

The Australia Institute Climate Integrity Summit

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Panel 1 – Ebony Bennett (Chair), The Hon Anthony Whealy KC, Dr Monique Ryan MP, Kieran Pender

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 0:00

On this very important issue, but even though we're not directly involved, we firmly embrace the broad concept of integrity in every aspect of government administration and decision making and that includes on climate policy, and the some of the the aspects that the last big convention, which I agree with entirely, were honesty, transparency, accountability. They're all the things that we come to expect. As aspects of integrity. You know, the net, the anti corruption commission. Now its form is terrific, but it's really just a fallback. It's not really the heart of integrity. It's really a safeguard mechanism, designed to check whether integrity is taking place or not taking place in public administration. So let's not fool ourselves that that's the end of the battle. So we look at government appointments. This is one that we feel really strongly about. We think that appointment making is not impartial. It's not independent. It's not transparent. And it's it's entirely in need of a complete overhaul. We believe that the role of the public service requires, as the daily report said, considerable overhaul it became just an adjunct to government policy and government decisions and lost its capacity to give Frank and fearless advice and that's got to be addressed as well. Another big issue to my way of thinking perhaps the biggest is the influence of big money in in political decision. Making. We all know that donation system at a federal level is entirely uncontrolled. In every major respect, we know that campaign spending spending is unfettered. We know that there's a lack of transparency and what we really what is at the heart of it, is it this evil of large money in donation making is a way in which corporate and private interests get access to government and therefore influence government in their decision making. And don't let's fool ourselves that that doesn't happen. Nobody gives 1000s and 1000s of dollars to government in donations without expecting something in return. I was so stupid that we don't realize that sometimes I think we are and so when I when the donation analysis is made as we come away absolutely gobsmacked to see the capacity for big money to influence government. And I'm sure that that's what's happening. And we are not yet addressing it at all the federal level. We need truth in political advertising. We need strong whistleblower protection in the public sphere. We need particularly to make sure that conflicts of interest are avoided. I recognize first of all, instead of being applauded, I'll probably have something to say more about that in a minute. But the finally let me just say, well, perhaps not perhaps two final things one. The the secrecy surrounding government decision making is appalling. We saw it for years under the coalition government. I don't want to see repeated again, it's so easy to slip into cabinet confidence, all those sorts of things. It's it's depressing, that were shattered shut out from understanding what governments do and why they do and the final thing is our reliance on experts, particularly particularly in the field of climate policy. There are a lot of experts and a lot of experts have got different opinions. And I mean, that can be a good thing that can be verified. But you know, I come from a system of the courts where experts were commonly used, and I became very suspicious of expert evidence. Because what you realize is body a cause an expert, lo and behold, the expert agrees that dynamic party is position and party B does the same thing. What am I making? But these are experts that, you know, I think we have to be very careful in our reliance on experts. Yes, by all means, look at what experts say. But let's not accept things at face value. Let's

just see how how scientific and useful those expert opinions really are. Again, I think that's to do with integrity. It's only a small aspect of integrity, but it's important. Well, there we are.

Ebony Bennett 4:55

Thank you very much, Anthony.

Next up, we have Dr. Monique Ryan MP. She's the independent member for Kooyong. You might famously remember be the treasurer at the last election. We're actually the first woman and first independent ever to hold the seat and was elected on a platform of action on climate change, integrity and government, gender equity and health care. She's also an amazing medical expert, formerly director of the urology department at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. But today we're going to talk to her about climate and integrity. Thank you Doctor Monique Ryan.

Dr Monique Ryan 5:44

so wonderful to be here. And firstly, let me acknowledge that we're on Ngannawal land and the Aboriginal owners. To me, integrity and climate action, two sides of the same coin. If we talk about integrity as being absolutely essential to public perceptions to actions and our success in government. I think we've seen that our actions in response to the climate change crisis has reflected that lack of integrity in public institutions general in recent years. What we're seeing in many cases has been the marketing of misinformation has triumphed science. Obviously there's not been limited to climate. One of my areas of particular interest in frustration in recent years has been global response to COVID. And what we've seen is in our response to COVID, vaccinations and other aspects of pandemic management has been has reflected the fact that people have had an incredible erosion of trust in our institutions. And that's been accompanied, unfortunately, by a really kind of frightening superficiality in the level of public discourse. And by complete loss of bipartisanship and politics and that has been to all of us. I think, at this point, our ability to affect climate change into a state action on it in a in a real way, is going to be very much contingent on our ability to bring the public with us. And that's one of the challenges at a time where the public no longer trust politicians, government, or science. I do think though, that that there's hope. I think that we are at the darkest hour, but the Dark Star or as we as we know, is generally just before dawn. What we have seen in recent years has been that scientists have stepped away from the bench top because they felt compelled to do so and then take them to the streets. We've we've heard indigenous peoples become louder and louder in their in their speech about this issue of now. We've continued to deny them a voice we've seen in electorates like Korea, Makayla Turton, North Sydney Ringu, Brisbane City Center, we've seen communities come together in a way that has been unprecedented in Australia history. I can tell you that encouragement, the thing that drove people to to come and to take action against the government. There are three reasons there are climate, climate, and climate. It was extraordinary. The people who came to help me and I'm not someone I'm not a politician. So take everything upside down. But the President came out incredibly well. Educated, isolated, best educated best looking volunteers in the country. They were people who had never done all of us. None of us have ever done anything like this before. If I heard that expression, one sided 1000 times or 22. So I've never done anything like this before. I felt compelled. And I think many of us we did what we did. Because we we felt the need for change. Last week, I spoke in the

chamber about the voice and I quoted a quote from that kind of wildlife in 1897. He said that Australian history does not read like history. Like the most beautiful lives. And I said it is time for us to tell the truth. We need to do it about response to our first people but also we need to to truth about climate. I'm not a scientist, climate scientists either, but I've learned a lot in the last two years I've had incredible health support from many people who who are experts are on things that I and the other members of the crossbench need to know. And what we do need in this full set of parliament is for people like yourself to work with the crossbench because we have to force the government and the nomination to some form of integrity in his response to climate change, and from now on, I think we have to bring science and we have to bring accountability to our government and all of its dealings and that's what I hope to do in the next three years. Thank you.

Ebony Bennett 10:36

And lastly, we have Karen pinned on who's a senior lawyer at the Human Rights Law Center leading his work in particular on whistleblower protections. He's also an honorary lecturer at the alien College of Law and an award winning journalist please welcome Karen

Kieran Pender 11:00

was never seated and that this is a particularly important year for progress in recognition and reconciliation. I want to begin with a question, which is how do we know about climate harm? How do we know about environmental damage? How do we know about climate inaction? We know about Australia's lack of progress we know about policies that aren't working. We know about damage being caused to our environments and ecosystems because of scientists and researchers, because of journalists and academics, and because of whistleblowers. Brave people who speak up about wrongdoing that they see in their workplace. But what don't we know? I don't think it's hyperbolic to suggest that there are policies that are failing to address climate that we don't know about in efficiencies and failures in our systems. There are regulators that are not fulfilling their functions. And perhaps most alarming of all there are companies that are damaging the environment and damaging their climate and covering it up. So what I wanted to talk about today is how do we empower brave Australians in their workplace who see wrongdoing? To say something, just speak up? And then how do we ensure that those people are protected and empowered, not punished for their bravery? Because unfortunately, far too often in Australia and in other countries, brave people who speak up about wrongdoing. And we've had a bit not in the climate environment context in the last few years a number of horrendous examples you've had delirium, in this case, speaking up about wrongdoing in team or had died from a bride speaking up about war crimes in Afghanistan. We've had Richard Boyle speaking up about wrongdoing at the Australian Taxation Office. And all four of them were prosecuted for their truth telling for their bravery. So in that context, it should be no surprise that far too many Australians who see wrongdoing in their workplace or staying silent. And we don't know about the totality of the climate inaction and harm and environmental damages occurring because brave people are staying silent in the face of those concerns. So it's very well founded concerns. So what do we do about it? I wanted to talk about the current potential the need for greater support for whistleblowers and then the reform possibilities ahead. So to begin with potential notwithstanding those concerns about the current climate around whistleblowers, I do think we are in an era where we'll have more and more people speaking up about climate and environmental harm, and that the existing systems and laws and institutions will

empower them. I think we've reached a tipping point we've seen in recent years we've seen just as towards the end of last year in this Parliament, Andrew Wilkie, using parliamentary privilege to speak up about fraud in coal testing, I think we will begin to see more and more whistleblowers. Everyday people could be any of you who in your workplaces see wrongdoing. See climate impact and choose to speak out when they go to a crossbencher and avail the protection of privilege whether they use federal whistleblowing law or state whistleblowing law to speak up. Even notwithstanding the flaws in current law, both the federal public sector and federal private sector whistleblowing laws, empower people to speak up about wrongdoing, and particularly in relation to environmental harm. So a public servant or a private sector employee could go to the media tomorrow, if they see and have concerns in their workplace about substantial and imminent danger. To the natural environment. Now, there are questions about what that means the extent to which it encompasses climate harm, and so on. But we already have some of the tools we need to protect and empower people to speak up. So we need to actually help them do that. The Human Rights Law Center in the coming months we'll be launching a whistleblowing project where we protect and empower whistleblowers. We give them pro bono legal advice to help them speak up. We've been very fortunate to secure some funding and some pro bono commitments from leading law firms and barristers. To do that. We'll be launching in the coming months that will empower whistleblowers to speak out as safely and lawfully as possible. And we're going to have a focus on climate and environmental. So I think we've seen in recent years, the beginning of a movement of brave people speaking up about climate and environmental harm in their workplaces, and I hope that our project will supercharge that movement. This year, and the years ahead will also be critical for law reform. I was applying laws that aren't working and so we need to fix them. We're going to see public sector reform this year private sector reform hopefully next year. The potential for Whistleblower Protection Authority. There's scope for innovation in the US they have reward schemes for whistleblowers. Imagine if we had a reward scheme for people who spoke up about dodgy carbon credits, carbon credits that were a fraud on the government and a fraud on the population. And what we can unleash if we rewarded people for telling us that it works in the US it will work here. But I think most of all, all of us need to do what we can to protect and empower the brave people who speak up. Because the tale of a whistleblower too often is a tale of loneliness. It's a tale of isolation. So we need to come around and support people to have the courage to speak up and back on doing because that will be a critical aspect of driving climate action.

Ebony Bennett 16:59

So we've had three really interesting perspectives on climate and integrity. Anthony Willie, I just want to give us a bit of a temperature check on where we're at with governance and democracy when it comes to I guess some of the barriers to integrity when it comes to climate change policy. So you spoken a little bit about political donations, which I think often take the headlines, but we've also heard about political appointments in key agencies. And I'm also thinking of things in the legal arena, like harsh anti protest laws, which seem to be very much directed at climate protesters and things like that. So in terms of climate policies, and the barriers to integrity there, what would be some of your key concerns?

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 17:39

Well, I repeat the ones that I mentioned, first of all, perhaps giving them a greater emphasis. You know, I think, I think you start at the beginning and you say, well, whatever your point, the bodies that are there to administer climate policy. There has to be a better system of making sure those people are not just representing the fossil fuel industry to put it flat.

Ebony Bennett 18:05

Yeah, so we've got for example, I know that the climate change authority is chaired by a former gas executive who's also the chair of a very large carbon offset. Developer. You've mentioned earlier some concerns around conflicts of interest. Can you just explain to the audience, the nature of those? Why is that a problem? And I guess, what can we do about it? Well, I

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 18:29

think there are two aspects to this sort of problem. The first is you're going to appoint someone to a position than they will be avowedly out to promote either their own interests or the interests of an allied Association. And that will be obvious to everyone. And they go ahead and do just that. So that's that's a conflict of conflict of interest, working beautifully. And unfortunately, it doesn't happen that often. It's often more subtle. So the deputy is trying to uncover and see that conflict of interest in operation and that's why we have now an anti corruption commission that's sort of soon to be launched. Because it will no doubt be looking, or it may be looking at situations where that type of conflict of interest exists, but it's hard to define. So you've got to dig underneath with special powers to be able to see. But there is I think, a worse situation really. I know, we're not we're not we're not talking about personalities here. But let me assume that in the hypothetical example, you've given me, the head of this body was a person who avowedly says I'm interested in net zero by 2050. I'm interested in reducing carbon emissions. And let's let's assume also this person is himself from all accounts a person of great integrity and well regarded in the commercial world. Nevertheless, the perception that he will be or maybe acting to further those interests will arise and when it does arise, everybody talks about he would defend it to say I'm not and there are plenty of commentators who says this is a terrible thing. And of course, the real problem is how he was appointed because we don't have a proper appointment system. So there isn't there's a perception. And I've had this remark to make about Michelle Wong the other day who took a big donation from the gambling industry. The trouble with that sort of perception of a conflict of interest is it's kind of dug you every step of the way. So that every decision you make, whether it's to do with climate policy or the gambling industry or whatever, even though it might appear to have some good aspects to it. There always be people who could legitimately say there are situations where the fossil fuel industry has been preferred or advantaged and that conflict leads to an absolute distrust on the part of the community in the whole system can tax the real danger of conflicts of interest in government appointments that it brings about a situation where the community deepen their distrust of the political class? I'm sorry. So I think that that, I think, really this question of public appointments, and conflicts of interest can be so easily fixed, of course, you have to have a lot of red tape. Governments don't like red tape. If you've got to have a panel that's truly independent. That will make let's say, make a recommendation of three shortlisted candidates and minister has no discretion to go outside of those candidates. That's what you don't want our thanks for the list, but I've got to make it I think it makes a bunch of evidence.

Ebony Bennett 22:05

Red tape was otherwise known as effective regulation. Exactly.

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 22:09

Exactly.

Ebony Bennett 22:10

protection for the community. My name is Brian, obviously, we've got the safeguard mechanism debate coming out very soon. We've heard some key concerns today. We've also talked about the fact that government's got a lot to do after a decade of inaction. Do you have any concerns around this legislation coming up or the government's approach to making sure that its targets have integrity at the moment with what's facing you in the parliament?

Dr Monique Ryan 22:39

Unfortunately, I think this great cause for concern around the safeguards mechanism like many of the pieces of legislation in this Parliament is equivalent quickly with Although the government has repeatedly about its intention not to muscle debate in the House, it's done that on a number of occasions most egregiously last week with the registration of the rules original processing center that was appalling. I'm still furious that they brought up the recertification and gave us an hour to sit with legislation, gallons an hour to debate it before forcing it through the house. Same thing is going to happen with Syfy to mechanism. A number of us have come up with potential amendments first, but we have been talking about the rules of the debate. In this way. The public interest Disclosure Act is going to put it in upside chamber for a short period of time that debate. There's real concerns about our ability to get through the amendments that we want to push through. Obviously, things are different in the Senate than they are in the house. But even in the Senate. There's a lot of pressure on people to sort of acquiesce to things or to bundle things up or to make compromises that perhaps we're not going

Ebony Bennett 23:55

to make and that Russia is quite counter to how the government has approached things like the secure jobs, better pay, you know, the big jobs roundtable that they had, that was all quite public.

Dr Monique Ryan 24:07

That bill we were given less than a week to look at a bill that was 623 pages long with a 200 page explanation. I mean, it's just incredibly detailed, omnibus bill and, again, you know, the only people who got into the house to talk to us about that with a lobbyist. Yeah. And then you go back to the streets of Paris, and people say, Well, you said you were going to talk to us you're gonna take our opinions to Parliament and the reality was, I didn't have that opportunity. Yeah. So I think there are unfortunately there were concerns about the safeguard mechanism. This is by no means a perfect

piece of legislation. As we've heard, this whole summit that you could drive a contract through and and it's I'm not sure how many changes won't be able to make them the house. Also, the government's being a bit sneaky and thinks that there's a sale, what about this? What about this? What about this, and so that's a great idea, but we'll deal with it when we get to the Senate because they're saving up the bonus to give to the people in the Senate, which is really frustrating. So if and when we get the balance of power

Ebony Bennett 25:19

was saying these are all democratic questions, essentially. And we did see a real sea change in the last federal election here and coming to you next I'm just really struck by the outline that you gave around whistleblower protections and how important that is going to be. It did make me think of the recent kind of the things that we've been hearing about Robo debt. And the way that program went so wrong, not only from the ministerial level, but also within the public service. You talked about the fact that you think this is going to be more and more important as more people come forward, spotting problems. How much does that apply to the public service in itself and its obligations under public service?

Kieran Pender 26:06

Sure, almost every Australian employee has whistleblower protection rights under the law, but public servants have particular rights because the federal public servants have a whole law the public interest Disclosure Act currently being amended in the house and that empowers them to speak up about wrongdoing internally to regulators oversight bodies, and then to the media to MPs to senators, to to anyone really, if things aren't addressed at robodebt, I think was a really vivid example of so many failures on process and all I kept thinking was Why did no one speak up? And I know that there were a few learners here and there and during the Royal Commission, we had a brave person who spoke up internally.

Unknown Speaker 26:52

We have evidence and

Kieran Pender 26:52

went to the secretary. And none of that was her and Robin it's particularly vivid example, but I think, in climate and in a number of areas of government policy, we're seeing this more and more public servants are not comfortable speaking up. And I don't blame them because the laws aren't working and there's a real absence of support. I often say to people, if tomorrow you saw something bad at work where would you go? If you're being underpaid at work, you can go to the Fair Work Ombudsman and you know, if you've been discriminated against you go to the Human Rights Commission. If you want to blow the whistle, you've got nowhere to go there are very few lawyers with this expertise, even fewer who will do it without charging a fortune. So you know, I think our project we're hoping to address that, but much more needs to be done. We need a Whistleblower Protection Authority. The government's committed to a discussion paper on that. But you know, I

think some of these ideas, they're not far fetched and fanciful, so that was about protection authority. They have one in the US they incentivize people blowing the whistle, with monetary rewards because of the toll it takes on people's careers. In the US. If you witness a company defrauding the government, you can actually just sue that company on the government's behalf and the government can choose to take over the case or not and if they don't, in any case, you get a cut of any fine lady. So in the US system, they've deputized lawyers to become anti corruption hunters. And it's worked really effectively we're talking billions of dollars in recovery by whistleblowers using whistleblowing law, our schemes at the moment in Australia don't permit that. And I think that really needs to change. I think the carbon credit context is a really good example where if people dodgy carbon credits are a fraud on all of us. It's a great example where whistleblowers could supercharge an effective regulatory system but at the moment, there is no dedicated scheme for covering whistleblowers, this laws that do protect them a week. I think there's great potential to change and to empower whistleblowers to drive climate action, but we're not there yet.

Ebony Bennett 29:02

We're gonna go to questions from the audience very soon. So if people could make their way to the microphone, if you have a question for our panel, we've got one microphone up here and another one over here. We'll get there very shortly. Anthony really, I wanted to ask you coming back to the national anti corruption body that we now have, and the ideas around trans transparency and accountability and the way that the one of the models I guess, for that has been the New South Wales I CAC and I know in the past, corruption around fossil fuel interests has been the subject of New South Wales aren't CAC investigations. How important is having a mechanism like that that you described as a safeguard? How important is that to exposing publicly when wrongdoing happens in terms of restoring I guess, trust that the center of the process is working, I guess,

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 30:00

when I retired as a judge, almost 10 years ago, I wondered what I would do with my life. I hate golf. And if I can, if I could go went up on Monday. My favorite Mark Twain saying is whatever I feel the need for robust physical exercise. I lie down to the feeling. So there I was, when I found an interest in that was to advocate for a national anti corruption commission and I also got the job for a year on the New South Wales anti corruption commission. And I advocated strongly and have done for all those years and didn't Well about six years. And so I'm committed absolutely to the value of this sort of body and I've particularly committed to the need to have where it's appropriate public hearings. I know this is a very controversial issue. And I know Chris Merrick would never agree with me or most of the writers in the Australian newspaper but I'm absolutely convinced that you need to have public exposure of corruption in order to be effective. And of course, regrettably under the legislation passed in the in the federal parliament, public hearings can only be held in exceptional circumstances. So I think it's a great shame that that limitation, suddenly forced upon all the people who've been advocating for public hearings and apparently with the, with the full approval of the Labour Party, which had, after all, in its platform, espoused a body that would hold public hearings, and as they now say, I will account all public, but I don't know what exceptional circumstances mean, but it's obviously meant to stop. So coming back to the heart of your question, in any issues involving the fraudulent use of sets, and I'm sure that this will come up, then I think I'd be prepared

to say if I were the commissioner, and happily I'm not. I'd be happy to say these are exceptional circumstances. And go ahead and hold the public hearing and let them try and stop. Not

Ebony Bennett 32:33

only the fate of the planet at stake, more exceptional than that. I think we've got some questions up here. Audience

Kieran Pender 32:45

Can you hear me rock? Yep. My name is Richard Weller. I'm a structural engineer expertise in the measurement of extreme events and determining how we use those numbers to design structures for Australia. So my, my concern and I'd like to thank all the speakers until now that would be very interesting. My concern is that you you already alluded to some degree about the lack of education and the misinformation that abounds on climate. And even to the extent where you know, some people that I talk to, they just don't get what the consequences are. Really going to be aware that close to 1.5. There's a whole string of tipping points that will be unstoppable at that temperature. And people just don't understand that and what the implications are for the community. So I suppose what I'm trying to get to is how do we what's the panel's opinion on what the government ought to do to increase the level of understanding in the community? You know, the reason we had elections, the last time the way they were was because we'd had two really big incidents, the major bushfires, that that convinced people and we're not seeing that change in opinion about climate, the fossil fuel industry are winning the war on education. So what would you have the government do,

Ebony Bennett 34:28

Monique? I might throw that one to first. Thanks, Richard.

Dr Monique Ryan 34:33

Well, I think communication is absolutely key. It's so important and there's been so much obfuscation and static in this space, that you know, good people are confused and they don't really understand it and it really does come back to the government to provide the leadership with clear and coherent messaging that will take people with I've been saying this about COVID as well. You know, we need to be positive and give people a sense of hope. Give them a sense of inclusion. In the process. We're doing this together. Yes, it's hard, but it is doable. And we're going to do this this business and this will be there. And it's been great because of not just for you, but for your kids. And yes, there'll be costs in the transition. But this is what we have at the end of it will be things will be cheaper and cleaner and better. Able to start don't understand that I was Australian this morning about the Macintosh in the comments. Extraordinary. People still saying because Don't you understand that carbon dioxide is good for us. So you're never gonna get everyone on around the table. But you just need sort of enough of a majority that people feel comfortable and safe. But that involves trust and to get trust, you have to clear communication. And it's a challenge for the government. I think, I think that we're we are in a much better place than we were eight months ago. Let's face it, but there's a long way to go in that respect.

Ebony Bennett 36:07

If I can just follow up. You said volunteers on your campaign were motivated by climate, climate climate. Was it the black summer bushfires and some of those impacts that we are currently experiencing? That really motivated people on your campaign or different things?

Dr Monique Ryan 36:20

There was a number of different things. And in fact, on my first page, I mentioned the things that people told me that they cared about. They cared about this more being subjected to repeated once in a century of events they cared about the Sunday bushfires, but they cared about extreme weather events everywhere. I was really striking about the fact that people didn't vote for self interest if they had they were voting for the rest of Australia on a whole lot of different things. A lot of things that they could see not affecting just themselves but also the next generation and their grandchildren as well. And people people are cumulatively aware of this. You know, there's extreme weather events. What's happened with New Zealand tweaking discussion. People have this innate sense of anger, rising anxiety about it. But until perhaps resonance, many of us felt that we didn't have a sense of agency. And some of us regain a sense of agency last year.

Ebony Bennett 37:26

Karen or Anthony,

Kieran Pender 37:27

do you want to try me do anything? I mean, that's a great question. It's a complex answer involving sort of robust media ecosystems, regulation of social media platforms, etc. But I think it really underscores the need for truth and the need to empower truth tellers. Because if we can get the truth into the world, and people have to confront that you're not going to change everyone's minds. And might always be some people who will, unfortunately be influenced by the misinformation and disinformation. But if we empower truth, we do the best job we can of persuading people as they need to rapid climate action. I think all of the recent events have motivated a lot of people to one person I know it's night I provided some assistance to was the backside of the fires and seeing the impact that we're having that motivated them to speak up. I'm sure we're gonna continue to hear that tale that what drives people to speak up about climate wrongdoing is the climate inaction and the disasters it's causing.

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 38:25

Just want to just say from a practical point of view, you're not really going to get the best message from the Government, I'm afraid because of the conflicts that I've mentioned. But we've got the new independence and they wish they had more time because you know, you who you are committed to this. And I think your voice in Parliament, just as Alex, who perhaps started in some ways, I think I think that will be important to keep that voice going. And then we've got The Australia Institute.

After all, I mean, there's 300 People here. That's very encouraging. I mean, you should all get out and educate the community. That's what we really need to do, but it's a complex subject. But I think as Polly said, it's, it's complex, but it's simple, really sense. The answers are simple. It's made complex. By people, I think really are trying to confuse us.

Ebony Bennett 39:21

What was that quote about a very good way to hide evil. It's just to get in the middle of something complex.

Unknown Speaker 39:26

If we've got the next question.

Unknown Speaker 39:29

Thank you. Thanks so much. I think actually, my question is probably a really good follow up to what was just touched on so my name is Nico brain. I am currently work for a state government and here and I'm really excited to hear about your initiative coming up. So I could work in the carbon market space at the moment, but my question is actually more to do with community engagement. So basically, before I worked with the state government, I was really involved in community led action and still am. And one thing that has really come through as a theme both with my volunteering work and in the state government, is the involvement of fossil fuel companies sponsoring to get social assets. So from everything looks like nippers, I think probably people have seen that was very public recently, but even company organizations like the WWF I would say, you know, in some ways, very compromised simply because the, you know, customers they have given them funding which was held back from government for a decade. So to my mind, we really have you know, organizations who wouldn't like to take money from big sponsors, but with the way that philanthropy is and also the way with very meager government funding for community led action. I feel that, you know, how do we enable community led action to push back against the temptation to take money from the fossil fuel lobby? I think it really does muzzled people and, you know, it was heartening to hear people for your campaign mynique saying climate climate climate, unfortunately, or fortunately, you know, your electorate is very well off, and so can afford to do these things. And I know definitely there's people I speak to that would love to do more but feel they can't for financial reasons. So I'd love to hear your opinions on and how to enable community people to resist fossil fuel lobby. Karen, do

Kieran Pender 41:14

you want to take that one first? Yeah, good question. multi million dollar question. I suppose. I think the green washing the sports washing, particularly by major fossil fuel companies is deeply problematic. Particularly in sport given this whole sport has on Australian psyche, and that makes it harder as you say for whether it's arts festivals and grassroots communities that run festivals, you know, the Santos Tour Down and the Adani North Queensland Cowboys and so on that has a really corrosive impact not only on the the outfit, the festival, the sports team, but the community and the

fans around them. See that it's entirely different level in Newcastle in England. English Premier League teams purchased by the Saudi Investment Fund and the way that those fans have suddenly used their criticism of Saudi human rights. Similarly, you know, fans off we will send some very brave fans of clubs that are sponsored by larger minutes speaker that many more are concerned. And what do we do about that? I don't really know. I think it was really heartening to see the time government stepped in to sponsor the Australian netball team after Gina Reinhardt and Hancock prospecting withdrew their funding. Jen Reinhardt's views on climate denial are well documented. And so Hancock prospecting is funding of for example with the Australian Olympic team, which is pledged to net zero and signed up to all sorts of green documents and then takes large amounts of money for one of the most influential climate change deniers in Australia. Deeply alarm and how do we stop that? Well, we I guess we empower fans to speak up and use their voice and use their movement. And use their dollars. There also support these teams to try and shift the dial. That's not easy, but that's what

we have to keep doing.

Ebony Bennett 43:21

We heard about kind of fossil fuel donations and sponsorship income from a medical background. We rolled out kind of tobacco advertising for health conferences and things a while back because it taught me did the same with

Dr Monique Ryan 43:35

fossil fuels. Oh, absolutely. And in fact, the medical industry has done come a long way in that respect in recent years. When I first started practicing conferences were very often sponsored by big pharma there's still no but there's much, much more. Why moguls around them. It was interesting last year, when we were new to Parliament, the world invited to the midwinter ball which is a social thing. in Canberra and it was sponsored by Woodside. As across Metro, we talked about you know whether we should go or not some of the students didn't but the point was made that in WA you can't go to the opera. Unless you accept that it's been sponsored by Woodside. You can't go to vision

Unknown Speaker 44:22

every sporting event it's

Dr Monique Ryan 44:23

so everything so you either you can take yourself out of a huge number of things if you don't engage with that if that's a playing football that you're you just won't go there. I think there's an issue with with Capture as capture of the army. Very Jones's recent book you described one of my colleagues in Parliament as being a wholly owned subsidiary of Hancock hospital. There is there is too much craziness. There's no doubt about it. And the problem is you need to be you can't just I don't think we should be limited to fossil fuels. I think that you know, no political party or political entity should

take donations from gambling companies, or tobacco companies, or fossil fuel companies. crossbench has got this incredibly long list of things that we're going to come at, you know, online gambling, advertising of alcohol and phosphates to kids and everything else. Yeah, this the list of things is incredible. So you're going to have to vote in some more crossbenchers. Can't do it all. But it's deeply problematic. But it's entrenched at all of this emphasis on

Ebony Bennett 45:39

Anthony talked about donation.

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 45:41

Sponsorship is really but I mean, starting with political donations, we really need to transform that system. We really have to stop. put a cap on what people can donate, enlarge the definition of donations to make sure that you capture sponsorships and dinners and all that sort of thing. They're not covered federally, and so and we've got to stop, you know, put a really, at federal level, put a cap on what people spend in campaigns we've got to make sure that whatever system we add, encourages new independent candidates to come along. I'm not suggesting we don't do that for a minute. And we've got some thoughts on all of that. But that's what you got to do on the political donation system. You've got to transform and change and stop the money coming in the big money more broadly. I don't know I'm not sure I really agree with Monique. I mean, in New South Wales, we ban donations from Hotel interests and gaming interest. Strangely enough, we allow all registered clubs in New South Wales to donate or whichever over machines so that seems to be odd. But I wonder whether it's not better to transform the system that is to cap the sort of money that could flow and to make it absolutely transparent. You know, it's your ability to say this, this function here that say this, we're all out today is sponsored by Woodside. I mean, the fact that you know that and that you did make a point about the undesirability of that is maybe in some ways, some people would argue better than money. But

sorry, everyone, let the cat out of the way.

Ebony Bennett 47:31

I think we've really got time for two more questions. So we might take one from this side and one from this side. And then I think,

Unknown Speaker 47:38

Oh, thank you so much to all the speakers and panelists for sharing your time and insights and thanks again to antivirus that wonderful welcome to none all country. My name is Steven Pfeiffer, and I'm a climate action donor and advocate and also a member of newly established group, climate capital forum. Spearheaded by the material Bipolars from invest and includes members such as Tim Buckley from the climate energy finance group. We've heard some wonderful comments and insights regarding the lack of integrity in government policies, particularly the upcoming safeguard

mechanism there's been some excellent articles written by Richard Fred and also over renew economy. But one element that seems to be lacking a little bit is well, if there's so many problems with it, which absolutely are, what is good robust policy actually look like what what can we actually point to and say, This is what could be on the table. This is what we could put in place because I think that without that clear indication of what we could be doing or what's possible or what you know, best practice would look like it's it's harder to hold these existing policies to that absolute account. And I think it sort of works in the fossil fuel industry isn't potentially government's favor, if that's not there as well. And particularly the safeguard mechanism that would be wonderful to see what that actually could

Ebony Bennett 49:10

look like. Okay, what does good, robust cloud policy look like? And the question from IBP, please.

Unknown Speaker 49:17

Hi, probably slightly different. I'm an academic working on carbon offset integrity, and Megan Evans, a university in New South Wales in Hamburg. And I guess just a couple of observations that come back to who is an expert and also the role of independent academics and researchers. Anyone can be an expert I think, as Anthony highlighted and just seems that at the moment, who is an expert has been conflated too if you have sustainability officer in your name on LinkedIn, you're apparently argued as credible as someone with 10 years of experience and a PhD in the topic to the point where my colleagues have been derided as opinion holders and commentators. There's also no incentive for us as researchers and academics to comment really on public policy. We don't get promoted on it. It's nice to have, but we're promoted and we get to keep our jobs based on how much inaccessible and unreadable stuff that we publish scientific journals. So it's a conundrum it's a question was not actually a question. It's his house ovation to throw into the mix.

Ebony Bennett 50:29

Thank you very much, Monica, why come to you on what good robust climate policy looks like? And then Anthony, maybe to you on the role of expertise.

Dr Monique Ryan 50:38

So it's being as long as published more than 200 inaccessible this look, I don't know it really great. Karma policy looks like that's a fantastic question. What I would say is, why don't you guys call me. You know, I'm here being reacted to pieces of legislation like the safeguard mechanism. What I've love is the the people who are the experts and who know this stuff, to build it together and then come to people like myself, and take us through and give us the we have the ability to take things forward. I can tell you right now. We don't have the ability to build really big pieces of policy like what you're talking about, but we'd love to work with people who can

Ebony Bennett 51:28

also when learning we didn't have a effective climate policy and didn't reduce emissions, even while the economy grew, but Tony Abbott repealed in a previous parliament, the role of expertise, Anthony,

The Hon Anthony Whealy KC 51:42

very quickly, but I sat next to Tony Abbott on the plane to talk to him.

Look, unfortunately, you know, experts are often chosen because they express the opinions that those who engage them want to express expert research that is wasted Indeed and in between. It's such a shame I wish we could do something about it.

Ebony Bennett 52:23

Karen any final estimations

Kieran Pender 52:26

in relation to what's good climate policy? I'm not a climate experts. I won't comment but I think we need to build integrity into the policy framework. So it's not enough to say okay, we have integrity over here. We have climate policy over here. Every piece of climate infrastructure we're building we need to be sure that we have robust and applicable whistleblower protections oversights, Inspector General's built into the system ways and means for people to speak up their wrongdoing. So that we have a holistic approach and it's not just all the integrity stuff or the kinds of stuff if we integrate them effectively, then both will be better for that.

Ebony Bennett 53:04

And if I could throw in my two cents in my prerogative this chair, there's obviously a million different ways that you can implement a climate policy, but the pretty good standard is does it actually reduce emissions? That's what it's supposed to do. Right. So thank you very much for the questions from the audience. And please give our panel a round of applause.

And it's now time for lunch. It should be up here in the foyer and cafes open as well. We'll see you back here. In an hour. Thank

Unknown Speaker 53:42

you. Very much, everyone. Thank you.