

Why the Energy Transition

- The energy transition has become the field of debate for climate skeptics. As the world has come around to the idea that climate change is happening and is caused by human emissions, now skeptics have turned to fighting the transition to renewable energy.
- These debates, although regularly occurring in public, in our parliaments and media, are increasingly occurring in spaces not often monitored by our existing fact-checking networks (e.g. Social Media, your grandma at the dinner table).
- However, these claims made in the non-public spaces are sourced from larger media and political organisations, which utilise framing effects to influence public opinion.
- With social licence becoming a key factor in the energy transition, ensuring the public has a holistic view of the factors in play will be essential to ensuring a viable democratic system.

Why Australia

- Australia used to be seen as a country leading the way in the energy transition
- However, over the last 20 years, we have fallen behind our compatriots in our climate action.
- Why this has happened is still up for debate.

Why Framing and not misinformation

- While misinformation is an ongoing issue, its detection and debunking can often become contentious in the climate space.
- Often in climate discourse, claims are made about the future, with predictions being made using the best available models, or in the contrarians' case, the model that best fits their worldview.
- This makes checking the veracity of a claim very difficult, as there is no ability to confirm the claims except for a consensus view of the opposite.
- Take, for example, when Peter Dutton released his plan for nuclear power. The costings were frequently criticised, but supporters were able to hide behind the fact that these are merely predictions and therefore cannot be verified.
- In contrast, a framing analysis will provide the ability to detect contrarianism by isolating bias and one-sidedness in their support.
- By not worrying about the issue of veracity, we skip the difficult task of verification.

What we need to be able to find

- We are assuming that media organisations, politicians, and people of influence are using framing effects to influence public opinion around the energy transition.
- The goal of this project is to fill the role of the first step in an intervention pipeline (the detect stage in the 4D framework ([Cook 2024](#))) that will be able to counter these framing effects.

RQs

What were the Overton window shifting debates in the last 20 years?

Hypothesis

We have become more polarised in our debates around energy, with both the left and the right creating support for and against renewables in their takes. However, I believe that the right has been more aggressive in their ‘window shifting frames’, while the left has had a more gradual shift.

Why does this need the rig

The rig is able to quantify the Overton window quite explicitly by looking at the elements of an argument that are ‘outside’ the norm of discussion. By looking through a massive corpus of text, we are able to identify the ‘first’ instances of new debate areas and then isolate those moments.

What is the impact

This will allow us to identify when strides are made in the anti-renewable space. This could help us determine who, when, and in which direction the window is shifting, which is important for identifying who these key actors are (in a quantifiable sense).

How can we test this

Realistically, I think this can be done with the parliamentary speeches, as this will be a good opportunity to identify the specific moments that something came into the ‘political sphere of conversation’.

This will miss some of the broader conversation. Similarly, I do think that sometimes conservative talking points start in the media and think tanks and then move to Parliament later, so I don’t want to miss them.

What topics are contentious and safe and how have they changed over time?**Hypothesis**

Although the debate is highly polarised, there are areas of agreement amongst the sides and areas of contentiousness. I also believe that the sides don’t debate on the contentious issues and simply frame their content to match what they want they know isn’t debatable.

eg. labour will say that renewables are cost effective then liberals will rebut this by saying that they are unreliable. They are debating on different dimensions which are ‘safe’, making it hard to come to a compromise.

Why does this need the rig

The Overton window style of the rig will allow us to quickly see what dimension-infrastructure pairs have a broad distribution (contentious) and which ones have a narrow distribution (safe). This can be done at scale and quickly.

What is the impact

This will allow for targeted interventions for these contentious issues, while avoiding flogging a dead horse by providing more pro-renewable interventions in these quantified areas of contention.

How can we test this

This would again be a question of where these debates are occurring. I think that politicians have a good role to play here, but again political commentators, think tanks and journalists all take a large part in the debate. This could be ‘twitterised’ as well, but I don’t want to fall into the using twitter just because it is easy.

I think it would be cool to then also compare these to climate research and white papers (there is a available dataset for this already).

How can this ‘rig’ function as an input to a larger system for generating interventions?**Hypothesis**

I think that the ‘rig’ would be an effective tool for the ‘detect’ stage of the 4d framework. I think this statistical reasoning approach is going to be more accurate than the comparable LLM/Black Box approach.

Why does this need the rig

The 4d framework outlines what a detection method needs. The requirement for early intervention means that these automated methods are extremely effective.

What is the impact

Better functioning automated interventions. Climate Genie 2.0

How can we test this

CARDS was the SOTA for the specific task they were performing. Comparing the rig’s ability to identify contrarianism to a ROBERTA model. The data we will need for this is most likely a labelled dataset, either done by me or by combining some data from CARDS and MFC.

Why can’t we just do this by hand

- The method proposed in this document focuses on transitioning away from the use of human experts to perform the framing analysis.
- This step is intentional, as humans have become a bottleneck in the intervention timelines.
- Before the prevalence of the internet, there were a limited number of sources of misinformation. When one of these sources made a misleading statement, another could read it and request a correction or publish a counter-narrative.
- Now, there are too many places where information can be sourced for media organisations to hand-check the claims that are being made.

Cook, J. 2024. “The 4D Framework: A Holistic Approach to Countering Climate Change Misinformation.” In *The Companion to Development Studies*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429282348-54>.