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

Flight Free Australia submits the following assessment of misinformation and disinformation by the Australian government related to climate change.

Flight Free Australia is concerned about growing emissions and their impacts across society as a whole. Its primary focus is on raising awareness of the specific impacts of aviation emissions on the climate.

As such, this submission responds to Terms of Reference (a) *the prevalence of, motivations behind and impacts of misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy.*

It addresses the prevalence of, motivations for, and impacts of Australian government misinformation and disinformation related to climate policy in general, and of both government and industry related to aviation climate policy in particular.

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information. Disinformation is false information which is deliberately intended to mislead. The hiding of information needed for a full understanding of climate change can be seen as an intention to mislead. Understating the risk of harmful events can likewise be seen as an intention to mislead the public's understanding of the threat posed by climate change.

To establish both misinformation and disinformation on the state of climate change, we recommend the committee first acknowledge the true state of climate change. It can then identify as either mis- or disinformation information that doesn't align with that reality.



The true state of climate change

Policy action can solve the problem it seeks to address only if the problem is first described honestly.

What are the facts?

- 1.5°C of global warming is not a safe limit or a point of climate system stability (1).
- 1.5°C of global warming has been reached 15 years earlier than forecast by the IPCC, for all practical purposes (1).
- The planet is heating up at an accelerating rate. Global average warming will trend to 2°C by around 2040-45 (1).
- Big oil and gas and airlines are backtracking on emissions reduction commitments. There is the prospect of global emissions dropping only 10-20% by 2050 on the current policy path (2).
- Total demand for energy is continuing to grow. Renewable energy is not yet replacing fossil fuels, but rather adding to the fossil-fuelled energy supply (1).
- Emissions reductions won't reduce the rate of warming in the near term (1).
- Atmospheric CO2 levels have reached over 420ppm, causing weekly catastrophic events across the planet. Climate scientists say 350ppm would be a safe level for humanity (3).
- Global warming has already triggered large shifts in the planet's climate system, some of which are irreversible. Shifts at both poles are now in play, coral reef systems have been in a death spiral for more than a decade, and permafrost, boreal forests and the Amazon are becoming net carbon emitters (4).
- Aviation emissions are growing by 4% each year (5).
- A 3rd runway will increase domestic flight emissions from Melbourne Airport by 55% on 2005 levels by 2030. Whereas decreasing emissions by 43% on 2005 levels by 2030 is government policy (6).
- There's no more jet fuel we can safely burn. Aviation's proportion of the IPCC's global CO2 emissions budget for a 66% chance of somehow holding warming to 2°C, allows each Australian the equivalent of only more one return flight to the UK, ever (7).
- So-called Sustainable Aviation Fuels do not cut flight emissions. Claimed reductions (up to 80% according to many sources) are a carbon accounting trick. They are achieved by subtracting the CO2 drawn down in growing the feedstock from the CO2 emitted when burnt in flight. CO2 drawdown to 350ppm is thwarted when the CO2 drawdown in growing the SAF feedstock is re-emitted in fuel burn. CO2 emissions from a burning forest aren't discounted by the CO2 drawn down in growing the forest! (8).
- For humanity global warming represents an existential risk. Stopping global emissions at emergency speed, rapidly drawing down atmospheric CO2 to 350ppm, and, while they are underway, relatively safe planetary cooling, are all now necessary to mitigate the risk (9).
- However small the risk of failing may be, that risk must be avoided when failure risks the collapse of society-as-we-know-it.



Mis- and disinformation

> PREVALENCE

Given the facts of climate change, as summarised above established, the following can now be identified as disinformation.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CLIMATE POLICY IN GENERAL

- The Australian government's refusal to release the Office of National Intelligence regionally focussed report assessing climate security risk deliberately misleads the Australian public as to the dangers we face (10).
- Net zero 2050 – Australian government policy – as an emissions reduction scenario/pathway that seeks to represent itself as being capable of preventing 2°C of warming (11).
- A 43% reduction in emissions on 2005 levels, by 2030 – Australian government policy – is effective climate change mitigation (12).
- Australian emissions reductions, as declared by Climate Change minister Chris Bowen, are on track to meet a 43% by 2030 target (13). When emissions from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry are excluded Australia's actual emissions have only decreased 3% since 2005 (14).
- An Australian 2035 Nationally Determined (emissions reduction) Contribution of less than 100% is effective climate change mitigation.
- Emissions from exported coal and gas are of no concern because no federal legislation requires consideration of their climate change impact (15).
- The growth of the renewable energy sector as an effective measure of Australian government action on climate change. (16)
- The "Safeguard Mechanism" safeguards us from climate change. Whereas, not reporting leaking methane emissions from Santos tanks, and 'paper averages' in its emissions reporting are permitted (17).

AUSTRALIAN AVIATION INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT CLIMATE POLICY IN PARTICULAR

- Market based mechanisms, such as the development of a so-called Sustainable Aviation Fuel industry and the use of carbon offsets, are fit for purpose as effective tools for mitigating aviation emissions (18).
- Emissions reduction claims by Qantas based on the use of SAF and carbon offsets. Whereas in 2017 Australia's Qantas Airways signed a 10-year deal for 8 million gallons of SAF annually, starting in 2020, with SG Preston based on its plan to build five SAF production plants across North America. In 2022, SG Preston filed for bankruptcy. And today, eight years later, none have been built (19).
- Aviation minister Catherine King's public endorsement of Australian Pacific Airport Melbourne's understated emissions projections from 3rd runway flights. Estimates suggest they will be 16 times larger than reported (20).
- The claim that carbon offsets effectively reduce the carbon emissions of your flight (21).
- There is no requirement on airlines to report the extraordinary extent of the emissions for an individual trip so that consumers are aware of what they are doing, nor is there any public information available as to the effect of CO₂, non-CO₂ aviation emissions or cirrus clouds which could inform consumer choice.



> **MOTIVATIONS**

- What would motivate the Australian government to spread disinformation about the climate crisis? To avoid its duty of care to Australian citizens? To avoid urgently pursuing those climate policies that would maximise our chance of restoring a safe climate?
- Could it be because the government is trapped in “normal-world” thinking – in a world normal no more? This “normal world” where the capacity to lead in an emergency was just never in the job description (22).

> **IMPACTS**

- Australians remain uninformed as to the shocking future they face, in general and by flying.
- Action by Australia to do our bit to effectively restore a safe climate (zero emissions at emergency speed including, for aviation via airport flight demand management, plus drawdown of Australia’s proportion of atmospheric CO2 to reach 350ppm globally) remains thwarted.



FOOTNOTES

- 1: <https://www.breakthroughonline.org.au/climateadvocacy2025>
- 2: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2025-06-12/climate-pledges-dropped-by-coca-cola-bp-hsbc-as-planet-heats-up> • <https://travel.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/aviation/international/iata-chief-calls-for-reevaluation-of-eu-aviation-green-fuel-targets/122572754> • <https://www.unep.org/resources/production-gap-report-2023>
- 3: <https://www.nature.com/articles/461472a>
- 4: https://www.breakthroughonline.org.au/_files/ugd/148cb0_fb8d67e54f914f429dc989ac968327b9.pdf
- 5: <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/return-to-pre-pandemic-levels-of-airline-travel-and-capacity>
- 6: http://www.no3rdtullarunway.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Tulla_3rdRunway_Emissions-1_16.pdf
- 7: <https://flightfree.net.au/aviation-has-already-blown-its-emissions-budget/>
- 8: <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2024/02/pigs-might-fly-australian-aviations-delusional-emissions-future/> • <https://flightfree.net.au/the-plane-facts/are-sustainable-fuels-emissions-free/briefing-note/>
- 9: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/may/27/humanity-survival-emissions-resilience-ecosystems-greenhouse-gases> • <https://www.climatecoded.org/2023/06/three-climate-interventions-reduce.html>
- 10: <https://www.climatecoded.org/2025/08/australias-first-national-climate-risk.html>
- 11: https://www.breakthroughonline.org.au/_files/ugd/148cb0_714730d82bb84659a56c7da03fdca496.pdf
- 12: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn47yjjeevdvo>
- 13: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-01/bowen-open-to-carbon-tariff/105362978>
- 14: <https://theconversation.com/australias-latest-emissions-data-reveal-we-still-have-a-giant-fossil-fuel-problem-257907>
- 15: <https://insidestory.org.au/the-icj-takes-on-climate/>
- 16: <https://www.climatecoded.org/2024/07/the-albanese-government-has-created.html>
- 17: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-01/methane-leak-darwin-lng-plant-kept-secret-from-public/1056927>
- 18: <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/media/publications/aviation-white-paper-towards-2050>
- 19: <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/AVIATION-SUSTAINABILITY/movadylljpa/>
- 20: http://www.no3rdtullarunway.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Tulla_3rdRunway_Emissions-2_06_flat_A4.pdf
- 21: <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2024/11/exposing-the-layers-of-aviation-industry-greenwash/>
- 22: <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2024/07/the-albanese-government-has-created-a-climate-vacuum-and-we-will-pay-the-price/>



Flight Free Australia

Flight Free Australia is a volunteer-led organisation campaigning for emissions-free aviation. Collectively we take a range of approaches including empowering people to make a personal choice not to fly, sharing and promoting information about the climate impact of air traffic and credible alternatives, as well as advocating for public policy regulations to eliminate the climate impact of air traffic and chart a path to a safe climate and a more equitable future.

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