



### Guardian Australia Reporting On Green Tape Inaccurate And Misleading

Cian Hussey / 1 May 2020 / PUBLICATIONS, Opinion, IPA TODAY, Uncategorized

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In an article today, the Guardian Australia outline a flawed critique of the Institute of Public Affairs' latest research report *The Growth and Complexity of Environmental Regulation*.

The report is based on a quantitative analysis of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* conducted using RegData. RegData is a method of counting the number of regulatory restrictions in a body of legislation. It was developed by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University in the United States, and together with researchers from RMIT University and the IPA was

## The Guardian's Attempted Smear of the IPA Proves Accuracy of Research

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In the April edition of this newsletter I wrote about Cian Hussey's research which found that federal environmental regulation had increased by 445 per cent since the year 2000.

Following publication of the that report and subsequent coverage in *The Australian*, on *Sky News Australia*, and on *2GB* and *4BC* radio, Graham Readfearn who is *The Guardian's* environment editor wrote a piece titled "*Claims of a 445% rise in Australian green tape based on 'lazy' and 'flawed' analysis.*"

The piece by Graham contained a number of factual inaccuracies which Director of Communications Evan Mulholland and Research Fellow Cian Hussey summarised and rebutted [in this analysis](#).

Graham claimed RegData, which is the methodology that Cian used to measure the growth of environmental regulation, is a "political project" which is "ideologically motivated".



But as Cian and Evan stated in their reply, RegData has been used in top-rated academic journals, such as *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* which is the oldest professional economics journal in the English language, and edited by Harvard University's Department of Economics, *The Review of Economic Dynamics*, and *Public Choice*.

Cian went on to say that RegData has also been referenced in a range of publications, many of which could not remotely be considered right-wing, including *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, and *Politio*, as well as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*.

Further – and this is where you will think “that is so typical of *The Guardian*” – one of the professors quoted in Graham's piece is Professor Jodi Short of the University of California's Hastings law school.

In the *Guardian* piece Professor Short was quoted saying “RegData is a political project that seeks to reduce regulation, period.” Short went onto to claim that “It is not an effort to improve the quality of regulation or maximise the net benefits of regulation, it is an effort to stop regulators in their tracks, regardless of the costs to the economy, the environment, and to human health and safety.”

However – and this is where it gets good – in a 2018 critique of RegData referenced by *The Guardian* Professor Short actually spoke highly of RegData saying RegData is “a particularly important development in the regulation counting project” and that “RegData is poised to gain more widespread use by governments implementing regulation counting policies and thus must be taken seriously not only as an intellectual project, but also a policy tool.”

Not only that, but an academic article co-authored by Patrick McLaughlin of the Mercatus Center (you might remember Patrick from the tour of Australia he did with the IPA last year) which uses RegData was published in *Regulation and Governance* – a journal which was edited by Professor Short at the time!

The point of the IPA's analysis which rebutted the *Guardian* piece was not that Graham and the editors at *The Guardian* were out of place in critiquing the IPA's research. In fact, we welcome open and vigorous debate on important public policy issues like the substantial growth to environmental regulation which is damaging business investment and job creation.

The point was that Graham's analysis was simply false and inaccurate and his unwillingness to correct his piece or issue an apology goes to show just how above reproach the IPA's research methodology is.

As is so often the case, the left play the player and not the ball.