

# Brian Fisher backgrounder

Brian Fisher, the former head of ABARE, has been a relentless campaigner against government action on climate change and renewable energy policies for decades. His consultancy BAEconomics has produced reports for the fossil fuel lobby, and in particular the Minerals Council of Australia.

- BAEconomics was [slammed by the Ombudsman](#) in 1998 for taking \$50,000 fees from Exxon, the Australian Coal Association and Statoil (now Equinor) to participate in a committee conducting climate change research projects.
- Brian Fisher has produced at least nine papers for mining and petroleum interests that contain misleading claims about the impact of climate change policies. All have been criticised by independent observers.

## Work with the Coalition government and fossil fuel industry lobby groups

The Coalition government has previously appointed Brian Fisher to conduct official reviews of government department models. **They have been discredited.**

- In 2008, the Minerals Council of Australia commissioned Brian Fisher and John Kunkel (who later went on to be the Deputy Chair of the Minerals Council and is now Chief of Staff to Scott Morrison) to produce a review of Treasury modelling of the Gillard government's proposed Emissions Trading Scheme. The Senate Select Committee on Fuel and Energy (chaired by Matthias Cormann) then passed a motion contracting Fisher to produce modelling on the ETS. **A [review of Brian Fisher's modelling](#) by researchers from the Crawford School of Economics and Government using standard labour market modelling techniques found that the ETS would have negligible impacts on employment.**
- In 2012, the oil and gas peak lobby group APPEA contracted Fisher to model the economic implications of the Renewable Energy Target. Fisher was later appointed to the Warburton review of the RET by Tony Abbott, which ultimately recommended slashing the RET.
- **Tristan Edis, from Green Energy Markets and a veteran policy analyst, says Fisher has been [wrong about technology costs for a long time](#).** In 2006, Edis says Fisher co-authored [a report](#) that suggested coal and gas would remain cheaper than "non hydro renewables", such as wind or solar, until 2050.

## Past Articles fact checking Brian Fisher's claims/work:

**The Guardian, 19 March 2019** – BAEconomics modelling did not model Labor policy  
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/mar/19/climate-modelling-cited-by-angus-taylor-did-not-model-labor-policy>

**Mediawatch 25 Feb 2019** – on misleading reports in the Australian, based on Fisher's modelling  
<https://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/episodes/solar/10846360>

**Tristan Edis in the Australian, 2014**  
<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/business-spectator/abbott-recalls-one-of-the-dirty-dozen/news-story/958bee83a233f0391717c8e7656dd6dd>

**ABC Lateline reveals conflicts of interest, 2014**  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-05/renewable-energy-target-panel-defends-conflict-interest-claims/5501372>

## The Australia Institute, 2014:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-26/economist-defends-coal-mine-report/5696716>

## Brian Fisher's previous work

Note how much of the work was commissioned by the fossil fuel industry...

- Minerals Council: Treasury Modelling Assumptions on Climate Change Mitigation Policy: Key Issues, October 2008 (archived [here](#), this report was co-authored by Scott Morrison's now chief of staff John Kunkel and precipitated an order by the Senate Select Committee on Fuel and Energy for Fisher to conduct a [more wholesome review](#)).
- Minerals Council: [Employment effects in the Australian minerals industry from the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme](#), May 2009 (led with "23,510 fewer people will be employed in the Australian minerals council" although the detail of the report projected continued jobs growth)
- Minerals Council: [Economic gains from streamlining the process of resource sector approval](#), July 2014 (benefits to the mining industry of removing federal EPBC assessment)
- 2014 Warburton review
- Minerals Council: Implications of Australian Renewable Energy Mandates for the Electricity Sector, February 2016
- Rio Tinto, [Productivity and Innovation in the Mining Industry](#), April 2016 (benefits of robotics and automation in mining)
- Minerals Council: [Implications of high wind penetration](#) for the NEM, February 2017 (attributed the need for transmission and storage upgrades to the wind sector)
- Minerals Council: [Primer on renewable energy subsidies in Australia](#), July 2017 (inflated costs of \$3bn a year)
- August 2018: Called as an expert witness by Gloucester Resources in the landmark *Groundswell Gloucester* case. Justice Preston ultimately rejected Brian Fisher's contention that failing to build a coal mine in Australia would lead to increased emissions elsewhere.