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Presentation Title: How is Solar Energy Represented In The Media And What Should Be Changed?

Abstract: Solar PV is an essential technology for low carbon transition and an abundant source of energy that has experienced rapid uptake in the last fifteen years in Australia. However, solar energy also continues to be depicted in media in a variety of positive and negative ways, which can shape the use and installation of solar PV. This research uses content analysis of mass media in Australia to identify the social representations, or shared ideas, of solar energy that have been expressed during 2005-2019, and the change in depictions of solar energy over time. Findings show that the idea of solar energy was depicted in media with six key narratives which were often in conflict across time. Findings also show that the relative frequency of these representations of solar energy shifted over time alongside levels of installed capacity of solar PV. By understanding the ways actors communicate about solar energy through social representations, as depicted in media, this research provides insight into the shared frames of reference that are used to communicate about solar energy and shape attitudes and behaviour. The research also provides insight into the potential use of social representations to encourage uptake of solar PV.