

# Anti-China dossier highlights target of Australian “foreign interference” bills

By Mike Head  
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Among the submissions to the parliamentary committee reviewing the Australian government’s unprecedented “foreign interference” bills—most of which are critical of the anti-democratic features of the proposed laws—one submission stands out.

It complains that the bills do not go far enough in criminalising what it alleges is a massive network of Chinese Australians and non-citizens involved in Chinese Communist Party (CCP) operations aimed at “influencing political processes and the exercise of democratic rights in Australia.”

The dossier confirms that the government’s bills, while supposedly banning all “foreign influence” activities in general, are designed to target, first and foremost, political activity or opinions that allegedly favour Beijing.

The 48-page dossier submitted by academic and former Greens candidate Clive Hamilton and a student researcher, Alex Joske, casts a pall of suspicion over the more than 1.2 million people of Chinese descent living in the country.

Among the groups accused of being “fronts” for Beijing are hundreds of student organisations, professional and scientific groups, friendship organisations and business associations. According to the authors, the 130,000 Chinese students in the country function as a virtual fifth column pursuing Beijing’s interests.

The dossier feeds into a rabid nationalist, and essentially racist, campaign mounted throughout the media and political establishment over the past 18 months to demonise Chinese Australians and anyone linked to them, including politicians and universities.

This has menacing implications for Australia’s large and diverse Chinese communities, whose members have migrated from a whole range of Asian countries for generations. Some trace their ancestry in Australia back to the gold rushes of the 1850s.

The dossier is in the filthy tradition of the racist “White Australia” policy, authored by the Labor Party and the trade unions, which depicted Chinese and other Asian people as a “yellow peril” intent on taking over the continent.

The unmistakable purpose of the dossier is to poison public opinion against anyone of Chinese origin, whip up right-wing nationalist and anti-Asian elements and help justify Australia’s

frontline involvement in US-led preparations for war against China.

Hamilton, who represented the Greens in a prominent 2009 by-election, told the parliamentary committee: “Eighteen months ago I couldn’t have imagined me taking this position and defending the US alliance.”

In fact, Hamilton epitomises the political trajectory of the upper middle class layer on which the Greens rest. The Greens once attracted votes by opposing Australia’s participation in the criminal US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In reality, their objection was that Australia’s military forces were needed to defend its imperialist interests in the Asia Pacific region.

The sheer scale of the alleged Beijing-controlled network is staggering. The dossier lists 81 organisations accused of affiliation to the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China, which supposedly spearheads the CCP’s activities.

This encompasses a huge variety of groups, ranging from the Australian Hokkian Huaykuan Seniors Association to the Australian Chinese Musicians Association. These affiliates allegedly “constitute a significant proportion of Chinese community groups in Australia.”

Another list identifies 37 Chinese Students and Scholars Associations, accusing them of “forming the core of Beijing’s presence” on university campuses. Among these student clubs’ alleged “crimes” are organising events to celebrate the 1949 foundation of the People’s Republic of China.

Some of “over 100 hometown associations” are also named. The submission admits that these organisations “draw together Chinese-Australians on the basis of their city or province of birth with the aim of mutual aid and social networking.” Yet this innocuous activity is now suspicious.

A further list identifies the Federation of Chinese Scholars in Australia and 13 affiliated associations, with a total “likely membership of over 1,000” scientists and academics. Several leading and prize-winning scientific experts are named, intimating that they pass on vital research results to China or serve “subversive purposes.”

Australian universities are indicted for research partnerships with Chinese universities, particularly in fields that have “military applications”—calling into question entire areas of

science and technology. The Australia China Relations Institute headed by ex-foreign minister Bob Carr at the University of Technology, Sydney is denounced for seeking to provide “a positive and optimistic view of Australia-China relations.”

A “proliferation of front organisations in the business world” is said to include the China Chamber of Commerce in Australia and the Australian-China Belt & Road Initiative, which the dossier says is linked to former trade minister Andrew Robb.

Full of unexplained contradictions, the dossier alleges that “necessarily secretive” CCP operations seek to infiltrate Australian society. However, it admits that “most pro-Beijing associations in Australia are not overt front organisations for the CCP” and “it may be misleading to label them” as such.

Likewise, the document states that the CCP relies on “psychological techniques of manipulation and behavioural control” to compel Chinese Australians to do its bidding. Yet, later, the authors say overseas Chinese may simply “hold genuinely patriotic feelings towards the motherland.”

In sum, the document provides no evidence for its assertions, let alone its incredible conclusion: “The strongly pro-Beijing views of much elite opinion testifies to the success of this campaign.” Far from “pro-Beijing,” the predominant “elite opinion” in Australia remains thoroughly wedded to Washington and its war drive against China.

Significantly, the dossier relies heavily on claims by intelligence agencies. For example, it regurgitates an Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO)-linked report last June that a Chinese-Australian businessman demanded that the Labor Party change its policy on the South China Sea, in return for a \$400,000 donation.

It is a matter of record, however, that Labor has remained lockstep with the Liberal-National government in backing provocative US “freedom of navigation operations” to challenge China’s territorial claims in that sea.

The dossier also depends on propaganda generated by Washington-based thinktanks, notably the neo-conservative Jamestown Foundation and the US government-funded Woodrow Wilson Center. It hails a “ground-breaking study” by New Zealand academic Anne-Marie Brady, who is a Global Fellow at the Wilson Center.

Brady’s document, released just before last September’s New Zealand election, claimed, again without substantiation, that the ruling National Party was beholden to Chinese business interests. This fed into a virulent anti-Chinese campaign fomented by the racist New Zealand First party, backed by the Labour Party and the trade unions. Having won the election, the new Labour-led coalition, featuring New Zealand First, has further aligned the country’s defence and foreign policy with Washington.

The government’s draconian new bills against “foreign interference” already contain sweeping definitions that would potentially criminalise the legitimate activities of many of the groups listed in the dossier.

However, the authors want to go further. They declare that the measures will be “difficult to enforce because evidence of the intention to interfere in Australia’s political processes or the exercise of democratic rights will be hard to obtain.”

In reality, the bills already overturn the need for authorities to prove intent. They require only “recklessness” as to whether one’s conduct would influence a political issue. “Reckless” means simply being aware of a risk that influence could occur.

As far as Hamilton and Joske are concerned, many Chinese Australians and other China-linked Australians should automatically be treated as guilty, regardless of any lack of proof or motive.

The authors offer eight “stylised cases” based on “actual” CCP operations and complain they may not be outlawed under the proposed legislation. These scenarios mostly involve vague allegations of “tacit” agreements to generate outcomes “sympathetic” to China.

The dossier is a foretaste of a book by Hamilton, titled *Silent Invasion: How China is Turning Australia into a Puppet State*, due to be published next month. By elevating the allegations of “interference” into accusations of “silent invasion,” the book will add to the escalating anti-Chinese propaganda aimed at poisoning public opinion and laying the basis for war against China.

In a revealing development, the Liberal Party chair and Labor Party deputy chair of parliament’s Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, which is meant to be examining the bills, have indicated their preparedness to publish the book under parliamentary privilege, thus protecting it against defamation lawsuits.

While the Turnbull government is offering to make minor amendments to its bills, in order to protect mainstream media outlets from draconian secrecy provisions, both it and the Labor opposition remain committed to pushing through the “foreign interference” provisions.

This police-state legislation is preparing the framework for the mass roundup and arbitrary detention of Chinese Australians. During both previous world wars, Labor and conservative governments alike interned, without trial, thousands of Australian citizens and residents of German, Italian and Japanese descent.

As the WSWS has explained, individuals and organisations linked to China are only the first targets. The bills contain far-reaching provisions that could be used to imprison anti-war campaigners, silence dissent and impose sweeping wartime-style political repression.

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