# Addressing misinformation relating to clean energy infrastructure

**PM&C - Team 2**

## Why does misinformation matter?
Crucial to the success of any clean energy project is understanding and support from the community who will be hosting the infrastructure.

There is a risk misinformation can extend to impact community support, undermine clean energy projects and potentially derail the clean energy transition.

## Our Proposition:
We are proposing two phases of nudges that are pre-emptive, then reactive. The decision to implement our reactive nudge will be dependent on the measured success of our ‘pre-emptive’ nudge.

The goals of our nudges are to empower and equip individuals with the ability to identify misinformation, utilise the credibility, authority and relatability of local governments as a ‘trusted messenger’ of correct information, and encourage informed and respectful dialogue amongst communities.

## Pre-Emption (Phase One): Digital Literacy Campaign
Our first nudge utilises technique-based pre-bunking to increase digital literacy through an information campaign via social media.

Technique-based pre-bunking addresses several goals:
- **it increases dialogue.** This will improve the quality of policy, because genuine co-design will always deliver better outcomes.
- **it is pre-emptive and timely.** We would be rolling this out in the consultation phase of a policy. This would be while viewpoints on a topic are still dynamic.
- **we want to build trust and the perception of procedural fairness.** This form of technique-based pre-bunking is apolitical, scalable, and highly ethical.

## Stand-by: Is more information needed?
We propose running focus groups with leaders and community members before and after phase 1 to collect qualitative data.

In addition, we propose surveying individuals to gather data on their susceptibility to misinformation.

Engagement with local government will continue to build trust as it builds on positive nudging techniques, including:
- **Similarity bias:** community leaders are familiar, recognisable, and trusted messengers.
- **Procedural fairness** and **distributional fairness**.

If the research shows that digital literacy has not improved, we propose implementing phase two – a reactive, issues-focused nudge.

## Reaction (Phase Two): The Digital Town Hall
A discussion platform for regional local government areas.

Unlike social media, it silos dialogue to prevent the spread of misinformation.

It avoids the backfire effect by encouraging dialogue, rather than suppressing it. It uses several nudges:
- **Similarity bias:** working with local government to monitor and roll out Digital Town Hall.
- **Social proof:** community forum run by trusted leaders.
- **Procedural fairness** and the perception of fairness of outcomes, by encouraging dialogue. Unlike the Australian Electoral Commission disinformation register, it identifies misinformation along with continued engagement.

## Why Stand-by?
The intended outcome is to determine the cost effectiveness of the intervention, to inform the need for our proposed second phase.
Feasibility and Implementation

The main reason it is feasible is because we developed it according to the policymaking process. When done well, policymaking is highly consultative and works with the intention of co-design (facilitates on the ground engagement) and we created our proposal with this in mind. Our proposal is also low cost.

Sponsored posts/advertising on social media are relatively cheap to roll-out at scale. Having a two-tiered approach ensures implementing high-cost solutions only occurs when necessary.

Our nudges aim to gain social license through the encouragement of community dialogue rather than the suppression of it. Of course, we recognise that nudging is only part of the solution – we need shifts in the broader policy landscape to stop misinformation.

References


