

The Inoculators

Protecting the community from misinformation and disinformation one lie at a time

Background

Australia has set a goal for net zero emissions by 2050. To achieve this, massive investments in renewable energy and transmission lines are being made by both the private and public sectors. Governments of Queensland, NSW, and Victoria, working with AEMO, are beginning to implement their plan to build energy infrastructure in renewable energy zones (REZs)—modern-day power stations with high-capacity generators, storage, and transmitters. While REZs will provide energy to the majority of Australians who live in urban centers, a majority of the REZs are being built in rural and regional communities. This leads to a multitude of problems for the integration of renewable energy infrastructure such as misinformation and disinformation, which DCCEEW must effectively work to combat to prevent set-backs that might derail the goal for net zero emissions.

Problem Statement

How might we leverage social networks to debunk misinformation, pre-bunk against misinformation and disinformation, and ultimately facilitate community understanding, support, and cooperation for renewable energy infrastructure.

Target Audience

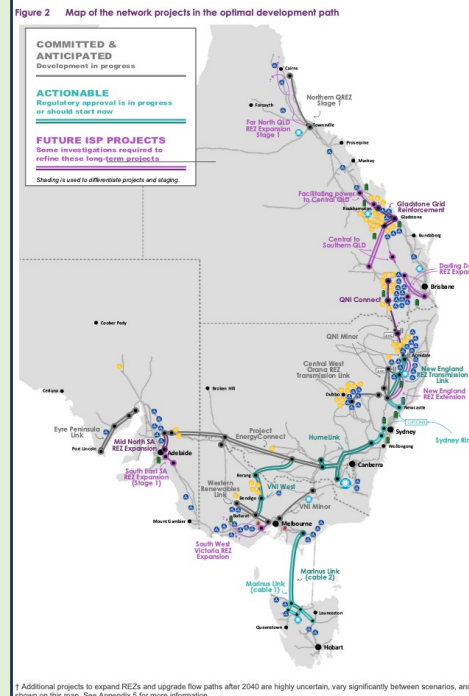
Regional communities and rural households and individuals living in renewable energy zones.

Target Behavior

To decrease in-person spread of misinformation

Measurable Data Points

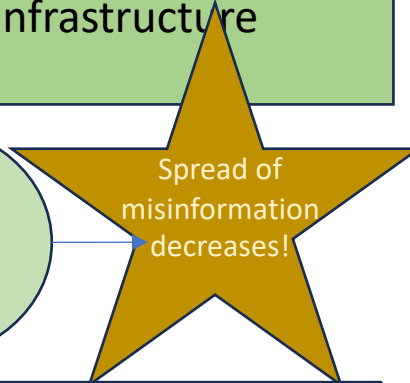
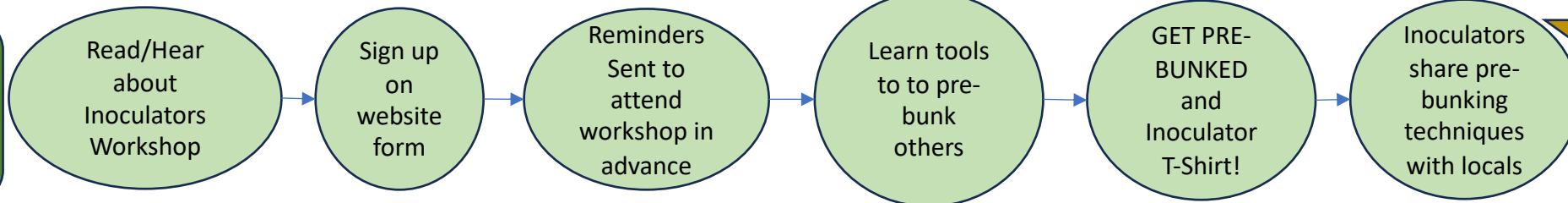
The number of sign-ups for the workshop.
The number of complaints filed to the AEIC



The Inoculators Intervention

DCCEEW will engage with community leaders who will learn pre-bunking techniques that they can use and disseminate to stop the spread of misinformation and disinformation in their local communities. Our proposed intervention achieves two stated interest of DCCEEW: 1) combats misinformation that threatens to derail and delay the clean energy infrastructure transition and 2) promotes through participatory governance through decentralized centralized design.

Community Leader's Journey



Pre-bunking Techniques

Exposing local leaders to **small doses** of clean energy misinformation will inoculate them towards more harmful forms of misinformation (Debunking Handbook). Using a **technique-based approach**, workshops will teach misinformation techniques, enabling leaders to recognize misinformation and stop the spread (Harjani, et al., 2022). Studies support pre-bunking and our intervention includes superheroes and gamification to further cement the learning and techniques.

Leverage Existing Social Networks

By working with local leaders, we leverage existing networks of **trust** between leaders and individuals we hope to inoculate. **Social norms** suggests individuals are most likely to change when confronted by their peers (Mildenberger, 2013). Moreover, utilizing the power of local leaders employs **messenger effects (authority bias)** given that people are more likely to trust authority figures (Milgram, 1963; Favero, et al., 2021). T-Shirts visibly signal the leaders work as social proof based on the social identity theory (Tafjel, 1978).

Local Involvement and Ownership

The **Ikea effect** states that people tend to like things that they expended energy to create (Norton, et al., 2012). By engaging community leaders and the community in confronting misinformation of clean energy infrastructure, we will not only combat misinformation, but create lasting support and cooperation among the regional communities in the REZs. Similarly, the **endowment effect** has been shown to increase value of an item simply by feeling a sense of ownership (Reb & Connolly, 2007).

Reasons For Complaints

The 2022 AEIC report indicates most complaints involved projected wind farms and transmission lines. Respondents' issues centered around visual amenity, community engagement, natural environment, and noise. Noise is an example of misinformation that the Inoculators will learn how to combat.

Community Engagement

Our intervention directly engages with the communities most affected by the transition to clean energy infrastructure and will allow marginalized and under-represented stakeholders a place to voice their concerns and questions. It will create a communication pipeline to and from the federal government (see right).

Pipeline

DCCEEW & Federal Govt

State Governments

Local Leaders

Regional Communities