

The Influence of Key Political Actors on Labor Government Climate Change Policy

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Abstract

The threat of anthropogenic climate change is arguably the defining issue of the 21st Century. Climate change has devastating global implications to which various authorities worldwide have responded by declaring a climate crisis. Australia, however, has neglected to address this issue. The Liberal-National Coalition, which has almost exclusively held government since John Howard was elected Prime Minister in 1996, maintains its scepticism on anthropogenic climate change despite international scientific consensus. It established Australia as a climate laggard, a reputation which was suspended for a brief period of Australian Labor Party (ALP) Government from 2007-2013. Despite the promise of a progressive government, attempts at climate change mitigation by the ALP were also criticised for their weak targets and generous financial concessions that primarily benefitted the nation's biggest polluters. The inconsistencies between the actions and rhetoric of the ALP, which under Rudd proclaimed climate change as the 'greatest moral challenge of our generation' have raised the question of whether there were other actors infiltrating this government. This paper examines the role of key political actors in shaping Labor Government climate policy. Specifically, it investigates the undue influence of vested interests, understood as interest groups which conflate their self-interest with that of the nation. It finds the mining industry is the most powerful opponent of climate policy. Australian Government climate policy has typically addressed the symptoms of climate change rather than the root of the problem. The mining industry has taken advantage of this tendency, utilising the ALP's ecological modernisation policymaking framework to minimise the impact of emissions-reduction policy on its bottom-line. The undue influence of powerful interest groups has resulted in a climate policy that supports the growth of the carbon-economy, favours business-as-usual and fails to address the damaging corporate practices of emissions-intensive industries.

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| ACTU | Australian Council of Trade Unions |
| AIGN | Australian Industry Greenhouse Network |
| ALP | Australian Labor Party |
| AMWU | Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union |
| ARENA | Australian Renewable Energy Agency |
| AWU | Australian Workers' Union |
| AYCC | Australian Youth Climate Coalition |
| CEFC | Clean Energy Finance Corporation |
| CFMEU | Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union |
| CPRS | Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme |
| EM | Ecological Modernisation |
| ENGO | Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation |
| ER | Economic Rationalism |
| ERT | Emissions Reduction Target |
| ETS | Emissions Trading Scheme |
| LEAN | Labor Environment Action Network |
| LNP | Liberal-National Party |
| NFP | Non-For-Profit |
| SD | Sustainable Development |
| TWU | Transport Workers' Union |

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¹ The CFMEU merged with the Maritime Union of Australia and the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia in March of 2018. It is now known as the Construction, Forestry, Mining, Maritime and Energy Union (CFMMEU)(Wright 2018).

1. Introduction

A. Introduction

The threat of anthropogenic climate change is arguably the greatest long-term challenge to the future prosperity of Australia. This global wicked problem has already had grand social, economic and security implications such that various authorities worldwide have declared a climate crisis.² Despite the acute vulnerability of the unique Australian landscape and biodiversity to the adverse effects of climate change (Commonwealth 2009), the nation's response has not been of the same caliber as its neighbours.³ It was reprimanded by host-island Tuvalu and other regional allies at the Pacific Islands Forum of August 2019 for its poor commitment to combatting climate change. Forum leaders agreed that no amount of adaptation funding for the region can compensate for Australia's failure to cut emissions (Lyons 2019).⁴ This criticism, however, has fallen on deaf ears - specifically those of current Coalition Prime Minister Scott Morrison who once brandished a lump of black coal in Parliamentary Question Time to slander the Australian Labor Party (ALP) Opposition for apparently inciting coal-o-phobia in the electorate (Murphy 2017).⁵

The climate policy decisions of the Australian Government today will determine the nation's future emissions trajectory for the next fifty years. Current federal climate policy has placed Australia on a course of inaction. Amidst a climate change debate dominated by coalition and industry fuelled scepticism since the Howard Government in 1996, the brief period of progressive Australian Labor Government from 2007-2013 remains the most stringent in the recent history of federal climate politics. The Australian Labor Government defined climate change as the 'greatest moral challenge

² Climate change is a wicked problem because it does not have one definition or a simple solution. It is a scientific, environmental, human, political, economic and religious problem (O'Brien 2017).

³ The Great Barrier Reef has suffered coral bleaching and erosion due to its acidification and the increase in ocean carbon (GBRF 2019). Rural Australia is plagued by the worst super drought in more than a century (Marinelli 2019), resulting in the loss of produce, livestock and livelihoods for farming communities.

⁴ Liberal-National Coalition Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, pledged \$500 million over 5 years in climate resilience and adaptation funding for the Pacific at the Pacific Islands Forum (Lyons 2019).

⁵ Then Treasurer of the LNP Coalition, Scott Morrison toted a lump of coal in parliament in 2017, celebrating it as the future to the nation's energy and reprimanding the Opposition's coal-o-phobia (Murphy 2017).

of our generation' (Rudd 2007) and implemented a price-based emissions-trading scheme which effectively facilitated the largest recorded drop in emissions in over a decade (Gillard 2014:392). However, it also suffered criticisms based on policy insufficiency.

This study aims to understand the influence of political actors in Labor Government climate policy. It identifies the interest groups that occupy the political arena on climate change and the various tactics they use to exert influence. It argues the mining industry is a powerful vested interest capable of manipulating the Labor Government's ecological modernisation (EM) policymaking framework to suit its emissions-intensive objectives. A mixed methods approach using elite interviews and Australian Labor Party National Platforms is used to deduce the influence of interest groups. This study finds that the undue influence of vested interests must be neutralised if political parties are to engage in real and just action against climate change.⁶

The remainder of this introduction reconstructs a timeline of Australian Labor Government between 2007 and 2013. Then it discusses the climate election in 2007 where the decisive issue of climate change was used by the ALP as a political tool to win government. It also discusses the more recent climate election in 2019 which failed to deliver the same electoral success for the ALP. Finally, it touches on the role of coal in Australia's emissions-intensive economy and the barriers in the way of a sustainable energy transition. Chapter 2 discusses the existing academic literature on the state of the climate change debate which has become a culture war of values, culture and ideology in Australia. The literature review also discusses current understandings of interest groups and energy system transformation. Chapter 3 explains the mixed methods research design using data from elite interviews and ALP National Platforms. Chapter 4 states the quantitative results from the ALP National Platforms, followed by a semantic analysis of the environmental content. Chapter 5 states the qualitative results from the elite interviews, followed by an inductive analysis of the patterns which emerge from the data. Finally, Chapter 6 provides an analysis and discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

⁶ The justice lens is an important framework for the Australian Labor Party, discussed in Chapter 4. The ALP's understanding of climate change as 'the greatest moral challenge' is exemplary of this. As a social democratic party, the ALP aims to promote social justice.

B. Timeline

The Labor Opposition led by Kevin Rudd defeated the Howard Coalition Government in 2007 after eleven years of Liberal-National (LNP) leadership. The issue of climate change had been a major topic of debate that differentiated the ecologically progressive ALP from its 'out-of-touch' opponent and ultimately contributed to its landslide victory (Gascoigne 2008). Under the ALP Government, climate change was to be addressed as 'the great moral challenge of our generation' (Rudd 2007), however, climate change action during the following two terms under Rudd, Gillard and Rudd again did not generate the policy change promise of this claim. The Rudd Government in 2010 chose to shelve its central emissions quantity regulation incentive, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), rather than call a double dissolution election following the scheme's repeated rejection in the conservative-dominated Senate. The Clean Energy Act (2011) introduced by the Gillard Government was first reframed by the LNP as a 'carbon tax' and later legislatively repealed by the LNP when Tony Abbott took office in 2013.

Within a six year period, two internal leadership challenges took place and not one of the ALP climate change mitigation policies stuck. The succeeding LNP Government repealed the Clean Energy Act, abolished the Climate Commission and defunded the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC)(Talberg, Hui and Loynes 2016).^{7,8} Rather than 'forge a national consensus on climate change' (Rudd 2007), the Labor Government from 2007-2013 earned a reputation for policy failure on climate change mitigation. Attempts at explaining ALP failure have suggested its policies were symbolic, not practical, (Crowley 2012; Ferguson 2009; Gascoigne 2008; Macintosh 2008; Taylor 2014), driven by economic imperialism rather than science and social welfare (Macintosh 2008; Pearse, R. 2016 and 2018; Rickards et al. 2014), and dominated by the influence of vested interests (Allern and Bale 2012; Christoff 2013; Garnaut 2008; Macintosh et al. 2010; Pearse, G. 2009; Tangney 2019).

⁷ The Climate Commission (2011-2013) was designed to provide independent expert advice and information on climate change to the public (Talburg et al. 2016).

⁸ The Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) was a \$10 billion fund dedicated to clean energy investment established in 2012. The Coalition Treasurer ordered the CEFC to cease investments in 2013 (Talburg et al. 2016).

C. Climate Change Election

Ahead of the 2019 federal election, political forecasts predicted its outcome would depend on the climate change policy platforms of the major parties. News media outlets observed that environmental debate dominated over traditional issues such as border security and the cost of living (Bedo 2019). The election campaign shaped the 2019 federal election into a 'climate election' in response to the series of natural disasters which took place the previous year, including fires, floods and the worst super drought in over a century (Whiteman 2019). This is not the first instance when climate change featured as a central election issue. Climate change was previously labeled 'the decisive issue' in 2007 (Gascoigne 2008; Rootes 2008). Gascoigne (2008) and Rootes (2008) examine the extent to which the issue of climate change defined the 2007 federal election. Both agree it had a significant impact on the election outcome, and further demonstrate how the issue was used as a political tool. Rootes highlights a clear break made from the climate politics of the Howard Government, which Gascoigne also argues was used as a proxy to exploit the policy discomfort of the Coalition. To an extent, climate change was a means for the ALP to differentiate itself (Gascoigne 2008:523). In 2019, the rigorous climate policy platform on which the ALP staged its campaign did not deliver electoral success. As a result, the concern with climate change as the 'leading threat to Australia's vital interests' held by 64% of Australians has since gone unaddressed (Lowy Institute 2019; Kassam 2019; Murphy 2019).

D. The Role of Coal

Although no economic or technological barriers exist in the way of a sustainable energy transition (Slezak 2017), the legacy of coal as our natural competitive advantage, 'key to Australia's future', still persists (Pearse, G. 2009:26). Approximately 85% of the domestic energy supply is sourced from fossil-fuels and coal is the nation's single largest export (DEE 2019). These statistics showing the nations' coal-dependence featured in mining industry rhetoric which argued that a sustainable energy transition would result in the systemic failure of the energy market (Pearse, R. 2016a:325).

The mining industry has typically stood in opposition to ALP Government mitigation policy, successfully lobbying for exemptions and compensation to safeguard against mine closures and job losses expected to 'unravel the national electricity market' (Pearse, R. 2016a:325). Its crisis rhetoric exaggerates the role that the mining industry plays in the Australian economy, which employs only 2% of the labour force and contributes less than 10% to the national gross domestic product (ABS 2019a; ABS 2019b; Pearse, G. 2009:12).

Opponents of rigorous climate policy often cite the apparent insignificant Australian contribution to global greenhouse gas levels as a justification for weak action (Pearse, G. 2009:78; MacDonald 2019). The strength of the Labor Government's emissions reduction target (ERT) under the CPRS was contingent on 'global agreement where all major economies commit to substantially restrain emissions and all developed countries take on comparable reductions to that of Australia' (DEE 2019). The ERT was set at 15% below 2000 levels if this condition was met, or 5% otherwise. Australia is responsible for less than 2% of global emissions (Talberg 2013). This figure does not include emissions produced by the nation's coal-exports or take into account that the Australian population constitutes only 0.3% of the global total (McDonald 2019). This means Australia is the highest per capita carbon-emitter of all OECD countries in the developed world and amongst the highest worldwide (Garnaut 2008:53). Therefore, the misperception that Australia's less-than-2% contribution to global emissions is small or insignificant does not excuse the government from its international emissions-reduction obligations. Global agreement and comparable reduction targets should not qualify as necessary conditions against weak emissions-reduction targets in Australia.

2. Literature

A. Climate Change Culture War

Within Australia, the issue of climate change is the subject of a culture war. The climate change culture war is a contest of values, culture and ideology between the neoliberal right-wing and environmentalist movements (Ferguson 2009; Taylor 2014). Despite international scientific consensus, social understandings of climate change are divided along political ideological lines. Australian political parties perceive climate change using competing worldviews constructed historically through language, party ideology and partisanship.

This political climate change culture war is relatively new. Prior to the 1990s, a strictly scientific approach was promoted in bipartisan politics and by the news media (Taylor 2014:xiii). Then dominantly referred to as the greenhouse effect, it appeared as though Australia might even lead the way internationally in climate change mitigation policy, with a 20% emissions reduction target on 1988 levels by 2005 established under Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke (xii). Taylor (2014) documents how the fossil-fuel industry used political framing and the media to subvert the scientific discourse to suit its economic interests.⁹ According to her, this is the origin of the climate change culture war. She summarises the political history of the climate change debate over the past 20 years as 'a tale of power, profit and eventual willingness to accept social and economic change, falling back on traditional beliefs and values through language' (171).

While the fossil-fuel industry is largely to blame for the current state of the climate change debate, the LNP has played a significant role in fuelling the climate change culture war - and many others. The Howard Coalition Government constructed numerous culture wars throughout its eleven-year term on various issues ranging from Aboriginal self-determination to the non-nuclear family (Ferguson 2009:289,291). Prime Minister John Howard was known to cite his 'gut feeling' on the integrity of climate science which he believed was being used as a 'substitute for religion', (Ferguson 2009:296; Howard 2013). Howard's intuition and the LNP's anti-environmentalism were

⁹ Please note the subtitle of the book, 'Global Warming and Climate Change: What Australia knew and buried... Then framed a new reality for the public', by Maria Taylor (2014).

backed by industry-sponsored studies undertaken by veteran 'experts' once involved in discrediting the scientific findings on tobacco and asbestos (Pearse, G. 2009:35). Liberal-National Coalition climate policy was governed by three pillars; inaction on mitigation and adaption, voluntary beneficiary-pays programs and the protection of emissions-intensive industries (Macintosh 2008:51). The anti-environmentalist ideology born under the Howard Government still persists two decades later. More than half of the LNP members continue to deny accepted scientific reality (Patrick 2017).¹⁰ The climate change culture war is a weapon in the political arsenal of the LNP. It has become a standard feature of the political environment in Australia and defines the adversarial nature of climate mitigation policymaking.

The tendency for right-wing politicians to approach climate change with scepticism and denial can be understood as a feature of a conservative worldview. Jost et al. (2003) in Fielding et al. (2012) offer System Justification Theory as an explanation for this phenomena. This psychological theory argues that conservative ideologies are resistant to change and support the existing order (714). The existing order privileged by the Liberal Party is based on a neoclassical orthodoxy that values the immutable economic tropes of individual rationality and consumer sovereignty (Lewis 2018). According to this logic, climate change is incompatible with the LNP's conservative ideology as it demands systemic change and disrupts the existing socio-economic order. The carbon-economy, based in agriculture, fossil-fuel power generation and energy-intensive manufacturing in Australia, was of primary concern to the Howard Coalition Government from 1996-2007 (Macintosh 2008:56). Industry stakeholders found their political and financial interests were at risk from environmentalist demands for immediate action to reduce emissions and combat this urgent, wicked problem. Conflict between the need to mitigate climate change and simultaneously satisfy industry stakeholders led the Coalition to adopt a sceptical, and even denialist, approach to climate change. This acted to preserve the LNP's conservative worldview and further frame international calls-to-action such as the Stern Review (2006) as 'Eurocentric propaganda', (Howard in Macintosh 2008:66).¹¹

¹⁰ An informal estimate by the Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs, John Roskam, claimed that more than half of Liberal Members of Parliament are solid sceptics of climate science (Patrick 2017).

¹¹ The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (2006) is a report by Economist Nicholas Stern commissioned by the Government of the United Kingdom.

The climate change culture war is a function of ideology. It is driven by spin which manipulates internationally-accepted scientific truths to fit the reigning narrative of energy politics in Australia lead by the Liberal-National Coalition, Minerals Council of Australia and mining and energy lobbies. The narrative in question celebrates the mine and 'King Coal' as key to future energy prosperity (Pearse, G. 2009:28), and in so doing, creates immense social uncertainty on climate activist movements and the virtue of emissions reduction. Ferguson (2009) theorises that this uncertainty is cultivated by the 'Australian New Right' using the culture war tropes of anti-elitism, political correctness and an Australian/un-Australian binary (131). Within Australia, the 'New Right' refers to the Liberal-National Party and is embodied in its economically liberal and socially conservative politics. The LNP under the Howard Government was largely responsible for the anti-environmentalist culture war; discursively, it employed a 'deficit model' discourse based on the belief that no amount of scientific evidence can ever be conclusive on what climate change means for Australia (Tangney 2019:131). Ferguson argues, based on his discourse analysis' findings, that political framing acts to discredit the environmental movement in order to legitimise socially and ecologically destructive corporate practices (2009:289).

Stegmann and Ossewaarde (2018), who also use discourse analysis, theorise that 'historical blocs' use the myth of sustainable development to reinforce existing power relationships. They argue that hegemonic discourse coalitions of government, non-government and corporate actors employ the green growth paradigm to suit the interests of their stakeholders. Based on reorienting economics to resolve social and environmental challenges, this paradigm benefits the coal-dominated energy sector in Australia by decoupling growth from environmental degradation (2018:25,26). Ultimately, green growth is still growth, and nowhere does this discourse acknowledge that fossil-fuel industry expansion is not compatible with environmental protection or sustainability. Either example of discursive framing demonstrates the pervasiveness of political spin in the climate change debate. The threat of climate science and advocacy to the energy politics narrative in Australia has aroused a hostile discursive response from those whose interests are threatened.

Ecological modernisation argues the economy would benefit from a move to environmentalism. Like green growth, it seeks to make capitalism sustainable (Curran 2009:203). The EM paradigm is discussed by Christoff (2000) in relation to the extent its weak application favours economic gain, on one side of the spectrum, or contrarily, the environment as the polar-opposite strong alternative. Weak EM measures are narrow, national, hegemonic, instrumental and technocratic or closed (Christoff 2000:222). This 'weakness' refers to the ability of EM measures to deliver lasting ecologically sustainable transformations. Strong measures, in contrast, are primarily systemic. These approaches are problematic because they fail to address underlying systemic problems. They fail to address the damaging corporate practices which cause anthropogenic climate change. Weak EM and green growth deliver incremental change that has little to no effect on the economy. It allows the business-as-usual responsible for environmental degradation to persist. Therefore, climate policy dictated by weak EM and green growth has only a superficial ecological reach.

The climate change culture war has typically been documented as a discursive tool used by the centre-right LNP against its 'climate-friendly' Opposition (Macintosh, Wilkinson and Dennis 2010:200). This coincides with the trend of polarisation on the importance of climate change action which has consistently split Labor and the Greens in favour and the Liberals/Nationals against (Fielding, Head, Laffan, Western and Hoegh-Guldberg 2012:712). Survey data collected by Fielding et al. (2012) concludes that partisanship and party ideology are determinant factors of politicians' beliefs on climate change. The study of state and federal members of parliament and local government authorities finds that political party leaders strive for policy distinctiveness, resulting in a left/right partisan split on action against climate change. This policy distinctiveness was evident during the ALP opposition campaign ahead of the 2007 federal election wherein leader Kevin Rudd used climate change to differentiate from the 'out of touch, old, complacent, and still embroiled in yesterday's issues' Prime Minister, John Howard (Gascoigne 2009:523; Tranter 2011).

The political elite are not alone in their polarisation. Tranter (2011) observes that the electorate echoes the political views of its party leaders, indicating that partisanship is a strong predictor of public concern on climate change. He argues that cues provided by party leaders have a 'simplifying function' for the public to make sense of complex political issues (2011:81,92). Tranter

operationalises existing data from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes and the Australian Election Study to uncover individual determinants, such as gender, education and social class, that coincide with climate change attitudes (2011:80). Tranter suggests that climate change is subject to routinisation, meaning it becomes normalised within politics and addressed in a habitual manner - in this case via a polarised partisan split (2011:80). Consequently, the adversarial drama between neoliberal right and socially progressive left has been institutionalised in the place of scientifically technocratic bipartisan attempts at mitigation policymaking.

While the climate change culture war is predominately documented as occurring along party lines, an alternative body of literature disputes this partisan split. It questions the integrity of the ALP's commitment to combatting climate change, claiming that ecocentric efforts at mitigation have been discarded in favour of bipartisan market-oriented reform (McDonald 2013; Miller and Orchard 2014; Pearse, R. 2016a). This perspective is critical of neoliberal action on climate change and its discursive variations, such as green growth, green economy and ecological modernisation.¹² Whilst neoliberal approaches are the historical standard, it argues that both price and quantity emissions-regulations have been means to greenwash business-as-usual and have entrenched the nation's coal dependence. Capitalist solutions to the climate crisis have attempted to depoliticise environmental policymaking using the economic reductionist logic of least cost opportunities (Bryant 2016:878) and thus downplay the activism of environmental movements. In a critical approach to the political economy of coal governance, R. Pearse (2016a) argues that governments develop climate policy in a manner that serves to protect energy-intensive activities. She draws attention to the limitations of neoliberal climate policy: it treats the symptoms but overlooks the disease such that mitigation policy fails to address the underlying contradictions of energy markets and sustainability in Australia. Simply put, an emissions-intensive market-based economy does not, and cannot, coincide with the objectives of environmental preservation.

Attempts by the Rudd Government in 2008 and the Gillard Government in 2011 to implement emissions trading and carbon pricing resulted in failure. Both schemes were based on weak national emissions reduction targets, further offset by billions of dollars in subsidies to emissions-

¹² These concepts are discussed on pages 12, 13 and 29.

intensive industries.^{13,14} Both supported emissions-intensive accumulation and both were eventually shelved or repealed. The apparent inadequacy of ALP climate change policy demonstrates that, despite the discursive contest and corresponding trend of partisanship on climate change, this 'progressive' party is not as climate-friendly as it appears. Further studies on the failure of so-called 'progressive' climate politics by McDonald (2013) and Miller and Orchard (2014) reach normative conclusions: progressives must address unsustainable consumption and move beyond short term considerations of economic growth if the Australian Government is to engage in meaningful climate policy.

The climate change culture war in Australia is characterised by loaded rhetoric featuring values and ideology in the place of scientific consensus. Policy that has eventuated from this debate has failed to undermine the coal hegemony; rather, it has supported emissions-intensive accumulation through neoliberal instruments such as market nonintervention, reductionist approaches to externalities and a myopic view of the future (Rickards, Wiseman and Kashima 2014:758). Despite the documented party-specific, partisan and ideologically driven polarisation on climate change, the respective climate policies of the progressive left ALP and neoliberal right LNP both prioritise the emissions-intensive economy. Although parties strive for policy distinctiveness, market-based mitigation remains the institutionalised standard. Regardless of party alignment, political leaders have retreated from genuine climate change action such that even the 'climate-friendly' ALP has facilitated the interests of emissions-intensive industries through its feeble climate policy. Anti-environmentalist rhetoric and market-based policies by both major parties have rendered vested interests the ultimate beneficiaries of climate policy in Australia. Rather than protect against dangerous climate change, policies rooted in the discursive political culture war and bipartisan neoliberalism act to stimulate the carbon economy.

¹³ An emissions trading scheme (ETS) is a market-based approach to reducing greenhouse gasses by capping emissions and creating tradable pollution permits (Sandbag 2011).

¹⁴ A carbon price, or carbon tax, is a market-based approach to reducing greenhouse gasses by setting a direct price on carbon-emissions (Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition 2019).

B. Interest Groups

Cooperation between interest groups and political parties is intrinsic to the contemporary Australian political party system. Groups must foster cooperation if they are to achieve their policy objectives. As policymaking power is concentrated amongst ministers and senior civil servants, the executive branch of government is typically the primary target of interest group influence. Interest groups use a combination of insider and outsider mechanisms to influence those with decision-making power (Halpin and Fraussen 2018).

An interest group is understood as a collective membership organisation which seeks to influence public policy (Halpin 2015:103). Without direct policy-setting capacity, groups must instead influence politicians, political parties and the electorate by means of insider politics to achieve their objectives (103). Discussing the relationship of interest groups to political parties in the Australian political system, Halpin (2015) asks, 'are they still in the shadows?' He is responding to the Shadow Thesis initially proposed by Matthews and Warhurst (1993) which contends that interest group involvement in politics is contingent on strong parties. The adversarial nature of party politics shapes the access, opportunities and strategies employed by interest groups, therefore they 'operate in the shadows' (Matthews and Warhurst 1993:82). Halpin's Alternative Thesis disputes the relevance of this view in a contemporary cartelised political system where adversarial programmatic contest is no longer the norm. He finds that the professionalisation of political parties has reduced their ideological distinctiveness, thereby reducing the importance of group affiliations (2015:109). Managerial effectiveness rather than group solidarity is central to the electoral race. This argument echoes that of Allern and Bale (2012), who note that the deterioration of formal relations does not preclude these autonomous organisations from instead cultivating informal ties. The short answer to Halpin's question regarding the nature of interest group and political party relations - 'are they still in the shadows?' - is insider politics. Halpin and Fraussen (2017) study internal processes with the aim of understanding the role of interest groups in public policy agenda setting. They find that informal relations are the groundwork for collaborative governance, noting how economic interests are realised through the maintenance of personable relations over time rather than the deployment of campaign-style techniques (2017:18). Further findings by Rickards

et al. conclude that groups act as 'trusted advisors' whilst reinforcing their self-serving responses (2014:756). They note, in a study of senior decision makers in politics, that groups shape the policy platform by expressing their concerns using the dominant discourse of the party in question (766). Therefore, interest groups are able to exercise autonomy in their approach to shaping public policy, and in doing so, hold influence over policymaking.

The discourse on vested interests relates to interest groups. 'Vested interests' is a floating term with no fixed meaning often used to denote actors who stand to benefit from the maintenance of the status-quo, especially those with financial stakes in certain outcomes. This term emerges throughout various disciplines but is rarely explicitly defined. The working definition used by former ALP Treasurer and Deputy Leader, Wayne Swan, is the most relevant to this study. Writing about the concentration of wealth amongst the 0.01%, Swan warns of the threat to social democracy posed by so-called 'vested interests'. He reflects on the objectives of big business and industry, referring to groups that characteristically misrepresent their self-interest as that of the nation (Swan 2012).

Within the climate change discourse, vested interests are addressed by various scholars including Macintosh, G. Pearce, R. Pearce, Rickards, and Taylor. In her book on how public understandings of climate change in Australia transformed from informed consensus to confusion in the 1990s, Taylor (2014) observes that fossil-fuel industries have penetrated climate politics. G. Pearce (2009), writing about the belief that the nation's greatest asset is its mineral resources, goes one step further to identify specific vested interests affiliated with the ALP: amongst those implicated are the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), the Transport Workers' Union of Australia (TWU), the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (AIGN) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). Trade unionism and emissions-intensiveness are shared characteristics of the interest groups identified, however, they are not the only features of so-called vested interests. G. Pearce points to these actors to expose the 'shadowy world of carbon lobbyists' (2009:blurb) and is not alone in his suspicion of their intentions. The Garnaut Climate Change Review (2008), which outlined recommendations for the Rudd Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme,

also warned of the undue influence of vested interests, specifically on the design of the emissions trading scheme and its resulting poor policy outcomes. These scholars collectively warn against vested interests which conflate their self-interest with that of the nation.

The two-party tradition of the Australian political party system has facilitated close ideological affiliation between interest groups and political parties on either side of the left-right split (Halpin 2015:107). For the ALP, cooperation with trade unions is characteristic of its institutional structure, having itself originated from a workers movement. Its affiliated trade unions, which are also typically factionally aligned, are drivers of internal politics within the party (Economou 2015:13). Economou (2015) examines the consolidation of modern factionalism within the ALP to determine whether it is democratic, oligarchic or polyarchic in structure. He finds it is a study of polyarchy, citing as evidence the existence of many centres of power controlled by 'faceless men' who exert influence from behind the scenes. Economou argues that contemporary factionalism is motivated by power rather than ideology thereby resulting in cartel politics.^{15,16} Historically recurring divisions over ideology, structure and policy demonstrate the difficulty of appeasing interests within the party.¹⁷ These interests, while diverse and contentious, must appear united at election time if it hopes to 'catch-all' of the electorate. As a result, factionalism within the ALP tends toward cartelisation due to the increasing depoliticisation of the party, its resistance to internal reform and the concentration of government resources with powerful factions (Economou 2015:5; Reece 2015).

Party-group relations are often discussed with regard to the trend of union membership decline and a subsequent distancing of union groups from the party (Economou 2012). Contrarily, G. Pearse

¹⁵ The term 'faceless men' was coined by journalist Alan Reid, referring to the ALP Federal Executive which decides the platform for government. The term describes individuals who exert political influence but are not elected representatives and therefore have no political accountability (Cassin 2002).

¹⁶ Cartelisation Theory argues that parties pursue the same policy agenda, therefore competition is governed by managerial effectiveness (Halpin 2015:109). The cartel party does not campaign for a distinct political agenda or rely on groups for funding as it has access to the resources of the state (2015:109). Its internal factions are pragmatic. They are interested in power rather than ideology (Economou 2015:5).

¹⁷ The ALP split over ideology in 1916, 1931 and 1955. Most notably, the 1955 division consigned the ALP to Opposition for nearly two decades (Economou 2012:4).

(2009) documents their closeness in a critique of Australia's 'Quarry Vision'. The mining industry and its unions pursued close relationships with parties with the aim of infiltrating the government. The view that the minerals industry is key to future national prosperity, he finds, has allowed for concessions to be made in favour of this vested interest. These range from subsidies to complete policy penetration, one example being the doubling of financial assistance for coal mines to the value of \$1.5 billion under the CPRS (Combet in Pearse 2016:325). The challenge for the ALP to satisfy such a diverse range of legitimate interests - subunits and its electoral base - and backroom pressures from vested interests has made climate change policymaking insurmountably complex.

Interest groups seek to exert influence using two distinct approaches: insider or outsider pressure. While insider approaches occur behind closed doors between actors with longstanding relations, outsider approaches are not constrained by access to the political party and are waged publicly (Halpin and Fraussen 2017:388). Scientific consensus on dangerous climate change has made it risky for vested interests to campaign publicly against its mitigation. Outsider politics has the potential to tarnish the reputation of business, industry and union groups, therefore these public techniques are on the decline. Groups are at no risk, however, in pursuing their interests through obscured and informal ties. Behind closed doors, insider politics has a powerful impact. Halpin and Fraussen (2018) discuss the means by which interest groups influence political parties, using the 2016 Federal Election as a case study. The four key insider mechanisms they highlight are financial dependencies, organisational overlap, ideational affinity and common membership (382). These methods of insider politics are only viable for groups with established party-group relations.

Alternative mechanisms of outsider politics take advantage of public opinion to mobilise political parties in their interests. The 'Mining Tax Ad War of 2010' demonstrates the power of harnessing public outrage through the media. McKnight and Hobbes (2013) pick apart this advertising campaign by the Minerals Council of Australia. It was a publicly-waged campaign against a policy to tax mining companies' 'super profits' achieved during an unprecedented export-driven mining boom in 2010. The MCA's advocacy advertising contributed to the removal of a first-term Labor

Prime Minister and re-shaped the Minerals Resource Rent Tax (2013:307).¹⁸ Advocacy advertising is a scare tactic used to gain public traction and, in the case of the Minerals Resource Rent Tax, effectively curbed a taxation policy at odds with the interests of the emissions-intensive industry.

Lobbying is another means of group influence, predominately used to fulfil rent-seeking objectives. Interest groups attempt to manipulate governments and public policy for their own economic gain. Expressly, groups seek to gain payment above the cost involved known as 'economic rent' (Brown, McLean and McMillan 2018). R. Pearse (2016b) evaluates the ability of emissions trading schemes to limit coal production and consumption, finding it a weak instrument unable to address real-world failures of coal governance. She explains that emissions-intensive industries' rent-seeking lobbying has institutionalised favourable compensation arrangements at the cost of the taxpayer (325). Efforts by the carbon lobby have historically exerted disproportionate political influence in Australia (Pearse, G. 2009:31).

The issue of climate change has mobilised numerous groups acting in their particular self-interests. Emissions-intensive industries represented by trade unions and lobbies bear the most influence. They employ techniques of insider and outsider politics as appropriate during the electoral term and have proved capable of manipulating climate change policy to their financial gain. The capacity of interest groups to influence public policy via political parties has increased with party cartelisation such that party-group relations no longer occur in a dynamic of strong parties and groups in the shadows. This does not mean that party-group relations are an observable phenomenon. They are obscured 'behind closed doors', especially in the case of vested interests which conflate their self-interest with that of the nation. Their undue influence has led to poor policy outcomes and the subsequent failure of progressive politics geared toward climate change mitigation policy, as demonstrated by the ALP CPRS. While factions, trade unions, interest groups and lobbyists are all legitimate actors involved with political parties in government, the private nature of their interactions conceals the dynamics of climate change policymaking and its barriers.

¹⁸ The Minerals Resource Rent Tax (MRRT) was a weak version of the Resource Super Profits Tax (RSPT). While the RSPT was levied at 40% on extractive industries, the MRRT was levied at 30% on only the 'super profits' of iron ore. It replaced the RSPT in 2012 (Swan 2014:334).

C. Energy System Transformation

Any climate change policy implemented in Australia today will determine the nation's long-term future emissions trajectory. The nation's energy supply is driven by coal-fired power stations which has resulted in a nationwide fossil-fuel dependence. The carbon economy is highly polluting. To mitigate the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, future energy and climate policy must be coordinated against the threat of dangerous climate change.

Both Labor Government emissions-reduction policies used market mechanisms as disincentives to curb investment in fossil-fuel energy production and encourage industry to seek fossil-fuel-free alternative generation solutions. The CPRS (2008) under Rudd and Clean Energy Act (2011) under Gillard were to function as financial motivators for investment in renewable alternatives. Thereby, investment into coal-fired power plants, which would lock-in emissions-intensive energy production for the next five decades due to sunk-costs, would be reduced (Cheung and Davies 2017:97). Discussing how fossil-fuel dependency impacts on the prospect of energy system transformation, Cheung and Davies (2017) find that economic-transformative 'underachievement' can be attributed to the lack of a variety of factors; the lack of bipartisanship, strong political leadership, target-driven policies and political motivation are identified as barriers to the technologically and economically possible energy system transition.

An energy system transformation for Australia qualifies as the lowest-cost abatement strategy if conducted in conjunction with the replacement of ageing and retired coal-fired plants (Cheung and Davies 2017:98). Thereby, there would be no lost sunk-costs, and hence, no barriers to the uptake of renewables in the transition to a clean energy economy. Of the 24 currently operating coal-fired power generators in Australia today, eighteen will inevitably have been decommissioned by 2050. Fourteen of these plants will reach the 40-year design-life threshold within the next decade and will thus have the potential to retire (APH 2016:6).¹⁹ Despite Australia's existing coal-fired power stations nearing their end, the Australian Government's plan for the future looks starkly different.

¹⁹ Coal-fired power generators have a design life of 40-50 years (Quong 2019).

Climate and energy policies by the Australian Government to date have been described as a ‘form of madness’ by Hudson (2019).²⁰ Hudson acknowledges the efforts of the main coalminers union, the CFMMEU, for having consistently tried to slow the growth of renewable energy (2019:588).

Despite the coal-hegemony, a renewable energy economy is a real alternative to fossil-fuel power. The nation has an abundance of economically and technologically viable renewable resources (Geoscience Australia and BREE 2014 in Cheung and Davies 2017:99). Falk and Settle (2011) discuss energy policy frameworks suggested under the Labor Government, focusing on nuclear, Carbon Capture and Storage and climate change scenarios. They describe the climate policy environment as an ‘energy crossroads’ and conclude that a non-nuclear, low-emissions future independent of coal is within reach (2011:6804). Although possible, Falk and Settle predict that this transformation remains unlikely. The Australian Government is under immense pressure from interests groups, and shares in the mining industry’s interest to continue to profit from coal through taxation, royalties and exports. The Australian Government often argues that it can have both its coal profits and emissions-reduction through Carbon Capture and Storage, despite this technology still being far from commercially available (2011:6804,6811).

The Australian Government on both sides of the left-right divide repeatedly tried to gentrify emissions-intensive energy production by framing it through an ecological modernisation (EM) discourse. Curran (2012) defines EM as ‘a theory that promises a market system which is both sustainable and dynamic, both green and productive’ (202). He argues that coal economies like that of Australia employ EM as a win-win solution to the threat of dangerous climate change. Herein, weak reforms have supported the existing coal hegemony by shielding the economy from necessary ecological restructuring. Only in Australia, Curran argues, have a suite of mitigation policies been designed to complement the coal economy and thereby defend the energy status-quo (205).

²⁰ Hudson (2019) echoes former Coalition Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, who, in his resignation speech in 2018, said that the actions of his fellow LNP party members towards climate change were a ‘form of madness’.

Despite the need for and feasibility of an energy system transformation, Australian Governments continue to support the coal hegemony at the detriment of nascent renewable energy alternatives. The first coal-mining basin (the Galilee Basin in Queensland) to have opened in 50 years recently passed its approval requirements and was celebrated by the Morrison Coalition Government as a 'great win' for jobs (Ireland 2019). The Queensland State Labor Government vowed to fast-track further proposals for the Adani-Carmichael Coal Mine and Federal Labor resources spokesperson Joel Fitzgibbon stated that the ALP 'welcomed the decision and jobs' (Ireland 2019). The 'progressive, climate-friendly' ALP's enthusiasm over the 45,000-hectare mine is counterintuitive in the age of dangerous climate change, where coal is already the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide (Muenstermann 2012:233; Greenpeace 2019). Employment is cited as a major concern for both major parties in a renewable energy transition, however, statistical modelling of prospects in each industry tells a starkly different story. Adani is forecasted to provide 1500 direct and 6750 indirect jobs (Ireland 2019), whereas the shift to renewables could create as many as 60,000 new jobs by 2030 (The Australia Institute 2018). Such modelling disputes employment as a justification for pursuing the high-carbon coal-fired power option and begs the question of where government interests truly lie.

In the event the Australian Government were to facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy, this shift would occur gradually due to the nation's coal-dependence. Even before Adani, Australia was over-invested in coal both economically, in the sense that coal-fired generators could quickly become stranded assets, and politically, with regard to the influence of mining interests (Cheung and Davies 2017:104). Historically within the ALP, mining interests have been pursued in the parliamentary ranks by the factional representatives of the Australian Workers Union (AWU), Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (recently CFMMEU with the addition of Maritime), and the Australian Mining Workers Union (AMWU)(Pearse, G. 2009:6). As representatives of the fossil-fuel economy, industry and trade union groups have been beneficiaries of taxpayer-funded government subsidies to the total of \$10 billion annually (Riedy 2007).²¹ Under the Rudd Labor Government, this equated to \$15 in fossil-fuel subsidies for every one dollar spent on climate

²¹ Total energy and transport subsidies in Australia during the period 2005-2006 was estimated between \$9.3 billion and \$10.1 billion according to a report by Riedy (2007) with the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney.

change mitigation (Pearse, G 2009:62). This has functioned to obscure inefficiencies and reproduce market failures at the expense of the renewables sector; by decreasing the costs and increasing the productivity of fossil-fuel production, subsidies have incentivised emissions-intensive industries to increase their quotas and emissions whilst renewable energy is stripped of its competitive advantage (Riedy and Diesendorf 2007:126; Curran 2009:214). This is what Riedy and Diesendorf (2007) call the 'distorting effect' of subsidies. They examine financial subsidies to fossil-fuel production and consumption in Australia, describing a 'perverse situation' where taxpayers ultimately fund fossil-fuel industry pollution, as well as the cost of cleaning up this pollution (135).

Union groups are not alone in their ability to exert influence over the Australian Government. The remarkable capacity of the coal-mining sector to translate economic into political power is addressed by Baer (2016:199), recounting the period spanning from Federation to the Gillard Labor Government. He describes the late-stage nexus between the government and the coal-mining industry under neoliberalism as dominated by the self-proclaimed 'Greenhouse Mafia'. The 'Mob' consists of the Australian Coal Association (ACA), Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), Business Council of Australia (BCA), Australian Industry Greenhouse Network (AIGN) and its associated businesses and corporations (198). This mining conglomerate has been effective in 'highjacking' climate policy through the disproportionate power of its union lobbying effort (Pearse, G. 2009:38) and remains infamous for its commitment to defeating the environmental movement 'with almost religious zeal' (Miller 2006).

Within Australia, politics remains the ultimate barrier to energy system transformation as a means to mitigate against the carbon-emissions responsible for dangerous climate change. Rather than support the rise of economically and technologically competitive renewable energy industries, the Australian Government reproduces the fossil-fuel dominated status-quo. It granted unreasonable financial concessions to polluting industries in the face of ALP emissions-reduction policy between 2007-2013 and recently removed the barriers to the Adani-Carmichael Mining Basin in mid-2019. Therefore, the feasibility of energy system transformation away from emissions-intensive energy remains unlikely for Australia in the near future.

3. Research Design

A mixed methods research design is used to deduce the key influences on Labor Government climate policy.²² The combination of qualitative and quantitative data has the benefit of constituting a broader perspective than either data set alone and thus compensates for potential weaknesses of the other method. This study examines Labor Government climate policymaking from 2007-2013. The qualitative component examines four elite-actor interviews. Former political actors involved in climate change policymaking were asked about their personal experiences working with other self-interested political actors. Their responses are triangulated with a quantitative, semantic content analysis. This is drawn from publicly available ALP National Platforms with a focus on chapters concerning the environment. The elite interviews provide insider knowledge of obscured political actors operating on the Labor Government, which is validated by the National Platforms, and vice versa. The influence of key political actors on Labor Government climate policy is not evident through simple observation as interactions between interest groups and political parties occur behind closed doors. Therefore, a combination of semantic deduction and interrogation is the best means to answer the research question.

Elite Interviews

The purpose of elite interviews is to provide a window into the private and obscured interactions of government. This qualitative method is the best means to discern the influence of political actors on ALP climate change policy due to its ability to extract insider information from privileged individuals. It is central to the research design. Interview data is rarely used alone due to the contextual specificity of the data collected which is tainted by memory, perspective and incomplete

²² The ALP was chosen as the focus of this research study as one of the two major political parties in Australia that has consistently held office. It was selected over the LNP due to the plethora of existing literature about influences on the Liberal-National Coalition, such as Macintosh (2008). The condition of government, resulting in the focal period of Labor Government from 2007 to 2013, was chosen due to the assumption that interests groups pay closer attention to and exert greater influence on the party in government than that in Opposition due to its ability to implement policy.

knowledge (W. P. Vogt, E. R. Vogt, Gardner and Haeffele 2014:25). Therefore, the elite interview data is complemented by a nonreactive content analysis.²³

Political actors from the Labor Government were approached to participate in semi-structured interviews regarding the key influences on ALP climate policy. The prospective sample of interview candidates included former members of the Australian Labor Party, board members for the unions representing emissions-intensive and trade exposed industries, representatives for environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), lobbyists and climate experts. This sample was based on the condition of former involvement in climate policymaking during Labor Government. A total of four from the fifteen approached agreed to be interviewed. Most candidates did not respond to the invitation or offered their published memoir as an alternative to participation. The interview data was analysed qualitatively for its explicit features, with special attention given to the respondents' career histories and the content of their responses.

Four ALP Members of Parliament agreed to be interviewed: former Treasurer and Deputy Leader, Wayne Swan; Member for Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon; former Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett; and former Minister for Climate Change, Greg Combet. The interview questions and transcripts can be found in the appendix. The contentious nature of this debate may have made some prospective participants reluctant to be interviewed. Therefore, offers to review memoirs were taken seriously. Unlike interviews, autobiographies cannot be interrogated or asked questions relating directly to the research study. Nonetheless, they are complementary to the interview research as both data sources provide a window into inner workings of government as experienced by the candidates central to this study. The autobiographies were analysed similarly to the interviews for their explicit content alongside the authors' career histories.

ALP National Platforms

A comparative content analysis of ALP National Platforms constitutes the quantitative component of the research design. The 44th, 45th, 46th and 47th National Platforms resulted from the National

²³ Non-reactive content is data contained in written documents or other communication media that was created without the intention or knowledge that it would be analysed (Vogt et al. 2014:49).

Conferences which took place in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2014 respectively. Each contains an environmental chapter. When viewed sequentially, these environmental chapters document the changes in Labor Party environmental priorities from 2007-2014. These four editions, which mark the years preceding, during and following Labor Government, were used under the assumption that interest groups devote greater attention to and put more pressure on the ALP whilst in executive power. A greater concentration of interest group influence can therefore be expected.

The quantitative content analysis occurred in three stages. Firstly, a semantic analysis of the National Platform environmental chapters was conducted. Its clauses were categorised by issue under environmentalism, sustainable development, ecological modernisation, economic rationalism, justice, or climate science. An implicit rather than surface content analysis is warranted due to the informal nature of contemporary relations between interest groups and cartelised parties (Halpin 2015:105). Actors' interests are largely pursued behind closed doors, and consequently, are obscured at all stages of the policy cycle. By 'reading between the lines' using latent coding (Neuman 2014:375), the ALP's understandings of and internal biases on climate change are revealed. Secondly, identical clauses across all platforms were removed from the analysis, leaving only altered and new clauses. These new clauses represent the changes in the National Platforms. Identical clauses across the platforms were also used as a constant variable to ensure that the standard of coding remained consistent. Thirdly, a manifest coding of the residual clauses (Neuman 2014:374) was conducted to determine emerging party priorities. These priorities revealed key influences on Labor Government climate policy and informed the interview questions. The quantitative portion of the mixed methods research design established context and ensured that appropriate questions were asked in the interviews.

The coding categories (Figure 1) arose during the process of data collection and latent coding. These categories are not an established academic spectrum of climate discourse approaches. Rather they are each based in a variety of sources and have been employed as a spectrum for the purpose of this research study as emergent themes in the data. Environmentalism, sustainable development, ecological modernisation, economic reductionism, justice and climate science are

used to describe the discursive style of each clause.²⁴ While this range of categories is not an exhaustive list of ecology-related discourses, it is exhaustive of the emergent categories in the National Platforms and is therefore sufficient to thoroughly address the climate change chapters. Furthermore, they are not mutually exclusive as more than one category can apply to a clause. However, it was necessary to select the single best fit for each clause for the purpose of later data analysis.

Each category correlates with a discourse coalition, referring to a group of political actors who share ways of thinking about an issue (Hajer 1995:70). These political actors are not explicitly apparent in the ALP National Platforms. Rather, they are deduced from the discourse coalitions which are associated with the discursive categories identified within the text. The extent to which key political actors influenced Labor Government climate policy is determined by the concentration of each discursive category. This inductive method has been effectively used in various studies on the politics of climate change (Christoff 2013; Audet 2012). Analysing national climate change policy debates from 1988 to 2013, Christoff (2013) establishes a climate discourse complex consisting of scientific, ethical, economic, technological, politico-legal, and daily-life discursive fields. He finds that the economic discursive field dominates the climate discourse complex in Australia. A similar approach is used by Audet (2012) to identify conflict, transition and vulnerability as discourses used by bargaining coalitions at the Conference of Parties in 2016. Both Christoff and Audet conduct studies that inductively identify discourses in nonreactive content, thus demonstrating the value and validity of this approach. Their specific categories are not applicable to this research study as the semantic content analysis of the National Platforms is used to induce the presence of actors within each discourse coalition, hence specific, emergent categories are required.

²⁴ The ALP 'environmental priorities' are listed as numbered clauses in the National Platforms.

Latent Coding Categories

Environmentalism:

Environmentalism denotes concern about and protection of the environment. It refers to symbiosis of human beings with nature and, therefore, political activity in this framework appears apolitical and conservationist (Krieger 2014).

Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs as well (WCED 1987:43). This long-term approach favours economic growth within the bounds of ecology and manifests in renewables, sustainability and intergenerational justice in the National Platforms.

Ecological Modernisation:

The ecological modernisation discourse is both pro-growth and pro-consumption (Glasson 2012). EM argues that the economy will benefit from a move to environmentalism and thereby reproduces neoliberal capitalism in a 'green' way. Weak applications aim to enhance market competitiveness and address the environment as a secondary concern (Christoff 2000:212). Weak EM approaches are only superficially ecological. Economic greenwashing, a marketing technique that functions to promote the perception that business or industry policies are eco-friendly, is often employed in EM. This gives the appearance of a substantive move toward environmentalism while maintaining the ecologically destructive practices of business-as-usual (Ferguson 2009:298). EM is a means to discursively overcome the contradictions between ecology and capitalism. Therefore, it fails to generate meaningful action on climate change.

Economic Rationalism:

Economic rationalism refers to the primacy of economic phenomena for explaining the environment. Within this analysis, ER also features clauses that have solely economic objectives.

Justice:

Justice is used as an umbrella term to encapsulate a variety of discourses concerned with fairness, namely climate justice, environmental justice and intergenerational justice^{25,26,27,28}. National Platform clauses addressing the disproportionate burden of climate change on low-income households, geographically vulnerable communities and minority groups fall within this category.

Climate Science:

Climate science refers to clauses expressed in a matter-of-fact manner according to international scientific consensus. These do not appear to have an ideological standing.

The five discourses and their respective discourse coalitions, induced for the purpose of this study, are defined and demonstrated in Figure 1 (below) with examples from the National Platforms.

²⁵ Climate Justice is based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)(1992) standard that countries should address the climate crisis 'on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities", (Bernstein 2011:144).

²⁶ Environmental Justice originated in the United States to refer to the unequal distribution of environmental degradation which unfairly impacted racial minorities (Bullard 1990).

²⁷ Intergenerational Justice refers to the temporal, non-overlapping, moral obligations owed to past and future generations (Kassner 2011:540).

²⁸ Clauses relating to the effects of climate change on human health were also grouped into the category of justice. This phenomena cannot be explained through an alternative accepted academic discourse, such as climate justice or environmental justice.

Figure 1. Discursive Frameworks

| Discourse | Definition | Example | Coalition |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Environmentalism | Concern about, and action aimed at, protecting the environment. | <i>Labor supports the promotion of less greenhouse-intensive forms of transport, including public transport, cycling and walking.</i> - Np44:C136. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentalists • Climate Activists • Get-Up! |
| Sustainable Development | Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. | <i>Labor is committed to maximising the social, economic and environmental benefits that flow from the sustainable management of Australia's forests.</i> - Np45:C183. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewables Industry |
| Ecological Modernisation | Business-as-usual masquerading as a substantive move toward environmentalism. | <i>Labor will support high carbon emitting industries to become more energy efficient and reduce emissions.</i> - Np47:C127. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses • Corporations • Mining Industry |
| Economic Reductionism | Primacy of economic objectives. | <i>The continued development of new technology to improve the economic and environmental efficiency of energy production and consumption is vital to Australia's long-term international competitiveness.</i> - Np46:C155. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining Industry • Emissions-Intensive Trade Exposed Industries |
| Justice | Concern about the unequal burden of climate change. | <i>Labor wants equity within Australia as we move to address climate change and is ensuring that low and middle income earners do not carry a disproportionate burden of our transition to a low carbon economy.</i> - Np46:C17. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers • Trade Unions • Social Justice Groups |
| Climate Science | Scientific consensus on climate change. | <i>Labor recognises there is overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions is making Australia hotter, the oceans warmer and our major cities and towns drier.</i> - Np44:C17. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientists |

4. What?

Quantitative Research: Semantic Content Analysis

Every three years, the Australian Labor Party reviews its values and program for government at its National Conference. The decisions reached during this three-day event are published as a National Platform and Constitution. A chapter on the environment is a standard inclusion therein. The publicly available National Platforms from the 44th, 45th, 46th and 47th National Conferences document the party's unified proposals for climate change action and key environmental priorities throughout the Australian Labor Government from 2007-2013. They also contain the ALP's policy platform for the following term. These four publications contain consistent attitudes and policies on water, biodiversity, coastal protection, land and agriculture, natural and built heritage and living environments, and demonstrate the ALP's commitment to responsible national leadership on environmental matters. The evolution of ideas contained by these documents demonstrates changing party priorities and suggests where its interests lay. The National Platforms were subjected to a semantic content analysis as the quantitative portion of this mixed methods research study.

A. Results

44th National Platform (2007)

The 44th National Platform discusses key ALP environmental priorities in a generalised manner. The platform is not concerned with current issues or climate policy. It makes broad statements about water, biodiversity, coastal protection, land and agriculture, natural and built heritage, and living environments.

Its most notable feature is the inclusion of the 'Precautionary Principle' as a Labor Party principle, which it defines as,

“...that if there is a high risk of serious or irreversible adverse impacts resulting from resource use, use should only be permitted if those impacts can be mitigated or there are overwhelming grounds for proceeding in the national interests. The absence of scientific certainty should not be a reason for postponing measures to prevent or mitigate negative impacts,” (Np44:Cl6).^{29,30}

The Precautionary Principle is an international guideline for climate change action established in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Article 3.3 in the UNFCCC 1992). Similarly to the ALP variation, this Precautionary Principle is concerned ‘where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage’ (UNFCCC 2006:25). It states that ‘a lack of scientific evidence should not be used as a reason to postpone measures’ to prevent environmental degradation (UNFCCC 2006:25). As a project in normative ethics, the Precautionary Principle is especially vital where decision-makers are not those vulnerable to the morally unacceptable outcomes of dangerous climate change (Gardiner 2011:402).

There are no mentions of the Precautionary Principle in any of the following National Platforms.

Regarding sustainable industries and cleaner production, the platform proposes State and Territory producer responsibility schemes and voluntary economic measures to address post-consumption waste management (Np44:Cl133).

The ALP supports the phase-out of plastic bags with a legislated ban if necessary (Np44:Cl134). Although the ALP won government shortly after the publication of the 44th National Platform, it did not translate this environmental priority into a policy. The phase-out of single-use plastic bags only occurred in June 2018 under a corporate initiative by Woolworths and Coles (Zhou 2018).

²⁹ This excerpt is a single clause. All clauses in each National Platform are written in a similar style. This is an example of what is meant by the term ‘clause’ in this paper. Please also see footnote 24.

³⁰ The clauses discussed within this analysis are referenced by their platform and clause number. For example, National Platform 44, Clause 6 is denoted as Np44:Cl6.

45th National Platform (2009)

The 45th National Platform was the first in fifteen years published under an ALP Government.³¹ Therefore, its content is largely policy-oriented. In contrast to the previous platform, it addresses current issues rather than making broad statements about the environment and the ALP's values.

The central focus of the chapter is the transition to a low pollution economy, wherein a large role is prescribed for farmers and primary industries in delivering policy-outcomes and adapting to climate change (Np45:CI47-56).³² By 2009, Australian farmers had endured years of water scarcity caused by low rainfall and low river inflows in the extreme weather event which came to be known as the Millennium Drought (BOM 2015). In this context, the National Platform subchapter on water reframes water scarcity as a proxy for climate change (Np45:CI57-65; Gascoigne 2008:523). Problems associated with the overallocation of water are exacerbated by climate change, the effects of which are felt disproportionately by vulnerable communities. The farming community is particularly affected by periods of low rainfall, but rather than focus on the agriculture industry in the 45th National Conference and Platform, the ALP framed its priorities around the individual. The focus on 'farmers' rather than 'agriculture' marks a shift in party interests. It focuses on the needs of families, prescribing welfare assistance and meeting environmental challenges through innovative farming practices.

Labor also pledges to support economic growth through the creation of 'Green Collar' jobs (Np45:CI33). This initiative is paired with the promise of improvements to emissions-intensive industries to increase their efficiency (Np45:CI34). Again, the individual worker is prioritised. The onus to act is deferred from the government level, enabled through 'employment opportunities'. While the local-level focus of the 45th National Platform enforces the enduring Labor Party motto of

³¹ The 45th National Platform includes a subchapter titled 'The Liberal Legacy of Neglect on Climate Change'. This was excluded from the analysis, as it does not contain the same style of normative or descriptive clauses as the rest of the document, in order to prevent it from skewing the data.

³² The 45th National Platform does not define 'low pollution economy'. The trope and its variations, such as 'low pollution future' and 'low carbon economy', appear in 10% of its clauses. The steps outlined for the transition from a high to low pollution economy include the implementation of the CPRS and the creation of new industries.

'a fair go' for all Australians in the face of climate change, it defers responsibility away from the nation's biggest polluters.

The solution proposed for Australia's emissions-intensive industries is Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)(Np45:CI27). By capturing and holding carbon emissions in a storage site, business-as-usual can persist without any additional carbon entering the atmosphere. However, ten years on, this mechanism is still only a concept (CSIRO 2019; NSW Gov 2019). CCS is currently in the development stage and is projected to become commercially available after 2050 (Treasury in Pearse, R. 2016a:326). Current models project that global carbon-emissions must peak and decrease by 50% by 2050 if CO2 levels are to stabilise at their current level (Pearse, G. 2009:15). Being both technologically and economically impractical (Pearse, R. 2016a:326), CCS has done more to clean up the reputation of coal than mitigate the effects of carbon on the environment (Pearse, G. 2009:37). While CCS did not appear in any subsequent National Platforms, it remains the favoured mitigation strategy of the fossil-fuel industry.

46th National Platform (2011)

A green growth approach to climate change is evident in the title of the 46th National Platform.³³ The title, 'A Clean Energy Future', implies that energy generation will be free from harmful externalities in the distant future, thereby displacing the need for urgent action on climate change. Tropes such as 'clean' or 'green' function to reframe business-as-usual, disguising damaging corporate practices so they appear consistent with current environmental objectives. They avoid substantial systemic reform by constructing a discourse of alternative truths enabling the blameless reproduction and growth of emissions-intensive industries, notably fossil-fuel industry expansion and the myth of clean coal (Stegemann and Ossewaarde 2018:27). The National Platform argues for 'clean' environments, communities, economies, technologies, infrastructure, jobs and industries to 'reshape the economy and cut carbon pollution' (Np46:throughout).

³³ The 46th National Platform includes a subchapter titled 'Labor Achievements'. This was excluded from the analysis as, it does not contain the same style of normative or descriptive clauses as the rest of the document, in order to prevent it from skewing the data.

The ALP aimed to ‘drive the biggest expansion in the clean energy sector’ (Np46:CI28) by putting a price on carbon and establishing the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). Both CEFC and ARENA still operate with ongoing success. Both organisations continue to profitably invest into a varied portfolio of renewable energy projects and technologies (Np46:CI28; CEFC 2019; ARENA 2019). While successful in these new ‘clean’ developments, the ALP did little to change existing dirty energy providers. The Clean Energy Act exempted the nation’s largest polluters to the total of 104 million and 98 million carbon units in 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively under the Jobs and Competitiveness Program (CER 2015; CER 2017). The Clean Energy Act was repealed in 2014 by the Abbott Government.

Similarly to the previous platform, the 46th edition is concerned with ‘equity to ensure low to middle income earners do not carry a disproportionate burden of the transition to a low carbon economy’, (Np46:CI7). Exemplified in this clause, the strong socio-environmental justice focus exceeds that of any other National Platforms.³⁴ Nearly 30% of all clauses are framed as matters of justice with specific reference to the regional mining communities based in Hunter, Latrobe and Illawarra, as well as families and pensioners in general (Np46:CI21,22). The ALP proposed to ‘look after’ those vulnerable by redistributing Carbon Price revenue and through further tax reform.

The National Platform endorses an ethical standard for emissions-intensive energy generation: ‘energy supply and use must be sustainable, economical and competitive to the extent it meets the highest operational and environmental standards of the coal seam gas industry’ (Np46:CI52). The National Platform does not reference any national or international guidelines, nor does it provide any to industry. It proposes that the industry adhere to self-determined limits. Without objectivity or enforceability, this clause lacks substance and thus enables industries to greenwash their carbon-intensive interests. Like CCS in the previous National Platform, coal seam gas is a means to maintain business-as-usual for fossil-fuel industries. The dissonance between the interests of extractive polluters and environmental conservation in the 46th National Platform demonstrates the dominance of fossil-fuels over the climate for the ALP’s second term in office.

³⁴ See footnote 24, page 28, for the use of the term ‘clause’ as the sampling element.

47th National Platform (2014)

The final National Platform was published by an ALP in Opposition nearly two years after Tony Abbott became Prime Minister with the LNP Government. Its content is primarily issues-based and shies from policymaking, a logical finding due to the ALP's inability to introduce bills to the House of Representatives without executive power.

The Great Barrier Reef receives singular attention in a subchapter to the 47th National Platform. Therein, reef health is addressed as central to the nation's culture, society, economy, and tourism. These ecological priorities relate to preserving species biodiversity and combatting climate change (Np47:CI41-43).

Support for protection of Cape York is also mentioned in the 47th National Platform and all earlier National Platforms. The ALP considers it a national and world heritage priority to protect the area (Np47:CI39). Cape York is home to the Rio-Tinto Amrun, Glencore Aurukun and Metro Bauxite Hills bauxite mining projects which occupy indigenous land (Drummond 2017). The consistent pursuit of heritage status for the peninsula shows that native title and environmental preservation are of ongoing importance to the ALP. The Labor Party reaffirmed its commitment to gain World Heritage status for Cape York ahead of the federal election in May 2019, pledging to work with indigenous communities to achieve a balance between social and economic development (Owens and McKenna 2019).

Another notable feature in the 47th National Platform is the omission of a clause featured in the editions at the time of Labor Government. The 45th and 46th platforms state,

“Labor believes a key part of reaching a global solution involves decoupling economic growth from emissions growth, a priority which has particular resonance for developing countries, which have a right to promote sustainable economic development and raise living standards,” (Np45:CI26; Np476:CI43).

This normative statement calls for alternative drivers of economic growth to replace the traditional emissions-intensive practices of business and industry that have become entrenched in Australia's national politics and economics. The act of 'decoupling', alongside reference to developing countries, suggests that the ALP is in favour of mass-system restructuring so that national and international reliance on Australian coal is reduced. With coal being the nation's largest export, the majority of which is to developing countries (Moss 2016:504), the decoupling of economic growth and emissions would require Australia to limit its export trade of this commodity. However, the 47th National Platform does not feature this, indicating that this clause, once a priority for the Australian Labor Party, is no longer.

Finally, the 47th National Platform clearly identifies key stakeholders involved in the development of the Australian Labor Party's environmental priorities.

"Labor is informed by scientists, economists, environmental and climate stakeholders, farmers, business, industry and governments," (Np47:C17).

This clause affirms the research findings of 'who?' are the key political actors involved with the ALP, and thus reveals potential influences on Labor Government climate change policy.

B. Analysis

Political Actors and Discourse Coalitions

Quantitative Semantic Content Analysis

The National Platforms spanning the years of and around the Labor Government are analysed for their underlying moods and attitudes using a semantic content coding method. The quantitative data collected from this research study reveals the extent to which emergent discourse coalitions are influential to the Labor Government by quantifying the clauses that corresponded to each category. Environmentalism, sustainable development (SD), ecological modernisation (EM),

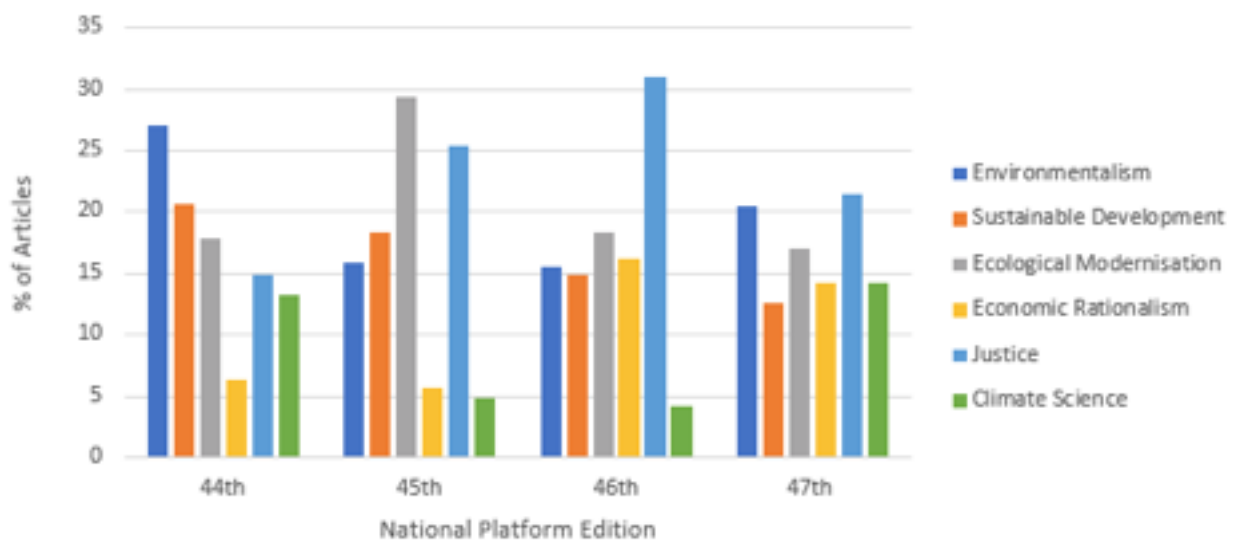
economic rationalism (ER), justice and climate science are the major discursive frameworks used to describe the underlying moods and attitudes of the National Platforms.

The manner in which the ALP's environmental priorities are discussed changes over the course of the Labor Government. The changes in the use of each discursive framework is shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Figure 2. Prevalence of Environmental Discourses

| Edition | Year | Chapter Title | Moods |
|---------|------------|---|---|
| 44th | Circa 2007 | Combating Climate Change and Building a Sustainable Environment | 27% Environmentalism 21% Sustainable Development 18% Ecological Modernisation |
| 45th | Circa 2009 | Tackling Climate Change and our Environmental Challenges | 29% Ecological Modernisation 25% Justice 18% Sustainable Development |
| 46th | Circa 2011 | A Clean Energy Future | 31% Justice 18% Ecological Modernisation 16% Economic Rationalism |
| 47th | Circa 2014 | Tackling Climate Change and our Environmental Challenges | 21% Justice 21% Environmentalism 17% Ecological Modernisation |

Figure 3. Prevalence of Environmental Discourses (Graphic)



The 44th National Platform, which demonstrates concern about Australia's unique natural environment, is framed through environmentalism. The greatest percentage of clauses (27%) are concerned with protecting the environment and are dictated by the one-off ALP value, the Precautionary Principle. The next dominant frame is sustainable development (21%) followed by ecological modernisation (18%). The categories defined in Figure 1 range from altruistic concern for environmental protection to purely economic objectives. Sustainable development is less ecological than environmentalism, and ecological modernisation is less ecological than sustainable development. As Figure 3 shows, the order of environmental discourses in the 44th National Platform declines in its ecological focus. This sequence shows that the environment was of paramount concern to the ALP in 2007.

The tendency toward eco-centric discourses in the 44th National Platform is demonstrated by the declining trend of clauses framed by environmentalism, SD and EM. As shown in Figure 1, this lexicon is employed by environmentalist and climate advocacy groups active in the community. They operate in cooperation with the grassroots members of the ALP, alongside subnational, national and transnational organisations. The use of this discourse demonstrates the influence of a number of community groups, think tanks and not-for-profit (NFP) groups. The state-funded, farmer-based conservationist group, Landcare, is of significant grassroots influence in the characteristic bottom-up policymaking process of the ALP. Its efforts to repair rural landscapes and support the uptake of sustainable farming practices are briefly acknowledged in two statements of the National Platform (Np44:Cl82,83), explicitly showing the influence of Landcare on the ALP. Other prominent organisations party to the Australian environment movement include Greenpeace Australia-Pacific, Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC), Friends of the Earth, Wilderness Society (TWS), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and GetUp! (Christoff 2016:1038).³⁵

A major discursive shift occurred in the environmental priorities of the Australian Labor Party when it was elected to government in late 2007. The party had previously framed its values and platform through eco-centric discourses centred around altruistic concern for Australia's natural environment

³⁵ The national Landcare movement was driven by the Australian Conservation Foundation which lobbied the Hawke Government in 1989 (Landcare 2019).

and unique biodiversity. The 45th National Platform, published after almost two years in office, reflects the responsibility of the Labor Government to its constituency and its desire for reelection the following year. The frame of abstract environmentalism is supplanted with real social and economic concerns resulting in a 29% use of references associated with ecological modernisation. The ALP environmental priorities are consistent with business-as-usual. They aim to maintain the growth of the carbon economy and deliver the least-cost mitigation strategy. Of the 126 clauses, 15% are concerned with 'managing' the environment and climate change. This suggests that the ALP is becoming increasingly professionalised as business principles such as managerial effectiveness come to dictate party competition (Halpin 2015:109). Party professionalisation has also resulted in a waning ideology. As a result, bipartisan neoliberalism has permeated all aspects of public policy, ranging from market nonintervention to economic reductionist approaches to externalities (Rickards et al. 2014:758; Miller and Orchard 2014:7). Business and industry that have a vested interest in the maintenance of the status-quo are obvious sources of this discursive framework.

As the source of approximately 16% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (Sudmeyer 2019), agriculture is one industry that favours business-as-usual over government interventionism. The discursive shift from 'agriculture' to 'farmer', however, marks a shift in ALP priorities in favour of the individual over industry, and aligns with the secondary framework of justice. Approximately 25% of all clauses are concerned with the unequal burden of climate change on individuals and households. As each clause was coded for only the single most relevant category, the overlap between social and economic priorities is obscured. Many of the clauses related to the individual are favourable to industry also, for example the directive to work in partnership with energy suppliers to improve energy access to households (Np45:Cl40). This does not, however, hinder the research objective of identifying key interests via corresponding discourse coalitions. The influence of farmers and social justice groups are revealed in the justice trend. As is evident throughout the National Platforms in Figures 2 and 3, the reorientation of Labor Party priorities toward the social and economic public interest coincides with the electoral pressures of being in government.³⁶ Having been a decisive issue in the 2007 election (Gascoigne 2008), climate change remained a

³⁶ The changes in the National Platforms are outlined in Chapter 4A: Results (pages 32-38).

vital policy priority for the ALP but needed to be framed in a manner which resonated with the public, business and industry.

The upward trend in the discursive use of justice in the 46th National Platform is consistent with that of the previous edition. A six percent increase in the number of environmental clauses concerned with equity and equality reveals a return to the social democratic origins of the Australian Labor Party. This rises to an unprecedented 31% of clauses framed through justice in the 46th National Platform, the highest concentration of any discourse in any of the National Platforms. The influence of trade union groups, community based organisations and social rights advocates can be identified within this discourse coalition. Reference to the unequal burden of climate change on farmers, indigenous peoples, households, future generations and workers in the mining industry is further evidence hereof. The chapter strives for 'A Clean Energy Future', objectified in its title. It aims to deliver justice for current and future generations that are dependent on out-dated, emissions-intensive methods of energy generation. Justice includes facilitating the transition of mining workers and communities to new forms of employment and industry (Cheung and Davies 2017:104). These individuals are made particularly vulnerable in the renewable energy transition as their livelihood is dependent on coal-fired energy production. The ALP directive to 'work with industry and the relevant unions to ensure proper processes are in place to manage employee-related issues' reveals the influence of mining unions (Np46:CI14c). Hence, the discourse coalition that employs justice entails a wide range of interests that do not necessarily prioritise the environment in climate change policymaking and could present a barrier to the creation of meaningful mitigation policy.

The 46th National Platform features a notable 11% decrease in ecological modernisation matched by an 11% increase in economic rationalism. This discursive shift does not manifest clause to clause; rather it occurs across the entire platform, indicating a change in key influences on the ALP from those represented by the ER discourse coalition. The discursive shift from EM to ER is relatively minor due to the minute differences between either macroeconomic frame. While both discourses feature the economy as central, the former requires economic activities to align with environmental practices whereas the latter is based purely on economic explanations (Figure 1).

For example, EM frames the directive to help high carbon industries to become more energy efficient and reduce emissions (Np46:CI50), while ER frames the directive to make Australia's energy supply sustainable, economically efficient, and internationally competitive for sustained economic growth (Np46:CI53).³⁷ Approximately 23% of clauses featured 'clean' or 'green' -washed versions of business-as-usual which lack substance beyond a statement of objectives. Without a plan outlining this transition, such clauses enable business, industry and the ALP to appear more environmentally friendly than they really are.

Alongside the influence of key political actors on ALP climate policy, the change in leadership is another explanation for this discursive shift. Prime Minister Julia Gillard favoured the use of market tools as policy mechanisms to support and advance the free-market economy, unlike her predecessor Kevin Rudd whom was critical of aspects of neoliberalism (Johnson 2011:568). Gillard's neoliberal ideology also implicates discourse coalitions that may favour her preferred neoliberal mitigation strategies as their influence on both her and the Government is evident in the 46th National Platform and similar party-authorised publications.

Finally, the 47th National Platform is framed through justice and environmentalism (both 21%), marking a partial return to the generalised priorities - and interests - of the ALP before its time in government. Of those analysed, this platform has more in common with the 44th edition published prior to the ALP's electoral success than to those published later during the Labor Government. Similarly concerned with preserving Australia's unique natural environment via the discourse of environmentalism, it also corresponds with the discourse coalitions identified in the 44th National Platform. Furthermore, key aforementioned political actors including business, industry, mining trade unions and farmers are not as prominent as they were in the latter two editions. As interest groups must strive to achieve their policy objectives via political parties, specifically those with executive, policymaking power, Labor's exit from government is one explanation for this discursive shift (Halpin and Fraussen 2018:382).

³⁷ Generally speaking, clauses featuring the term 'sustainability' were grouped into the category of sustainable development. Clauses featuring the terms 'renewable' or 'efficiency' were grouped into ecological modernisation. These coding rules were used as a rough guideline and did not overwrite the content and context of each clause.

Australian Labor in the 47th National Platform acknowledges its key political influences are scientists, economists, environmental and climate stakeholders, farmers, business and industry (Np47:CI7). However, some have a greater impact than others in this particular platform. Business and industry only emerge as vested interests through ecological modernisation in 17% of the National Platform, whilst the other actors collectively informed 42% of all clauses.³⁸ Thus, there is a clear difference in the prevailing interests within the final National Platform, specifically a weaker influence of market-centric political actors compared with previous editions published during the Labor Government.

³⁸ Clauses framed using environmentalism and justice (21% + 21%) comprised 42% of all clauses.

5. Who?

Qualitative Research: Elite Interviews

The elite interview sample is comprised of ALP Members of Parliament who played a central role in climate change policymaking during the Labor Governments of 2007-2013. Wayne Swan, Joel Fitzgibbon, Peter Garrett and Greg Combet were asked about their experiences and opinions relating to climate policy during this period. Upon their request, the interviews of Swan and Garrett were supplemented by their respective memoirs, *The Good Fight* (2014) and *Big Blue Sky* (2015). Julia Gillard also offered her memoir, *My Story* (2014), but declined an interview.³⁹

A. Results

Interview 1 - Wayne Swan

Former Treasurer and Deputy Leader of the Labor Government, Wayne Swan was a central decision-maker on climate policy during both the Rudd and Gillard regimes (Gillard 2014:366).⁴⁰ He constituted one-third, alongside Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water, Penny Wong, of the unofficial policymaking organ which came to be known internally as 'the Troika' during the Rudd Government (Gillard 2014:366). He was renowned as the 'last man in parliament' from the Rudd-Gillard years until he retired from politics following the Labor electoral defeat in May 2019, ending a 40 year career with the ALP (Maley 2019). Swan made clear in his memoir, *The Good Fight*, that powerful vested interests associated with the Liberal-National Coalition employed every conceivable measure to discredit the Labor Government and increase their profit margins (Swan 2014:336).

³⁹ The interview questions and transcripts can be found in the appendix.

⁴⁰ Any unattributed quotations are from the interview with Wayne Swan on 11/07/2019.

The mining sector was successful in abolishing the Resource Super Profits Tax (RSPT) in early 2010, which was designed to collect a return on the nation's natural resources (Swan 2014:204; Henry in McKnight and Hobbes 2013:311). The RSPT was intended to compromise for the low effective company tax rate paid by miners in 2008-2009 which averaged 15% compared with the corporate tax rate of 25% (Swan 2014:334). The wealth it generated would be redistributed to the community so that all Australians, not just the multibillion dollar mining sector, would benefit from this common good (Swan 2014:204). The response from vested interests was immense. This policy was met with a disinformation campaign by the mining industry that exaggerated the mechanism and its outcomes beyond its intended application. Swan writes,

“They yelled about a 57% tax rate... when this would have applied to only a handful of mines that were earning returns to their shareholders in the vicinity of 400%,” and “The same miners who publicly claimed that they would have to close their mines were quietly expanding their operations...” (Swan 2014:334).

Outwardly, mining companies threatened shutdown and called for governmental consultation while simultaneously expanding operations and dodging meetings (Swan 2014:213). They staged talks with the LNP ‘designed for the TV cameras’ (213) in an effort to discredit the Labor Government and ‘scare the hell out of the community’ (206). The industry also held a Billionaires Rally against the RSPT attended by the country's wealthiest individuals, mining moguls Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest. Swan denounced the ‘absurdity, hypocrisy and moral obscenity’ of the event which aimed to secure a resource that belongs to the nation and its citizens in the hands of the few (314).

In his interview, Swan argued that ‘vested interests’ concerned with taxation were also against climate change action. He listed mining companies, energy-intensive industries and the finance sector, which is “sympathetic to the [emissions-intensive industry's] cause”, as the main offenders. These three big groups made a superficial commitment to climate change mitigation, but when long-term structural reform conflicted with their short-term profit, the latter imperative “won every time”. In terms of action on climate change, the Gillard Government was able to get the second ETS, the Clean Energy Act, through the House of Representatives despite opposition by business.

This was not without consequences. Its opponents responded with “populist politics” by “taking out newspaper advertisements - slagging [Swan] off across the board”.

Despite the hostility of some, the Labor Government tried to involve all relevant stakeholders. Swan recalled the months ahead of both emission-trading schemes were filled with meetings with big investors in the economy. In 2011, the Gillard Government convened a Business Roundtable on Climate Change which was embraced enthusiastically by business executives, yet undermined by the Business Council of Australia (BCA). This industry association of leaders from 144 companies, including mining giants BHP and Rio Tinto, and the major four banks (BCA 2019), arrived to the negotiations with unreasonable demands and no will to compromise (Swan 2014:339). Swan recounted a similar experience with the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA). Whilst the MCA stated its support for a joint-venture in reforming the royalties regime, the fate of the mining tax confirms their preference for an inefficient royalties system (Swan 2014:209). Behind closed doors, Swan said, the MCA is basically run by mining giant BHP. It is the “most influential private vested interest”, representing the nation’s largest mining companies.

These vested interests did not penetrate the Australian Labor Party. Some of its members, notably conservatives from the Right faction with an ideological preference for maintaining the status-quo, “were understandably sympathetic to the cause [of vested interests]”. Nonetheless, the ALP was united on emissions-reduction. Interest groups successfully negotiated financial concessions to industry. Subsidies and exemptions were justified by the ALP as necessary for the practical implementation of the policy. Swan explained the gap between the Garnaut Review (2008) and the CPRS White Paper (2008) as the difference between the “theoretical presentation of one scholar” and the “practical implementation of a sustainable policy”. Whilst the Garnaut Review prescribed an ‘economically pure’ emissions trading scheme wherein ‘no identifiable circumstances would justify the free allocation of permits’, many concessions were made in the final government White Paper (Macintosh Et Al. 2010:203). The White Paper planned to exempt deforestation completely, agriculture temporarily, and furthermore provide financial assistance to polluters (Macintosh et al. 2010:203). The final policy awarded concessions to the emissions intensive industries to the value of \$48-83 billion over the next decade (Macintosh et al. 2010:208).

Swan's rationale for these concessions to industry was that "you can't close down the economy". He said, "it is ludicrous to think you can close down large industries", when asked not about industry closure, but about the reason for carbon credits granted to the emissions-intensive sector. Furthermore, he criticised the problematic role of purists in carbon-reduction policymaking for being unconcerned with the immediate fall-out or impact on ordinary people and communities. For Swan, so-called "purists" are proponents of an ecocentric discourse, including environmental advocates, the Left and the Greens Party. Purists advocated for full implementation immediately and renewable energy system transformation, he criticised, despite the "existence of alternatives". Swan suggested carbon sequestration as an alternative although this mechanism is decades from being commercially viable (Treasury in Pearse, R. 2016a:326).

The National Platforms were of little significance to Swan. In the interview, he was dismissive of emerging trends in Labor Party priorities, stating that the fact an industry was more prevalent in one platform than in another meant nothing. A case in point is the Precautionary Principle, berated by Swan as nonsense. When asked about its inclusion and subsequent exclusion in the National Platforms, he responded "it sounds barking mad and probably should not have been there in the first place!" Swan discredits the National Conferences and Platforms as the key agenda-setting instruments for the ALP's beliefs, values and program for government (ALP 2019).

Interview 2 - Joel Fitzgibbon

Member for Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon, served as Minister for Defence and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry during the Rudd and Gillard Labor Governments.⁴¹ As the then Chief Government Whip in the House of Representatives, he was tasked with maintaining discipline among fellow ALP Members of Parliament in the House of Representatives.

The electorate of Hunter is financially dependent on coal-mining and coal-fired power generation, with 40 mines employing approximately 9,000 workers in the region (Miskelly 2019). As a result,

⁴¹ Any unattributed quotations are from the interview with Joel Fitzgibbon on 15/07/2019.

the electorate is politically sensitive to the climate change debate, evident in large swings against Labor at the height of this issue, notably 8.8% in 2013 (ABC 2013) and 9.5% in 2019 (ABC 2019). According to Fitzgibbon, although Hunter is becoming more progressive, it is guided by economic costs to the community and therefore rejects the ALP when it is perceived to be anti-coal mining. The future of the electorate and its miners have always been Fitzgibbon's central concern. Following the 2019 federal election, Fitzgibbon promised to preserve the future of Hunter by contesting ALP leadership if the next candidate failed to guarantee political support for coal and regional Australia (Maher 2019).

Fitzgibbon is aligned with the right-wing faction of the ALP, Centre Unity. In the interview, he explained that Centre Unity does not formally interact with interest groups or activists. With regard to the climate change debate, Fitzgibbon stated that the Right tries to balance emissions-reduction with economic development to ensure the retention and growth of jobs in the economy. It "ensures that we don't overreach". This is important as "overreach typically consigns [the ALP] to Opposition".

The rationale for financial concessions to industry, according to Fitzgibbon, was to be able to sell the policy to the Australian people. Alongside industry, compensation was provided for pensioners, low-income earners and emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries. The Gillard Government also raised the tax-free threshold to ensure "compensation went to everyone" (Gillard 2014:388). Unfortunately, this rationale was not successful as the Clean Energy Act, dubbed the 'carbon tax', was unpopular nationwide.

Despite being a centre of coal-mining activity, Fitzgibbon did not recall any substantial protests having taken place in the electorate of Hunter. There was little presence of pro- and anti-mitigation activists, possibly because the electorate has always been so supportive of coal. "Their efforts would be better invested elsewhere", he speculated. He did not recall the presence of union organisations such as the CFMMEU or the MCA, nor did he encounter any environmentalist activity apart from the recent Youth Climate Strike in Newcastle on March 15 ahead of the 2019 federal election.

While he remembered little of the 2007-2013 Labor Government, he commented on the behaviour of interest groups during the 2019 election campaign. He identified the Labor Environment Action Network (LEAN), a grassroots network of ALP members committed to action on climate change (LEAN 2019), as having been influential on ALP policy. Regardless, he described the ALP climate change policy ahead of the 2019 election as having a “light touch” compared with the robust CPRS under Rudd and Clean Energy Act under Gillard.

Interview 3 - Peter Garrett

Peter Garrett, environmentalist and Lead Singer of Midnight Oil, served as the Labor Member for Kingsford-Smith during the Labor Government. He was appointed as Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts under the Rudd Leadership, and later, as the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth under Gillard. Before entering Federal Parliament, Garrett was the President of the national environment organisation, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). He was also a Board Member of leading independent environmental campaigning organisation, Greenpeace International. At the time of this study, Garrett was touring Europe with Midnight Oil and therefore agreed to respond to the interview questions via email.

Within his interview, Garrett revealed that Labor Government climate policy attracted the lobbying efforts of industry and environmental groups alike. Garrett recalled that the BCA and the MCA were particularly active, as were the ACF and other environmental non-governmental organisations, but to a lesser extent. Mining companies swayed the political debate by funding media and advertising campaigns against the government. This is one example where environmental groups were outnumbered and outspent by industry. The antagonism of the efforts by pro- and anti-environment groups to influence the government was a source of tension in the creation of climate change policy. Similarly, Members of Parliament were at odds with one another over whether the resources industry should be shielded from carbon-reduction policy or if it could withstand a faster transition to a low-carbon economy. Garrett addressed the ‘perverse nature’ of the climate change debate in

his memoir, *Big Blue Sky*, stating that doubters within the Labor Cabinet were ‘always dropping dissent to the press gallery’ (Garrett 2015:343).

Concerning the National Platforms, Garrett was always in favour of the Precautionary Principle. Garrett frequently referenced the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act (1999) during his appointment as Labor Minister for the Environment to block developments which threatened the natural environment, biodiversity and heritage (DEE 2019; Morton 2019).⁴² He said, the omission of the Precautionary Principle from future National Platforms reflected the view of the Right faction. Garrett also attributed this change to the influence of powerful unions such as the CFMEU which, he said, were reluctant to advance true sustainability.

Interview 4 - Greg Combet

Former Labor Member for Charlton, Greg Combet’s political career began with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).⁴³ A coal-mining engineer by profession, he joined the peak union body in Australia of 38 affiliated unions, which together represent 1.8 million workers. There he was employed for twenty years as a Union Official and as the Secretary (ACTU 2019; APH 2019). Within the ALP, Combet was Minister for Defence Materiel and Science to the Rudd Government, and later, Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to the Gillard Government (APH 2019). Since leaving parliament, he has worked as a consultant to unions and is currently the Chair of Industry Super Australia and IFM Investors.

During his ministerial appointments with the Labor Government, Combet witnessed the efforts of “every interest group known to human kind” to influence climate policy. Of this multitude of groups, he reported that business groups that would be adversely impacted by efforts to reduce emissions dominated the political arena. He said, “the coal industry was very persistent”. It commissioned research of questionable validity that produced alarmist projections on the effect of climate policy,

⁴² The EPBC Act (1999) legislates for environment and heritage protection and biodiversity conservation. It is a national regulatory scheme that operates by issuing and approving permits (DEE 2019).

⁴³ Any unattributed quotations are from the interview with Greg Combet on 05/08/2019.

forecasting industry closure and job-loss in regional communities. Studies created to benefit the industry were cited in conjunction with election forecasts that the ALP was vulnerable to marginal seats. This escalated to threats, often by powerful international mining companies that did not want the national politics to interfere with their business objectives. Combet described these interactions as “brutal” and not unlike the behaviour of Big Tobacco in the fight against plain packaging legislation (Swan; Pearse, G. 2009:35).

Concessions to the emissions-intensive industry were granted based on the macroeconomic, industry, regional and company-specific implications expected to result from reducing emissions, according to Combet. He pointed to the variety of emissions-intensive industries beyond the electricity sector. It includes steel-making, cement manufacturing, aluminium smelting and liquified natural gas, all of which would have to adjust to the climate policy. Concessions were to function to “phase-in” emissions-intensive sectors to the emissions-reduction scheme, thus allowing for a “just-transition”. Having held a senior position in the ACTU, Combet maintained a dialogue with the relevant unions to try to overcome the scare campaign by the LNP and the fossil-fuel industry against climate policy. He recounted that the coal mining union ultimately decided to hold a plebiscite on the ALP CPRS. It gained over 90% support from its members.

Reflecting on the National Conferences and Platforms, former Climate Change Minister Combet said the ALP environmental priorities were in accordance with what was happening on the ground. However, he said, “there is also a practical reality for political parties”. The democratic process of Conference motivates idealism such that the constraints which come with being in government are not taken into account. Economic reality is the largest constraining factor to this purist sentiment. The Labor Government was “absolutely committed” to the transition from a carbon economy to a low-pollution future; Combet said, “we wouldn’t have put ourselves through all this pain”. However, the Labor Government was responsible to its constituency represented by various interest groups. While interest groups can be very powerful and influential, Combet said, that is how it should be. They are key to democracy and lead to sustainable public policy outcomes.

Biography 1 - Julia Gillard

'Our Atmosphere', a chapter in the autobiography, *My Story* (2014), by former ALP Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, focusses on the effects of carbon-emissions on anthropogenic climate change and the policy her Cabinet created to counteract it. It recounts the process of climate change policymaking undertaken during 2007-2013, prior to and including her leadership in 2010-2013.

Operating in the highly sensitive economic climate following the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008, the Rudd Government had to take into account a varied and conflicting range of stakeholders. While business interests were appeased by postponing the CPRS, dissatisfied environmentalists were compensated for this delay with a 10% increase in the national emissions-reduction target.⁴⁴ Gillard attributed the CPRS defeat to an 'unholy alliance' between the Greens and independents, Nick Xenophon and Sarah Fielding. They failed to put the national interest over their short-term politics and the ambition to look purer than the ALP in the eyes of environmental voters (Gillard 2014:368).

The CEA did not suffer the same fate as the CPRS. Rather, the Greens were vital to the temporary success of the policy, having supported the passage of the bill through parliament after negotiating for investment in renewable energy and for funding into scientific research (Gillard 2014:388). Former ACTU Secretary and then Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Greg Combet, advocated for internationally-competitive businesses to be shielded from the full effects of the price on carbon. Advantages for farmers were arranged by Independent Tony Windsor to coincide with Carbon Farming and efficiency-enhancing initiatives. Household assistance was delivered universally by raising the tax-free threshold so that low- and middle-income earners gained the greatest advantage(388).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The Labor Government increased the ERT to 25% by 2020 to stabilise pollution at 450ppm and thus coincide with the Copenhagen Accord of December 2009 (Gillard 2014:367).

⁴⁵ The tax-free threshold is the amount of money which an individual can earn before paying tax. Prior to the ETS in 2011, the tax-free threshold was AUD\$6000. The Labor Government tripled this amount to \$18,200 as a mechanism to shield households from the economic spillover effects of the price on carbon (Gillard 2014:388).

In her autobiography, Prime Minister Gillard celebrates the fairness and pragmatism of the ETS created under her leadership, the Clean Energy Act (2011). In doing so, she acknowledges that the government has a responsibility to its stakeholders in policymaking. These stakeholders may be the usual suspects, namely scientists, economists, environmental and climate stakeholders, farmers, business, industry and governments, however this autobiographical chapter remains ambiguous about the influence of political actors on climate change mitigation.

B. Analysis

The Extent of Interest Group Influence

Qualitative Surface Content Analysis

The elite interview data, complemented with memoirs, was analysed qualitatively to identify the political actors who exerted influence over Labor Government climate policy and to what extent. The interview evidence provided by the Members of Parliament serves as a window into the private interactions of interest groups and the ALP on climate policy.

The climate change policymaking arena was populated by a diverse variety of political actors. Business, industry, environmental and union groups operated in a highly coordinated manner to sway the policy in their favour. The coal-mining sector emerged as the biggest political player with a vested interest in reducing its emissions-reduction obligations. Unrivalled in its organisational size and lobbying budget, the persistent coal-mining sector engaged in “populist politics” (Swan) with the aim of discrediting the ALP leadership and its mitigation schemes. It employed news and advertising media to reach its objectives, broadcasting industry-funded research designed to favour the emissions-intensive industry alongside disinformation campaigns spreading ‘fundamentally dishonest, hysterical figures’ about various Labor Government policies (Swan 2012; Courier Mail 2010). The MCA spent nearly \$16 million in advertising against the RSPT in 2010 and \$23 million against the Clean Energy Act in the financial year of 2011-2012 (Ker 2015).

While outsider pressure by the coal-mining sector generated doubt and dissent in the public, insider techniques were used to threaten the Labor Government. The MCA was careful to point out the political sensitivity of the climate change debate in regional electorates where the ALP held marginal seats. It warned of mass industry shut-down and job loss in these areas as an ultimatum to appease the mining sector (Swan). As policy implementation cannot occur from the Opposition, these threats to marginal seats were very serious. Large international mining companies, both in coal and other globally-traded mineral resources, went so far as to threaten complete industry withdrawal from Australia if their financial demands were not met (Combet). Behind closed doors, the coal-mining sector exerted immense pressure on the ALP to prevent any adverse impact on its commercial interests.

Of the business and industry groups which pledged to reduce their carbon-emissions in partnership with the Labor Government, none were prepared to take real action on climate change if it was to the detriment of their short-term profits (Swan). These commitments were purely symbolic and therefore crumbled where policymaking was concerned. The BCA is one example of this, having upstaged the Business Roundtable on Climate Change after appearing enthusiastic to engage in negotiations (Swan 2014:339). The MCA under mining-giant BHP, which stated support for a joint-venture on natural resources royalties reform and then campaigned against the RSPT, is another. These interest groups are Wayne Swan's vested interests. The mining, finance and energy-intensive sectors misrepresent their commercial self-interest as the national interest in order to hijack Australian politics (Pearse, G. 2009:38; Swan 2012). They are the key political actors who influenced Labor Government climate change mitigation policy.

While ENGOs were similarly well-organised, they were largely outnumbered and outspent by their business and industry competitors (Garrett). Presenting the counterposition to industry groups, they were criticised by some as the purist problem with Australian climate change politics (Swan). According to Swan, the purist expression against financial subsidies, which demands an immediate transition to renewable energy, is recklessly unconcerned with the impact on ordinary people. Yet, the constraints and responsibilities of being in government go beyond environmental concerns. Further criticisms concerning the difference between the theoretical projections and practical reality

of policymaking echo this argument. Regardless, the Labor Government was absolutely committed to facilitating the transition to a low-carbon economy “to have put themselves through all this pain”, (Combet).

The rationale for financial concessions to emissions-intensive industries varied widely amongst the interviewees; each explanation has validity. Firstly, financial concessions were granted to avoid closing down the economy (Swan). While complete industry and economic shut-down is an extreme and rather unlikely effect of emissions-reduction obligations, it points to the major systemic reform implied by climate change mitigation policy. The nationwide coal-dependence that permeates politics requires a gradual transition to decouple economic growth from greenhouse gasses (Cheung and Davies 2017:104). Secondly, the concessions were a means to sell Labor Government climate change policy to the electorate (Fitzgibbon). Thirdly, they were a means to phase-in the Carbon Price (Combet). A gradual transition into a national ETS enhances the future sustainability and longevity of this major structural reform. It doubled as an incentive for business and industry to reduce emissions and encouraged those affected to embrace the policy. Finally, financial concessions satisfied the interests of relevant stakeholders (Gillard). In climate change policymaking, as in all areas of public policy, the government has a responsibility to its constituency, including the business and industry groups that drive a large portion of the economy.

The ALP environmental priorities also received a mixed response from the Members of Parliament. While a majority of respondents displayed faith in the National Platforms as a democratic process representing the party’s values and objectives for government, one interviewee did not agree. Swan gave the pragmatic response that party politics happens on the ground, not in Conference. In contrast, his colleagues maintained that while there is a difference between theory and practice, the politics on the ground was consistent with the idealist ALP National Platforms. Furthermore, Garrett revealed that the later omission of the Precautionary Principle from environmental chapters was in response to the demands of the right-wing faction and the CFMEU. The National Platforms were generally perceived as a genuine democratic effort at climate change agenda setting.

6. How?

Discussion

This research study investigates the key political actors who influenced Labor Government climate policy to determine the barriers to real action against climate change for a progressive party in Australia. It aims to understand the insufficiencies of the ALP's response to 'the greatest moral challenge of our generation' (Rudd 2007) by examining interest group influence. It finds the mining industry has manipulated the ALP's ecological modernisation policymaking framework to suit its self-interest.

The impact of interest groups is evident in the National Platforms and in the financial concessions granted to subsidise the effects of mitigation policy. The ALP was informed by the usual suspects. Scientists, economists, environmental and climate stakeholders, farmers, business, industry and governments were consulted during the policymaking process. Beyond democratic cooperation with key interest groups in the electorate, the ALP was also influenced by powerful vested interests that conflate their self-interest with that of the nation (Pearse, G. 2009; Swan 2012). Specifically, mining companies and emissions-intensive industries exerted enormous pressure to safeguard their short-term profits from the potential impacts of climate policy.

As an interest arena, the mining industry consists of businesses, trade unions and associations. This carbon lobby, known internally as the Greenhouse Mafia, exercised disproportionate power through its lobbying effort to defeat the environmental movement 'with religious zeal' (Miller 2006). Its membership boasts the ACA, MCA, BCA and AIGN; all have been donors to both major political parties. Fossil-fuel industry associated trade unions such as the ACTU and CFMEU also drive donations and share personnel. Greg Combet and Martin Ferguson held leadership positions with the ACTU before their ministerial appointments with the ALP.⁴⁶ The flows of staff and money are two means by which groups have traditionally aimed to influence political parties (Halpin and Fraussen 2018:382). A common ideology is a third means.

⁴⁶ ALP MP Martin Ferguson was the Minister for Resources and Energy between 2007 and 2013.

The mining industry also deployed insider and outsider politics as a contemporary alternative to institutionalised party-group relations to penetrate the increasingly professionalised Labor Party (Halpin 2015). It outwardly engaged in populist politics, staging advertising wars and disinformation campaigns based on sponsored, self-serving research. Behind closed doors, it resorted to threats. Alarmist predictions of mass industry shut-down, although unfounded, were a means by which international mining giants exerted disproportionate influence. Simultaneously, emissions-intensive sectors were quick to stoke the legitimate concern of job loss in regional areas with marginal ALP seats. Longstanding, institutionalised linkages between the mining industry and political parties alongside strategic scare-campaigns have entrenched the coal hegemony to ensure action on climate change is systemically inhibited (Baer 2016:194).

Since its election to government in 2007, the ALP has maintained its narrative in support of action on climate change. Its campaign for the 'climate election' of 2007 was used to differentiate itself from the previous 11 years of Howard Government (Gascoigne 2009:523). The polarising nature of the climate change debate provided a welcome opportunity for the 'climate-friendly' ALP to capture an electorate increasingly concerned with the imminent threat of climate change (Macintosh et al. 2010:200; Kassam 2019). Despite its commitment, ALP climate policy was predominantly constrained in the framework of ecological modernisation. Climate policy, framed by a narrative that the economy would benefit from a move toward environmentalism, was ultimately limited to growth-oriented, market-centric practices. The promise of 'clean' industries and 'Green Collar' jobs, while appearing to decouple growth from environmental degradation, fail to address dangerous corporate practices at the centre of climate change (Steggmann and Ossewaarde 2018:25,26). Green growth tropes such as CCS and sequestration function to reinforce existing power relations and the expansion of the fossil-fuel industry.

Increases to operational efficiency in high-polluting sectors are a common means by which the ALP employs its weak EM approach to environmental problems. By reducing the number of resources required to turn a profit, and ultimately increasing corporate profit-margins by reducing input costs, high-polluting sectors are able to reduce their impact on the planet. This is in conflict with the

systemic transformation required to decarbonise the fossil-fuel dependent Australian economy. Furthermore, the ALP avoids addressing the climate through means that are not standard practice. It does not expressly address climate change - it constructs policy around related ecological issues which come to serve as a proxy for this contested partisan problem. For example, the water-related clauses in the National Platforms avoid stating the link between climate change and severe drought. The resulting drought policy is concerned with the distribution of water resources rather than mitigating and adapting to climate change. Overall, Australian climate policy addresses the symptoms of climate change rather than the disease, thereby enabling the nation's biggest polluters and their destructive corporate practices to persist with business-as-usual.

The findings regarding mining industry influence and ALP ecological modernisation are prevalent in related studies on climate change in Australia. These findings corroborate evidence on the effect of mining industry pressure on political parties (Garnaut 2008; Macintosh et. al 2010; Pearse, G. 2009; Taylor 2014) and the limitations of economic approaches to climate change (Bryant 2014; Curran 2009; Pearse, R. 2016 and 2018; Stegmann and Ossewaarde 2018). The mining industry was the key political actor to have influenced Labor Government climate policy. While the mining industry is not the only interest groups in the climate change policymaking arena, it has unprecedented power relative to its competitors. It has been able to exert undue influence by manipulating the ALP EM framework which privileges economic growth and the maintenance of the coal-hegemony. The ALP EM framework shelters the mining industry from the potential impacts of climate policy by mitigating its emissions-reduction responsibilities. Thereby, it safeguards emissions-intensive business-as-usual and, in extension, the Australian carbon-economy.

The predominance of the EM discourse coalition is closely followed by the justice framework, encapsulating climate, environmental and intergenerational justice. This framing by the ALP is characteristic of its social democratic nature which stems from its origins in the workers' movement (Economou 2012:13). While EM approaches are implemented by progressive and conservative parties alike, the use of justice frameworks in climate change policymaking is uniquely progressive. In contrast with the business-oriented neoclassical LNP, the ALP values the needs of the collective. Various collectives are represented by interest groups which interact with the ALP to ensure justice

vis-a-vis climate policy. Farmers, indigenous Australians, middle to low-income earners and environmentalists for coastal and bush heritage and biodiversity are accounted for within the ALP National Platforms. The operation of interest groups is key to democracy and ensures the sustainability and longevity of major structural reform.

Alternative explanations to the insufficiency of Labor Government climate policy note the difficulty of policymaking in a polarised, partisan environment (Fielding et al. 2012; Rootes 2008; Tangney 2018; Tranter 2011). While institutionalised checks and balances in the bicameral system did not favour the Labor Government, this does not explain the failure of progressive climate politics. The ALP failed to secure the balance of powers in both the Rudd and Gillard Governments hence received considerable resistance from the Senate. The Senate, dominated by LNP denialist views, blocked the CPRS in the first term. This was balanced by the Greens in the second term, who expressed dissatisfaction with the weakness of the Clean Energy Act, but ultimately pushed the policy through parliament (Cheung and Davies 2017:103). As policymaking is a daily occurrence in the Australian parliament, the lack of meaningful climate policy cannot be attributed to the Australian bicameral system. Rather, the conflicting objectives in the upper and lower houses are those of parties informed by obscured political actors whom this study aims to uncover. Therefore, the insufficiency of Labor Government climate policy can be attributed to the undue influence of interest groups, especially the mining industry.

The qualitative portion of this research study suffered limitations of time and access to potential interview candidates. Most prospective respondents did not respond to the interview invitation and many declined. While the effects of incomplete knowledge and memory on interview responses was anticipated (Vogt et al. 2014:25), the small size of the sample amplified this limitation. A larger sample size would compensate for incomplete knowledge and memory as additional responses can be used to fill in the gaps. The career histories of the participating Members of Parliament provide only a contextual basis for their participation, however, the flow of personnel is often a means by which interest groups interact with political parties (Halpin and Fraussen 2018:382). Results pertaining to the effects of organisational cross-appointments may have emerged from a larger sample size of interviewees. The research study would also have benefited from a more

diverse pool of interview subjects, including political staffers and industry representatives. Data collected from a larger, diverse pool may have constructed a better overview of the state of climate change mitigation policymaking. This would also have allowed for more thorough triangulation.

The influence of the mining industry on the Labor Government has exacerbated the insufficiency of Australia's weak ecological modernisation approach to climate change. Climate change requires bipartisan action based on international scientific consensus. If Australia is to contribute effectively to global climate action, this undue influence must be neutralised. While interest groups are key to democracy and the contemporary political party system, the uneven distribution of power amongst interest groups has proven problematic. The mining industry outnumbered and outspends its fellow interest groups, reducing the space for its competitors to engage in democratic consultation with the government. It has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to translate its economic power into political power (Baer 2016:199). Climate justice can only be achieved if the undue influence of the mining sector is neutralised and the nation's biggest polluters are held responsible for their contribution to carbon-emissions. Furthermore, mitigation requires both progressive and conservative political parties to address the problem rather than its symptoms. Real action rather than policy masquerading as adaptation measures is required by Australia.⁴⁷ Climate policy must work to transition the carbon-intensive economy based on comprehensive political and economic system transformation.

Concluding Remarks

The mining industry is the most powerful interest group opposed to climate policy. Its significant sunken costs in emissions-intensive corporate practices and the opportunity cost of future profits place mining industry objectives in conflict with environmental preservation. The MCA, in particular, spread disinformation bolstered by industry-sponsored research studies with fixed conclusions. They conducted an advertising war to generate public dissent regarding the Labor leadership. Meanwhile, international mining giants resorted to threats. Both insider and outsider techniques,

⁴⁷ An example of policy masquerading as adaptation is drought policy, discussed on page 59. Drought policy aims to redistribute scarce water resources post-crisis rather than addressing climate change at the source of the problem.

characteristic of contemporary party-group relations, were employed to sway the government and its climate policy. Various traditional measures were also used in conjunction with this campaign, namely shared money, personnel and ideology. Party donations, board appointments and a shared ecological modernisation approach to environmental problems have facilitated a coal-state nexus. It has enabled the mining industry to have undue influence over Labor Government climate policy. This nexus inhibits Australia's response to dangerous climate change (Baer 2016:194), resulting in policies such as market-based emissions-reduction schemes that fundamentally shift responsibility away from the nation's biggest polluters (Pearse, R. 2016a:319).

As the mining industry is central to both the carbon-economy and the climate crisis, the Australian Government is faced with a contentious predicament balancing the nation's economic needs and its international environmental obligations. Although the mining industry exerted undue influence, the ALP endeavoured for justice in granting financial concessions. Carbon credits and subsidies served as a sustainable policy phase-in to counter the threat of mass industry closure and, simultaneously, to revive the ALP's reputation following the mining industry's advertising onslaught. The individual was also compensated through the threefold increase in the tax-free threshold, designed as a redistributive measure to benefit citizens. The ALP collaborated with all varieties of interest groups to achieve fair and equitable policy outcomes for all stakeholders in its constituency - as is its democratic responsibility. However, market-based emissions-reduction schemes such as those employed as climate change mitigation by the ALP ultimately perpetuate business-as-usual. Their greatest benefit is to the short-term profit of the carbon economy and at the expense of nascent eco-friendly alternatives such as the renewable energy sector.

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Appendix

A. Interview Questions

1. What interest groups did you encounter or observe concerned with climate policy during your time with the Labor Government (2007-2013)? Which groups more persistent than others? How did they try to influence policy? Who or what was the most influential group or insider?
2. Reflecting on Labor Government climate policy, what was the rationale for financial concessions, subsidies and carbon credits granted to the emissions-intensive industries? Reflect on the role of the carbon intensive industries in securing these concessions. Who were they designed to benefit? (Individuals, politicians, groups, etc.)
3. How far did the the Labor Government's commitment to a low-carbon future extend? What do you think this commitment was motivated by? (E.g. Ideology, re-election, the economy, etc.)

Regarding the National Platforms:

4. Article 7 in the 44th National Platform states that ALP environmental priorities are informed by the Precautionary Principle. This states that *'if there is a high risk of serious or irreversible adverse impacts resulting from resource use, then use should only be permitted if those impacts can be mitigated or there are overwhelming grounds for proceeding in the national interest'*. This principle was not included in any future ALP National Platform. Why, after 2007, was the Precautionary Principle abandoned? What was the thinking behind deleting this clause (if known) from future Platforms?
5. The 45th and 46th National Platforms created during the Labor Government years stated a *'belief in the need to decouple economic growth from emissions growth, a priority that has particular resonance for developing countries'*. Can you recall from your personal experience, possibly from having attended the National Conferences, what was meant by decoupling economic growth from emissions growth? How was the ALP hoping to achieve this? And how realistic or effective was this means to achieving decoupling?
6. The 47th National Platform created post-Labor Government in 2014 has relatively ambiguous environmental priorities compared with previous platforms. It contains little reference to farmers and business or industry interests. Why was this? How do discussions about the environment differ at National Conferences when the ALP is in and out of government? Do interest group pressures also differ, and how?

For Wayne Swan:

7. I read your essay in the Monthly about vested interests, in which you refer to the 0.01%. How does this apply to climate change policy in Australia? What effect do vested interests have on climate change mitigation policymaking? What about vested interests for and against mitigation policy?
8. As Treasurer, did the nature of your interactions with interest groups change? Did your interactions increase in quantity or intensity?

For Joel Fitzgibbon:

9. Your electorate, Hunter, is a coal-mining region. Do you encounter some mining union groups? Which ones? What other interest groups speak for coal? How do these groups try to achieve their objectives?
10. You're part of the Centre Unity Faction. What kind of interest groups are involved with Centre Unity? I'm interested in your experience as part of the Centre Unity Faction with interest groups concerned with climate change mitigation policy. What is their stance on climate change? Is it hard to juggle their interests and toe the party line?

For Greg Combet:

11. You were a Union Official and the Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. Being in a leadership position in the peak body of unions, did you notice that some unions were more persistent than others? How do they try to achieve their objectives?
12. As Minister for Climate Change, did the nature of your interactions with interest groups change? Did your interactions increase in quantity or intensity?

For Peter Garrett:

13. You were the President for the Australian Conservation Foundation; did this organisation try to influence government policy in any way? How? How effective was it? How responsive was the government? Does this differ with your experiences with interest groups whilst working in government?
14. As Environment Minister, did the nature of your interactions with interest groups change? Did your interactions increase in quantity or intensity?

B. Interview Transcripts

i. Interview with Wayne Swan

Interview with Wayne Swan

Phone Call on 11 July 2019

Question 7

Regarding - Vested Interests

It's the same effect with all structural reforms such as tax or climate change. You don't get structural reform bigger than climate change which is a price on carbon across the whole economy. Now when you do that you challenge a whole lot of powerful and vested interests, in this case, you know there's all of the mining companies, the energy-intensive, all the heavy energy-intensive industries, and for that matter, even the finance sector which is self-professed to be much more sympathetic to the cause. But when push came to shove whenever any of the three big groups thought that a commitment to reduce carbon emissions conflicted with their short term profit, I'll tell you, the short term profit imperative won every time. That's the point I made. The big structural reforms cost more in the short term but have bigger benefits in the long term. So big business and big powerful vested interests are not prepared to put their shoulder to the wheel. They'll squash that and that's what happened with carbon. For us to get a second emissions trading scheme through the house and actually implement it, we didn't do it with the open support of most of them, the business sector or some of the largest offensive companies and when the concerns started they started to play populist politics. They didn't stand up to them with the long term interests they went to short term interests rolled over and the consequence is we've had a decade of energy insecurity and soaring prices. So you know big structural reforms which challenge the power of vested interests are always hard. They're never achieved easily. In the case of carbon pricing, that is the classic exhibit A in the process that we're talking about.

Did vested interests penetrate the party?

No, not really. There were some people who were sympathetic to some of their causes. I mean everyone wanted to keep industry going. By and large, the party was pretty united on the carbon price. We didn't really have any great misery over it. There were people at the fringes but it had been a very strong part of everything we'd been doing. When you and I last discussed when it first went into the platform, which was a pretty long time ago. Even Howard pretended he was going to move towards it which was before 2007 but he never did.

Question 1

Regarding - Interest Groups

It would have been a bloody period of engagement with all of those people, they had been taking out newspaper advertisements against me, slagging me off across the board. Forrest, Rinehart. The whole lot of them. So after we got carbon pricing up... I had never actually met any of them. I knew Forrest, but I had never met Rinehart. So I had a talk. You know you've got a responsibility to the country and they are your investors. Whatever you think of the person and of the politics, you do your best to work with them. Even if they oppose you basically, you've got those responsibilities in government. I had never met her so that was the reason the meeting took place. It didn't achieve particularly anything at all really.

I met with all those vested interests. The whole time we were putting our carbon pricing scheme up. The first one, the second one, it was chocker-block, back to back meetings with powerful, big companies and so on. That's what you do in government, you meet with those people. Just because you disagree with them that doesn't mean you don't talk to them. Chocker-block. I spent all my time as Treasurer going in and out of meetings with people who are big investors in the economy. That's what you do.

You've seen the techniques if you read the section on tax you'll see the very substantial campaign they mounted behind the scenes. Obviously the discussions I had with... And I think many people in climate would have been engaged in the same underhand, behind the scenes expenditure of money, campaigns, against my party and myself. I am sure it happened on carbon like it happened on tax but you don't always see it all and its not obvious.

Basically, the Minerals Council was probably the most influential private vested interests which represented the largest mining companies. Basically the Minerals Council for most of that time was run by BHP behind the scenes. Who professed to be all in favour of doing something dramatic and significant in doing something about climate change until it came to actually affecting them.

Question 2

Regarding - Concessions

Well, because you can't close down the economy. [Laughs]. It's ludicrous to think you can put in it a reform like that, so great, and close down large industries. You've got to carve out a practical program. I don't think even anyone, even someone as barking mad on the left would suggest you should put in place policies which close down large slabs of your industry. You've got to work the policy through all those things which is what we were doing.

How do you explain the inconsistencies between the Garnaut Review and the CPRS White Paper?

There certainly wouldn't have been more in some cases. I don't dispute that for a minute. I don't think the gap was that large. But certainly, there would've been because we would have had to work through the practical implementation of the program. Not the theoretical presentation of one absolute, practical effect daily but in industry A, B, C, or D - wherever they're located. If you look at our CPRS in light of recent history, you know, some of those purists might have thought you should never give assistance to any industry, but the truth is if you want a policy to be sustainable over time it has to be practically implemented. Part of the problem with carbon pricing in Australia has been there's been too many purists who wanted full implementation immediately, completely unconcerned about the immediate fall-out or impact on ordinary people and you know policymaking is not possible in the theoretical. If you want to maintain ongoing support for something like carbon pricing then you have got to be conscious of that.

Question 4

Regarding - Precautionary Principle

It sounds barking mad and probably shouldn't have been there in the first place.

Question 6

Regarding - Interest Groups

We talk to all the interest groups. It's not just farmers, its not just miners. It's also the finance sector and every sector of the economy is impacted by pricing carbon which is why its such a hot button issue. It moves into every aspect of economic and social life and I wouldn't be surprised if there was more stuff on farmers in there at one stage. There's a whole lot of industry policy that hinges on carbon pricing, once of those industries would be carbon farming. The purist expression of industries relies on renewable energy. There's all forms of carbon sequestration. There's a whole lot of different industries reducing carbon or storing or mitigating it or whatever. The fact that one sector had a change at one stage or was more recognised here or there is nothing.

ii. Interview with Joel Fitzgibbon

Phone Call on 15 July 2019

Question 1

Regarding - Interest Groups

This is going to be difficult as that's 10 years ago. I'm not going to make it up on the run. I don't really recall. I mean I would have been lobbied. I'm going to call them all the usual subjects. I mean

I would be misleading you if I said off the top of my head. Even if I had been given a chance to think about it I doubt I would remember. Look, I don't I'm sorry. It's so long ago. I would only be guessing and I don't think that's helpful. I don't really remember.

Question 9

Regarding - Member for Hunter

Climate change remains a hotly contested public policy right across the country and in my own region. My view is the electorate is becoming more progressive over time, and more and more people, and a broader range of people, are coming to the conclusion that climate change is real and real action needs to be taken. I think that will continue to evolve over time. Even electorates like the hunter, electorates which are traditionally based on coal mining and coal-fired power generation are becoming more progressive, but at the same time, when people are pushed to make a commitment to supporting meaningful climate change policy, they're often guided by the economic costs on themselves and on the community and that issue is no easier here today than what it was ten years ago. Now after the election, for example, there was a big swing against Labor in the Hunter and that swing was in large part that Labor was anti-coal mining.

Are you aware if there is a large presence of mining unions in your electorate?

In the Hunter Valley, while climate change has been an issue for many many years. If you go back to the 2013 election, Labor again had a very large swing against it and that was largely because of the so-called carbon tax and the mining tax. In my region, whenever Labor is perceived to be in any way anti-coal mining or anti-coal fired power generation, it suffers a very substantial swing. In saying that, the level of activism in the Hunter Region isn't all that strong. In fact, I don't recall my own electorate being subject to any large protests. There have been protests in the region, activists often strap themselves to the railway line which take the coals to port close to Newcastle. Over time there have been some protests, not in my electorate, but up in what is now the Lyne electorate up in Gloster for example, by groups like lock-the-gate, but I think that was largely about coal seam gas. But in my electorate, despite feeding most of the coal to the coal port in the world, I don't recall there being a protest. The school children participated in the students against climate change march in the lead up to the electorate but I wouldn't describe that as a protest. So that's an interesting thing I hadn't thought about it much myself in the past, the fact that we are, I suppose the centre of coal mining activity, and yet I don't recall any substantial protests taking place in my electorate.

Why do you think that might be?

Maybe the activists pick their mark and see my electorate as being so supportive of coal that they see that their efforts would be better invested somewhere else.

Question 10

Regarding - Centre Unity Faction

Yes, a fancy name for the right. The faction doesn't formally interact with any interest groups or activists. I think the most important point to be made there is that the right-wing of the party typically tries to achieve some balance in the climate change/economic development fund. While you should never generalise or stereotype, people in the left are more likely to be more bolshy in their activists on climate change than the people in the right. People in the right are looking to balance the need to act with the need to retain and grow jobs in the economy. No formal engagement but certainly I'd like to think that the right brings the balance which ensures that we don't overreach on climate change. In addition to having an economic impact, overreach typically consigns us to opposition for longer periods of time and if you're in opposition you can't achieve any of your key objectives as a party.

Question 2

Regarding - Concessions

Well I suppose what Labor was trying to do there was develop a policy which both has the desired impact of limiting carbon output while at the time doing too much damage to the economy and therefore too much damage to itself politically. The architecture the Gillard Government put in place was beautiful in its sophistication covering every possible consequence of that carbon policy. Too often its a carbon tax. There was compensation for pensioners, low-income earners, emissions-intensive and trade-exposed industries, etcetera, the raising of the tax-free threshold which ensured compensation to everyone really. So the Labor government was trying to make sure it was not only addressing climate change and carbon output, it was also acting responsibly and making sure people weren't too adversely impacted by the policy and therefore hoping it could be sold to the Australian people, which we know now was not the case.

Additional Comments

I'll make a point which might interest you. You've probably heard of a group called LEAN: Labor Environmental Action Network which was very active in this space over the course of the last three years. I don't know if they even existed in the 07-13 period. They may have done but most certainly I don't remember them from them. Oh well. They were very, very active. They had quite an influence on the Labor policy over the last three years. They brought a whole range of environmental policies. Having said that I believe that Labor's climate change policy leading up to the last election can be described as a light touch. In other words, not as robust as the carbon tax under Gillard or CPRS under Rudd.

iii. Interview with Peter Garrett

Email Response on 12 August 2019

Question 1

Regarding - Interest Groups

A review of media over this period will help inform this question. Industry groups: BCA, and AIMIC, in particular, were active, and the mining industry-funded campaigns against the government undoubtedly affected the political debate. ACF and other ENGOS were present too but generally outnumbered and outspent by industry.

Question 2

Regarding - Concessions

Greg Combet's book and Lenore Taylor's articles in the FinReview will provide a deeper perspective on this matter.

Question 3

Regarding - Just Transition

Governments don't really have 'vested interests', they have an interest in implementing policy (for example, see the Gillard government's legislative program), staying in power and advancing the national interest.

Question 4

Regarding - Precautionary Principle

I was always in favour of that principle, notwithstanding what the Platform stated at the time or any changes that occurred, and included it in my decision making when Minister, especially in relation to EPBC approvals (see the Guardian/my website on that issue). Changes like this to the platform generally reflected the view of the right faction, and some powerful unions like the CFMEU who were reluctant to advance true sustainability. It didn't prevent a minister from acting in favour of the environment if he or she so chose.

The remaining questions were answered 'see above'.

iv. Interview with Greg Combet

Phone Call on 5 August 2019

Question 1

Regarding - Interest Groups

Every interest group known to humankind I think would be the broad answer. So interest groups in business, governments at other levels and certainly obviously environment groups but everything conceivable, especially business groups and in different industries. Especially businesses and their representatives who were in the business in emissions-intensive, high polluting industries. The coal industry, you could say, was very persistent. But yeah obviously the more that, if you look at sort of the business world, the more that business impacted by efforts to reduce greenhouse gas and things, the more that they are persistent.

There were a lot of public statements made but most of it tends to go on behind the scenes. For example, the coal industry peak body commissions research that duly showed what they wanted with alarmist projections about the loss of jobs in coal mining, closures of coal mines, the impact on regional areas. They always pointed out that many of these seats were in marginal seats, there was an implied political threat. That sort of stuff is pretty common and happened across many areas. In environment groups, of course, its completely the other side of the argument. But they're also well organised and are also not averse to pointing out the risks in marginal seats so you know that people know that politicians are sensitive to how people vote in a democracy and they use that and commission research for their own purposes.

Question 2

Regarding - Concessions

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions especially in a very emissions-intensive economy like Australia's is a massive change. Its a massive economic change. We have a lot of emissions-intensive industries, not just in the electricity generating sector but in steelmaking, cement manufacturing, aluminium smelting, the plastic sector, liquified natural gas, exports, coal mining more generally, the list goes on and on and on. So if you're looking as I was doing to introduce a price signal that would encourage businesses to reduce their emissions, they focused very heavily on that and as a minister you have to properly analyse the impact of the policies you're bringing in at a macroeconomic level, an industry level, regional level and a company-specific level and on jobs, employment of working people in Australia. In doing all of that, I reached the view and the government reached the view that we needed to phase in the price signal in areas like steelmaking and aluminium smelting and a whole host of others, because to introduce it without any phasing in would in our view have lead to the loss of jobs and the closure of some businesses with an impact

in regional areas. So in the emissions-intensive part of the economy we're talking about, that was the reason why. It was a phase-in of the carbon price arrangements.

Question 11

Regarding - Unions

They knew me well so obviously I had a dialogue with many of the unions. So obviously the unions representing people in coal and steel and aluminium making industries like that I had a lot of dialogue with. But you know, I probably would have had even more with businesses involved, company leaderships. But you know, with my background I was very concerned to ensure that the workers employed in these areas were not adversely impacted and that there would be a transition in the economy and that it would take some time. Just to give you one specific example of what that means, I'm a coal mining engineer myself originally. That's how I found my way into the union movement, I was a coal miner. I worked underground, I know the industry and the people and the union and many of the companies as well. And it's obviously at the centre of climate policy, the coal sector. So I put a lot of time to understanding the impact of a price signal on the coal industry and impact on people and in order to overcome the scare campaign I spent a lot of time going to coal mines, to coal mining union meetings, addressing people to explain the policy and the coal mine union ultimately decided to have a plebiscite, to give everyone a vote, a secret ballot amongst their members, as to whether or not they support the carbon pricing policy and over 90% supported it in a secret ballot. So we attended to their concerns and put appropriate arrangements in place to transition people. It's generally referred to as just transition. You cannot change the economy overnight. It has to be done over a fair period of time.

Question 3

Regarding - Just Transition

We were absolutely committed. We wouldn't have put ourselves through all this pain, I can assure you. We were totally committed to bringing in an emissions reductions policy that would achieve targeted emissions reductions over time and would allow for a socially just transition of the economy. That was our approach and that was what we did. I might say that we did successfully legislate it when we were in a minority in both houses of parliament and it was in place for two years and it was working. The emissions were coming down for those two years and the brown coal, the heavily polluting part of the electricity sector, lost some market share but no businesses closed. It was working until Mr Abbott repealed it.

Question 4

Regarding - Precautionary Principle

It would have been replaced by a policy that was probably reflective of what we were doing in government, I suspect, and the party conference is only every three years I think and I don't remember the chronology of it. But there's also a practical reality for political parties. When you're doing those national policy platforms the debate and the outcome tends to be dominated [by idealism]. You know, it's a genuinely democratic process. There's a bit more idealism in it. But when you're in government, you're constrained by many other factors. The number one being economic reality. On the precautionary principle you could argue that with coal mining, it may be better it be shut down, phased out sooner rather than later, and certainly not approve of any more coal mines. But that is more a Greens type of approach, Greens party type of approach. But when you're in government and you're responsible for the economy, you're responsible for billions of people's livelihoods, their families, their kids getting to school, you know all the rest of it and you have to think about these things in a longer term context and bring about change over time and ensure that people are protected in the process in a reasonable way. And that then tends to mitigate against some of the more visionary and idealistic elements of party platform making.

Question 6

Regarding - Interest Groups

Once you're in government, you have got a wider set of responsibilities to be mindful of, but also, the influence of interest groups. By the time you're in government, the interest groups have been expressing their interest groups most forcefully to you as a government. Take agriculture, we excluded agriculture from our carbon pricing scheme and one of the reasons for that it's such a difficult area scientifically, technically, politically, like dealing with emissions from agricultural livestock is a really complex problem. And in the last decade or so the science related to that has actually improved a lot but we didn't have that available to us then. Similarly, the sequestering of carbon in soil was an uncertain carbon endeavour but that's advanced a lot. You know we didn't have the policy tools available to us necessarily to deal with agricultural emissions at the time. Take motor vehicles for example as well. We excluded domestic vehicles as well from our carbon pricing scheme as well although they're a large contributor to our greenhouse gas emissions. That's essentially because it's so politically difficult to put extra charges on petrol when people don't have an alternative that to use a car and petrol as electric vehicles were not even in their infancy 10 or 12 years ago. So things like that come into play and ultimately are reflected in the party platform. That some more pragmatic things come into play when you're in government and have to take responsibility.

Additional Comments

You're on the right track. Interest groups are very powerful and influential. From all walks of life whether they be unions or business groups or environment groups or churches. But that's as it should be in a democracy. Ware a democracy. Provided those institutions are properly reflecting the interests of their community or the cohort of people that they represent. That's not a bad thing in a democracy. That leads to better public policy outcomes. Ones that are more sustainable. Also helps government mitigate the risk of doing harm so I don't have any real complaint as a former minister in this policy area. What I didn't like though was when threats were issues. That's overstepping the mark. That happened often in the mining industry in particular. They are large international mining companies and Australia is just a little place in the southern hemisphere in the minds of some of those executives and they don't like it if the government down here interferes in the success of their business. So we had some interesting conversations with international mining executives. They behaved like, in few instances, like the tobacco sector. Brutal in trying to prevent any impact on their own commercial interests. They don't muck about. These things are played very hard. Basically the shutting down and putting people out of work. And so as a government you've got to think is that real or is it just a threat? Pretty much it was just a threat. Australia has some industries, but resources are a different thing. They're in the ground here. Something like aluminium smelting, for example, that's an industry that is global, the commodity is traded globally. You can shut down an aluminium smelter if you have enough resources and open one up somewhere else. So in those circumstances you have to consider very carefully as a government and some times the threats are very nicely put with a smile. Very subtle. But the point is very clear.