

Gina Rinehart company revealed as \$4.5m donor to climate sceptic thinktank

Billionaire's company gave significant donations to the Institute of Public Affairs in 2016 and 2017

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Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting donated \$4.5m to the Institute of Public Affairs in 2016 and 2017. Photograph: Jason Reed/Reuters

Australia's richest person, mining magnate Gina Rinehart, has been revealed as a key funder of the rightwing thinktank the [Institute of Public Affairs](#) – a consistent promoter of climate science scepticism.

Rinehart's company, Hancock Prospecting, donated \$2.3m to the IPA in 2016 and \$2.2m in 2017, according to disclosures made to the New South Wales supreme court.

As part of a long-running legal dispute over the use of company funds, Rinehart's daughter Bianca had served a subpoena to access documents that would have shed light on the two donations from Hancock Prospecting to the IPA.

The IPA has close ties to the Liberal party and IPA fellows regularly appear in the media. The payments suggest that more than a third of the IPA's income in 2016 and 2017 was from Hancock Prospecting, the majority of which is owned privately by Rinehart.

According to Forbes, Rinehart was the seventh-richest woman in the world in 2017 and Australia's richest person, with [current wealth estimated to be \\$17.6bn](#).

The IPA is a registered charity but is not legally required to disclose its funders and has declined to reveal them in recent years, citing concerns that donors could be "intimidated".

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According to the [court judgment](#), Bianca Rinehart's solicitors had been provided with a schedule of "donations and sponsorships" from Hancock Prospecting where it was disclosed, the judgment said, that the company "paid or provided amounts to IPA in a total of \$2.3m for the 2016 financial year and \$2.2m in the 2017 financial year".

The donations also raise questions about the way the IPA has disclosed the nature of its revenues.

The IPA's [2017 annual report](#) declared \$6.1m of income but said that 86% had come from individuals. Based on that report, Hancock Prospecting's \$2.2m donation would appear to have constituted more than a third of the IPA's income that year.

In 2016, the [IPA reported](#) that 91% of donations were from individuals, but that year Hancock Prospecting's \$2.3m donation constituted almost half the IPA's income of \$4.96m.

Hancock Prospecting was asked why it was supporting the IPA, if the donations were linked to specific work, and if it was still a supporter.

IPA spokesman Evan Mulholland replied, "no comment" when asked about the donations and if supporters should be concerned that so much of its income is derived from one person.

The IPA has a long history of publishing books and sponsoring speaking tours of prominent climate science deniers.

Rinehart's own views on human-caused climate change match those promoted by the IPA.

In 2011, she wrote in a [magazine column](#) that she had "yet to hear scientific evidence to satisfy me that if the very, very small amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (approximately 0.38%) was increased, it could lead to significant global warming".

She added: "I have never met a geologist or leading scientist who believes adding more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere will have any significant effect on climate change, especially not from a relatively small country like Australia."

Rinehart has also supported Australian speaking tours of British climate change denier Lord Christopher Monckton. Prof Ian Plimer, another prominent geologist who rejects climate change science, sits on the board of Hancock Prospecting subsidiary Roy Hill Holdings.

Inside the AEF, the climate denial group hosting Tony Abbott as guest speaker

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In 2013, the IPA gave Rinehart a "free enterprise leader award" – which she accepted at a dinner alongside Tony Abbott just before he became prime minister and Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch's father, Sir Keith Murdoch, helped found the institute and the News Corp boss served on its council from 1986 to 2000. In 2016 Rinehart was made an "honorary life member" of the IPA.

The IPA has also [promoted massive export-focused coalmines](#) planned for the Galilee basin, arguing they would help lift Indians out of poverty. Rinehart has a direct stake in

GVK Hancock, one company looking to develop coalmines in the Queensland deposit.

The IPA is seen among progressives as having an outgrown influence on the Liberal party. Liberal MP Tim Wilson and Senator James Paterson are both former IPA staff members.

In May it was reported the IPA had been proposed as a potential co-host of a later-cancelled visit to Australia by former US EPA chief Scott Pruitt.

An IPA-sponsored climate study that claimed most global warming was natural was heavily promoted among conservative media outlets around the world. Climate scientists who reviewed the paper, which had appeared in a journal, described the work as "junk science".

HPPL was approached for this article but no response had been received at the time of publication.