



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Stand up to terrorising McCarthyism in Australia

Australia has a wannabe Senator Joe McCarthy and his name is Senator James Paterson. McCarthy terrorised the USA with his anti-communist witch-hunt in the 1950s; Senator Paterson is leading a witch-hunt against so-called “foreign interference” in Australia, which means, in practice, casting suspicion on anything Chinese that could in any way, no matter how tenuously, be “linked” to the Communist Party of China (although Australian politicians insist on using the incorrect name Chinese Communist Party—CCP). Ironically for someone championing sovereignty, Paterson is part of a political agenda that is abandoning any semblance of foreign policy independence, and redefining our national interest as subservient to the strategic agenda of extreme neoconservatives in the UK and USA who are targeting China for war.

Charles Sturt University “Ethics” Professor Clive Hamilton set the scene for Paterson’s McCarthyism in his 2018 book *Silent Invasion*, which asserted, without evidence, that 30 per cent of Australia’s one million strong Chinese diaspora are more “loyal to Beijing” than to Australia. Hamilton’s book fanned the flames of a revival of “yellow peril” hysteria that led to the Turnbull government’s 2018 foreign interference and foreign influence laws targeting Chinese activities in Australia.

The loudest political voices demanding these laws came from a bipartisan gang of politicians calling themselves the “Wolverines”, after the teenagers in the 1985 Cold War fantasy movie *Red Dawn* who resist a fictional communist invasion of the USA. The Wolverines in the Australian Parliament, who have a curiously juvenile habit of leaving stickers of claw marks around Parliament House, include Senator Paterson, fellow Liberal Senator Eric Abetz (who demanded Chinese-Australians testifying before a parliamentary inquiry demonstrate their loyalty by denouncing the CCP), Liberal MP Andrew Hastie, and Labor Senator Kimberley Kitching; in 2020 these “sovereignty” warriors made the serving US Ambassador an honorary member of their pack.

Targeting the Chinese community

Senator Paterson chairs the powerful Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS), having taken over from fellow Wolverine Andrew Hastie when he was promoted to Assistant Defence Minister (Paterson also succeeded Hastie as co-chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China). Paterson is currently chairing a PJCIS inquiry into “national security risks affecting the Australian higher education and research sector”. Rather than examine legitimate concerns about why Australian universities have become dependent on foreign students for their funding—which can only be blamed on Australian government policy—Senator Paterson’s inquiry is blatantly targeting one of the main sources of foreign students, China, its Chinese-language schools called Confucius Institutes, and the links between Australian and Chinese universities. Paterson’s inquiry follows an outbreak of US paranoia over university links to China, which has led to Chinese academics in US universities being persecuted and [falsely accused of espionage](#). In a blatant example of actual foreign interference, the [US State Department has been funding the Australian Strategic Policy Institute](#) (ASPI) to whip up similar paranoia about Australian universities, leading to Paterson’s inquiry.

Earlier this year, Paterson weighed in on a scandal involving an employee of the Parliamentary Library at Parliament House in Canberra, Geoff Wade, using his time at work to tweet about members of Australia’s Chinese community being possibly connected to Chinese government influence operations. Concerns about Wade’s activities were raised by veteran journalist Marcus Reubenstein, a former Channel 7 and SBS television news reporter, who is also a former Liberal Party office holder and staffer to then-Liberal Senator Bronwyn Bishop. Reubenstein’s CV shows he is hardly a communist sympathiser, but as someone with knowledge of China from having worked there, he has expressed opposition to the escalating hostility towards China that has come to characterise Australia’s foreign policy, especially as it spills over into growing animosity towards Chinese-Australians. Reubenstein [exposed on his news website APAC News](#) that among Geoff Wade’s thousands of tweets casting aspersions on Chinese-Australians, made at a rate of every five to ten minutes and mostly from inside Parliament House, Wade on 19 February this year had tweeted a photo clearly showing the identifiable faces of nine children aged seven and eight at a Canberra Chinese language school, all but one of whom were of Chinese origin, with information about their class times and school locations; Reubenstein noted the information was posted “alongside absurd allegations of links to the Chinese Communist Party”. Reubenstein’s report must have hit a nerve, because Wade quickly took down his tweet and the Parliamentary Library asked him to cease tweeting.

However, at a 22 March hearing of the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, Senator Paterson decided to grandstand about the incident as being a case not of inappropriate targeting of children, but of sinister “CCP” infiltration and interference in Australia. Praising Wade’s Twitter feed as being “helpful” to him, Paterson declared: “I have reason to believe that the campaign against this researcher is state-sponsored or -initiated. It’s very similar to campaigns of intimidation and coercion of other researchers who work in this area internationally. I would be very concerned if material made available to members of parliament were influenced by a state-sponsored campaign of coercion.” Given he is Chair of the intelligence committee, Paterson was effectively accusing Reubenstein of being a “CCP” agent—for defending children against a smear campaign!

Paterson’s McCarthyite outburst appears to have signalled a counterattack. A few weeks later—despite having effectively acknowledged his error by taking down the tweet—a government-linked law firm representing Wade sent letters threatening defamation action against Marcus Reubenstein and four others who had published or shared his article, including [independent journalist Michael West](#). Reubenstein has responded with a lawsuit against Wade and the Commonwealth of Australia, for copyright infringement and defamation over a series of tweets Wade posted while on official duty portraying Reubenstein as a “mouthpiece” for the “CCP”.

Reubenstein has appealed [for much-deserved support for his legal effort](#) to stand up to the McCarthyite bullying in Australia.

‘Sovereignty’?

Senator Paterson is hunting “CCP” influence in Australia, but questions must be asked about his own “foreign” influences. He is the Australian front-man for an [international campaign to form CANZUK](#)—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, UK—essentially restoring the “white” British Empire of countries that, as Paterson enthuses, share the Queen as head of state. CANZUK is intended to start as a free trade and travel bloc, but extend into the member nations giving up foreign-policy sovereignty to form a voting bloc at the United Nations.

Paterson’s position as Chair of the PJCIS is also questionable: the only qualification of this 33-year-old career politician seems to be membership of the Wolverines, like his predecessor Andrew Hastie. By contrast, the politician with the most intelligence experience, independent Andrew Wilkie, who resigned his position as senior analyst at the Office of National Assessments in 2003 over the intelligence lies fabricated by the USA and UK to invade Iraq, is deliberately excluded from the committee. Does US-UK government influence in Australia extend to approving the membership and leadership of this important committee?

McCarthyism hides an agenda which is anything but sovereign, is persecuting our fellow Australians, and is pushing Australia into conflict with China. Support the fight against it.