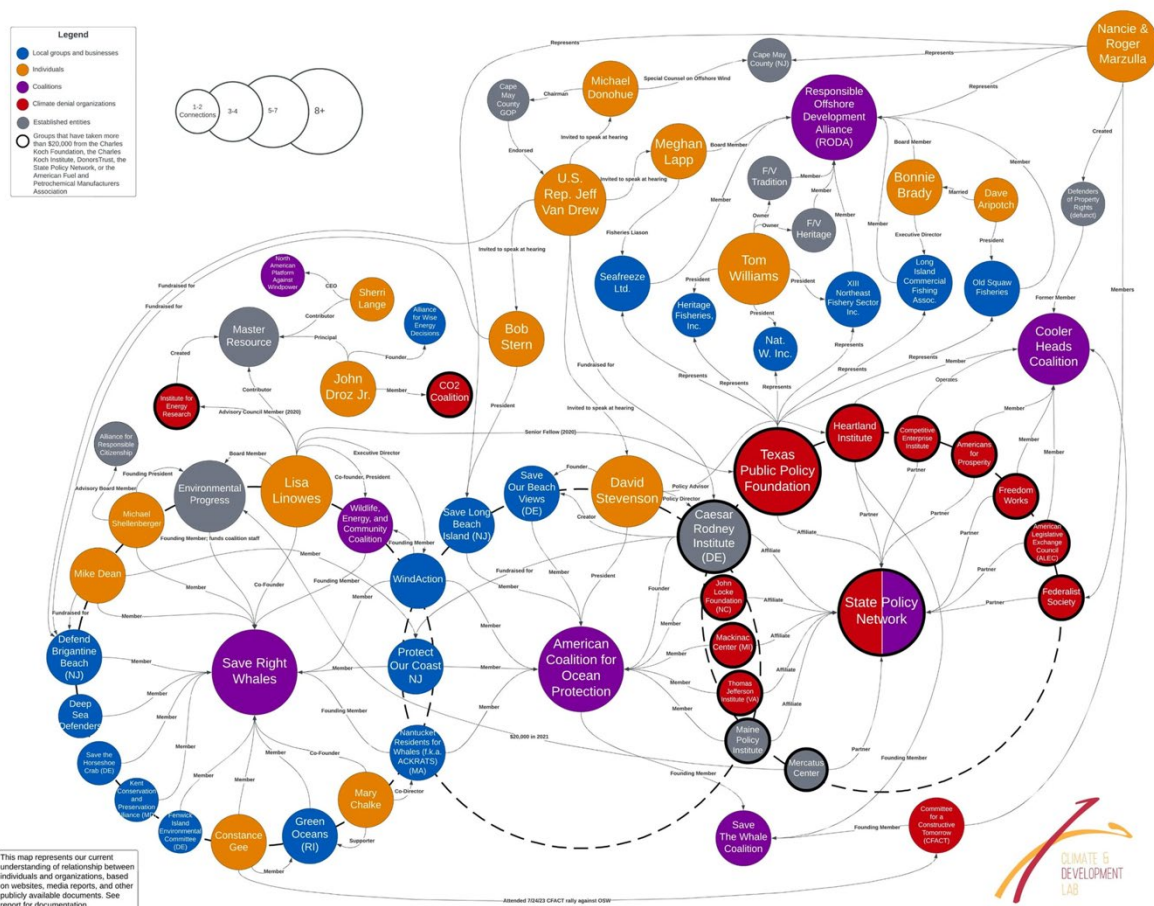


FIG 2: A Map of the Anti-Offshore Wind Network in the Eastern United States: see Atlas Network affiliated institutes in the bottom right circle (red and grey) and astroturfed ‘community’ groups bottom left circle. [Slevin, Katrup and Roberts \(2023\)](#),

Origins of the ‘wind kills whales campaign’ in US Atlas Network affiliates.

As has been clearly demonstrated by research published by the Climate Policy Development Lab at Brown University, Rhode Island USA, and numerous articles in the US press, the proliferation of ‘save the whales from windfarms’ articles and memes were first propagated by The Heartland Institute,¹³ C-FACT,¹⁴ the Caesar Rodney Institute¹⁵ and the Texas Public Policy Foundation¹⁶, each of which are or have been listed by the Atlas Network as affiliated organisations, and each with amply documented histories of fossil-fuel derived funding, including from ExxonMobil, the Koch Foundations, the Gulf/Chevron and Alcoa derived Scaife

¹³ <https://heartland.org/?s=whales>

¹⁴ <https://www.cfact.org/?s=whales>

¹⁵ <https://www.caesarrodney.org/energy-updates2/Offshore-Wind-is-Killing-Whales.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.texaspolicy.com/the-biden-admin-is-sacrificing-whales-to-save-the-planet/>

foundations, and Atlas Network’s donor anonymising vehicles Donor’s Trust and Donor’s Capital.¹⁷

Atlas operatives working with these ‘institutes’ assisted in catalysing the formation of anti-offshore wind ‘community’ groups near offshore wind zones, mobilising ‘community anger’ against wind projects based on false claims widely circulating on pop-up Facebook groups that windfarms are causing whale deaths, and setting up anti-wind campaign websites, often disguised in the language of environmental NGOs.¹⁸ The intentional creation and fostering of ostensibly ‘grassroots’ political action groups by strategic communications experts is termed ‘astroturfing’, intending to convey superficial authenticity to what are in fact highly professional PR/disinformation campaigns. The aim is to enrol individuals and ‘community’ members quite unaware of the Atlas Network think tank archipelago and its fossil fuel funding sources, and thus the origins of the false beliefs planted in the head that they have come to think of as their own.

Anti-wind websites, Facebook groups and ‘community’ campaigns in Australia

The articles, memes and false claims that ‘wind kills whales’ generated since 2023 by Atlas thinktanks and and spin-off ‘community’ anti-wind groups on the US East Coast are now widely circulating in the Australian anti-wind Facebook groups, cloaking pro-fossil industry narratives in the language of ‘environmental’ and ‘community’ concern via slick, anonymous websites: a method identical to the tactics used by the US branch of anti-offshore wind network.

Much of the groundwork organisation of the anti-offshore wind campaign in Australia appears to be conducted by secretive strategic communications experts, setting up multiple anonymous websites to spread disinformation and catalyse local ‘community’ protest and anti-wind action groups in all the coastal communities adjacent to the declared offshore wind development zones around the country. Whilst anti-RE and offshore wind campaign websites are carefully anonymised, key actors running the campaign, including some active within anti-wind Facebook groups, have well documented histories of working for fossil funded climate-denial organisations affiliated with the Atlas Network, and aligned campaigns.

Couched in the language and imagery of environmental concern, websites such as No Offshore Wind Turbines, Responsible Futures (Illawarra), Australians Against Offshore Wind and associated Facebook groups, are notably silent on the catastrophic global impacts of fossil fuel

¹⁷ See analysis based on Form 990s by DeSmog:
<https://www.desmog.com/heartland-institute/>
<https://www.desmog.com/texas-public-policy-foundation/>
<https://www.desmog.com/committee-constructive-tomorrow/>
<https://www.desmog.com/caesar-rodney-institute/>

¹⁸ Slevin, Isaac, William Kattrup, and Timmons Roberts. 2023. “Against the Wind: A Map of the Anti-Offshore Wind Network in the Eastern United States.” The Climate and Development Lab, Brown University, Rhode Island.
<https://www.climatedevlab.brown.edu/post/against-the-wind-a-map-of-the-anti-offshore-wind-network-in-the-eastern-united-states>

See also: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90856401/these-groups-fighting-offshore-wind-say-its-about-whales-but-theyre-funded-by-big-oil>

Climate and Development Lab. 2023. “Discourses of Climate Delay in the Campaign Against Offshore Wind: A Case Study from Rhode Island.” The Climate and Development Lab, April, 2023.
<https://www.climatedevlab.brown.edu/post/discourses-of-climate-delay-in-the-campaign-against-offshore-wind-a-case-study-from-rhode-island>

on ocean ecosystems. Whilst it is of course true that any infrastructure project will disturb ecosystems during the construction phase, evidence suggests that offshore wind farms form artificial reef communities, potentially increasing fish populations and thus also of whales and other keystone species. The question of the short-term impact of offshore wind construction on marine life and marine environments must be considered in the context of the catastrophic impacts on marine life of fossil fuel combustion, seismic testing during oil search, extraction, bulk transport, oil spills, ocean heating, mass coral bleaching, and ocean acidification.¹⁹

One of the more active organisers and members of the No Offshore Windfarms (Illawarra) Facebook group is one **Burchell Wilson**, who posted in November 2023:

“let me know if any of you guys are interested in running for council. I’m flying some guys over from the States to run a campaign bootcamp early next year.”²⁰

By September 2024, there were at least three new candidates for upcoming local council elections, whose militant opposition to offshore wind seamlessly reflects the over-arching PR strategy of provoking moral outrage against clean energy rollout by couching it in the language of environmental responsibility.²¹

Wilson has previously authored several pro-fossil/anti-climate policy articles for the Manhattan Institute (NY), another Atlas partner²² with documented support from ExxonMobil, Scaife and Donors Trust along with many other foundations that have systematically built up the US branch of the Atlas Network.²³ Wilson’s 2014 advocacy on behalf of an Australian business chamber to abolish the Minimum Renewable Energy Target is reported in the anonymous Australian anti-wind website ‘Stop These Things’ which aims ‘to destroy the wind industry’.²⁴ Since 2010 an aggregator of anti-wind ‘content’, most of the ‘experts’ profiled on the website have worked for Atlas-affiliated climate denial organisations with recorded fossil-fuel funding, e.g. **Alan Moran** (MPS), a veteran anti-climate policy activist since the late 1980s, and executive director of Australia’s most prolific pro-fossil/anti-climate campaign org, the Atlas-affiliated IPA.²⁵ Moran now works for the specialised US climate denial thinktank the Heartland Institute,²⁶ which together with C-FACT and the National Legal and Policy Centre (likewise funded by ExxonMobil, Scaife and Donor’s Trust)²⁷ has sued the Biden administration over its approval of a wind project off the coast of Virginia, alleging it failed to consider the facility’s impacts on endangered

¹⁹ <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/wind-farms-misinformation-peter-dutton-climate-change-20231101-p5egvn.html>

²⁰ https://www.facebook.com/groups/221120457510451/permalink/305194522436377/?_rdr

²¹ See for example: <https://www.powersuburbs.com.au/>

²² <https://manhattan.institute/person/burchell-wilson?top=false&limit=10&page-number=2&people%5B%5D=46063&dates=>

²³ <https://www.desmog.com/manhattan-institute-policy-research/>

²⁴ <https://stopthesethings.com/tag/burchell-wilson/>

²⁵ <https://stopthesethings.com/?s=moran+>

²⁶ <https://heartland.org/about-us/who-we-are/alan-moran/>

²⁷ <https://www.desmog.com/national-center-public-policy-research/>

whales.²⁸ These attacks on offshore wind generate legal and political uncertainty, and are effective at discouraging wind power companies from proceeding with investments. Of course, the motivation of such lawsuits is not at all genuine concern for ecological protection of the Earth from catastrophic energy infrastructure, but exactly the reverse.

In September 2024, Wilson appeared as a speaker at a Regional Climate and Energy Forum held at a private venue in Lake Oberon, NSW. The lineup also featured Alan Moran (MPS, IPA, Heartland), and vocal climate denier Ian Plimer, who routinely appears at events organised by the Australian Atlas affiliates - most recently the 2024 CPAC convention in Brisbane.²⁹ The speaker introducing Moran named him as the owner of the 'Stop these Things' website. In his speech, Wilson evidences his intimate knowledge of the membership and tactics of anti-wind groups in the Illawarra and elsewhere, as well as the methods and tactics of the IPA and the CIS.

According to Wilson's bio, whilst in the US: "he received world-leading training in political strategy and tactics". He is the proprietor of Blackwell Strategies, a strategic political communication firm through which he "now leverages his policy experience in Canberra alongside the capacities of his partners in Washington DC."³⁰ The website of this business itself offers no names or information about it, except its modus operandi: "moral outrage is the most powerful motivating force in politics – dominate the narrative".³¹ Wilson recently offered his services, to provide a training "bootcamp" led by "American instructors" on an "invitation only basis" for "politically solid" individuals attending the Brisbane CPAC 2024 conference. He advises in the ad that the \$895 per head fee "should be tax deductible", and that he is "looking for a donor" to reimburse participants.

Scheduled in Brisbane just weeks ahead of the Queensland state election, the CPAC conference was sponsored by Advance and the IPA. The Brisbane outpost of the Atlas Network, the Australian Institute for Progress, received \$682 000 of Coal Australia Ltd and Byerwen Coal's combined \$2.78 million election influence spending.³² Following the change of government, the head of BHP took no time to issue strident demands that the incoming Liberal Q'ld government immediately cut state royalties on coal. Andrew Cooper, convenor of CPAC Australia, has been trained by the Atlas Network as part of its so called 'Atlas Thinktank MBA' program. Hardly comparable to a genuine, 2 year long University-accredited Masters of Business Administration, the "10-day strategic planning curriculum" is presumably as much a networking event as a licence to access the vast funding sources and other resources available to approved Atlas Network protagonists.³³

²⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/right-wing-groups-sue-us-over-offshore-wind-impact-whales-2024-03-18/>

²⁹ Climate and Energy Forum, Lake Oberon NSW, Sept 2024. See: <https://www.facebook.com/Chriscoveries/videos/1003778144858261/?rdid=shgywqpltUz6ngq2>

Also available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuVqtYG_I8I

³⁰ <https://www.burchellwilson.com/>

³¹ <https://blackwellstrategies.com/#features>

³² Electoral Commission of Queensland, 3rd Party entities, 2024 State Election data. <https://disclosures.ecq.qld.gov.au/>

³³ <https://www.atlasnetwork.org/articles/atlas-network-training-in-australia-asks-whats-your-orgs-core-focus>

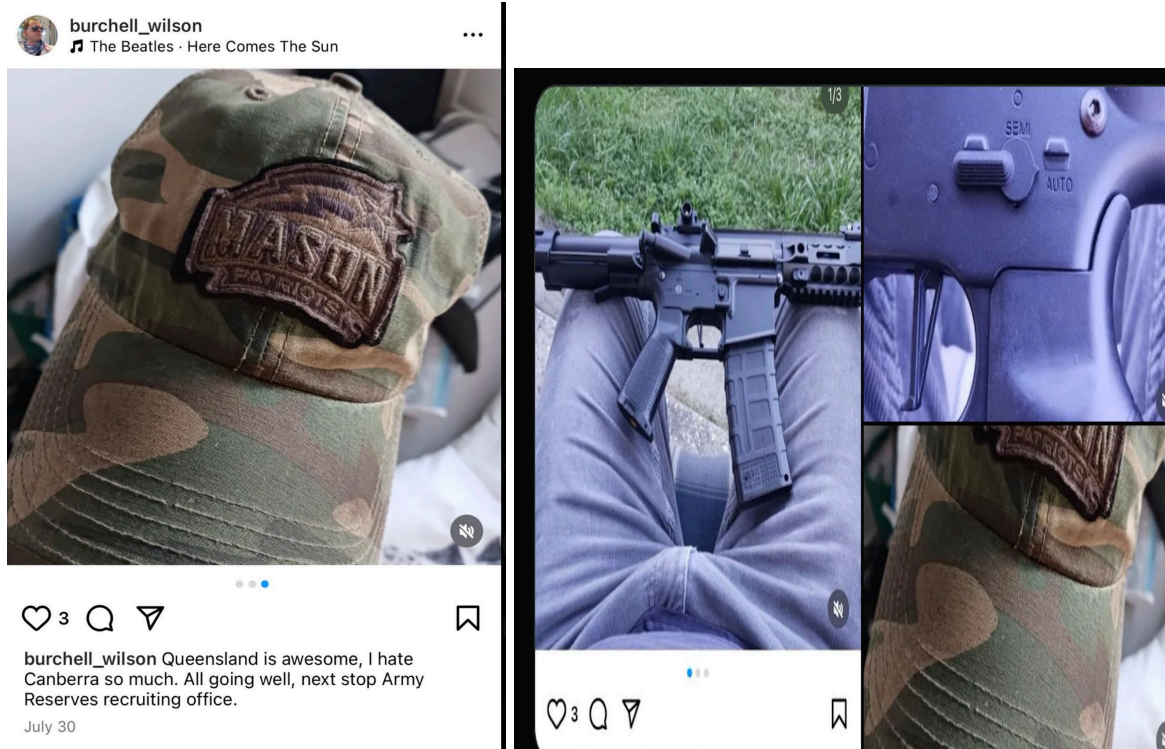


FIG 3: Burchell Wilson’s Facebook page, showing his MAGA identity as a self-described ‘Evil Racist No Voter’, his George Mason University ‘Patriots’ hat and [his?] self-loading military assault rifle.

So, by whom was Burchell Wilson trained? Who are his “partners in Washington DC”? Who are the ‘guys from the states’ are that he told the Illawarra Facebook members he would fly over to ‘run a campaign bootcamp’ to train them to gain seats on Wollongong Council are, he does not say. One clue is the camouflage ‘Patriot’ cap he is wearing in the Oberon video, the same one he has also posted pictures of to his Facebook page, alarmingly alongside pictures of a machine gun. The Patriots are the basketball team of George Mason University, beneficiary of extensive tied funding from key Atlas funder the Charles Koch Foundation, and the site of the central office of the global Atlas Network, into which hundreds of millions of Koch money has been poured.³⁴

The systemic disruption of offshore wind consultation processes by disinformation and astroturfing, the targeting of Australian local councils and state and federal parliaments, is part of a foreign-influence campaign traceable through local actors to powerful, highly organised, far-right forces bent on preventing democratic governments from protecting their constituents from the catastrophic consequences of the fossil fuel industry. We ignore at our gravest peril the fossil sector’s shadowy Atlas Network, its disinformation assault on clean energy, on the integrity of our public sphere and democratic institutions and processes, and its long record of

<https://www.atlasnetwork.org/articles/think-tank-mba-training-brings-together-worldwide-free-market-leaders>

<https://www.atlasnetwork.org/articles/think-tank-mba-2018-brings-together-21-think-tank-leaders-from-18-countries>

³⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/05/us/koch-donors-george-mason.html>

defeating climate policy, which threatens the very survival of our children, of whales and of the oceans upon which we all depend.