



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Media buries China scandal revealed at Victoria's branch-stacking inquiry

The just-resigned deputy chair of the intelligence committee has boasted of colluding in media "hatchet jobs" that poisoned Australia's relationship with our biggest trading partner.

At the current hearings of Victoria's Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC), federal Labor MP Anthony Byrne sensationally confessed to 20 years of branch-stacking—signing up fake members to boost his faction's power. Byrne's confession received extensive coverage in the media, which demanded to know if Labor leader Anthony Albanese would sack him from the party, and led to Byrne resigning from his position as deputy chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS).

The media and Byrne's political opponents have conspicuously ignored another revelation from the hearings, however, which is of far greater consequence to Australia's national and economic security right now. In the hearing on 12 October, a lawyer read into evidence a December 2018 text message from Byrne, in which he boasted that he had colluded with ABC Four Corners reports smearing China, and admitted those reports were "hatchet jobs". Coming from the deputy chair of the powerful and secretive PJCIS, this private boast is revealing of the coordinated operation that in the last few years has poisoned Australia's relationship with our biggest trading partner and motivates Australian politicians to casually talk of war.

The lack of media interest in the Byrne text message is connected to the extraordinary outpouring of support Byrne received from his supposed political opponents in the Liberal Party, who would ordinarily be gleefully dancing on the political grave of one of their Labor opponents. PJCIS chair Senator James Paterson explained to Sky News on 14 October: "He has given very good service to the PJCIS and Australia's national security.... I've always found him very driven by Australia's national security". Sky News host Kieran Gilbert noted that Paterson, fellow Liberal Andrew Hastie, and others have been very positive about Anthony Byrne's performance on the PJCIS, and "reticent to criticise his behaviour".

The politicians Gilbert cited are all "Wolverines", as is Byrne himself. The Wolverines are a gang of anti-China extremists who intentionally set out to destroy Australia's relationship with its biggest trading partner. Inspired by the paranoid Cold War fantasy movie *Red Dawn*, in which teenagers calling themselves the Wolverines fight back against a Communist invasion of the USA, Paterson and his fellow parliamentary Wolverines have a juvenile habit of plastering stickers of claw marks on the walls of Parliament House. The Wolverines proclaim their motivation is protecting Australia's "sovereignty", but their actions and connections show they define sovereignty as permanent strategic subservience to the USA and UK. Hastie and Paterson are both close to the UK's Henry Jackson Society, a right-wing neoconservative think tank that promotes regime-change wars to spread "democracy"; Paterson is a staunch advocate of CANZUK—an alliance of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK, i.e. reuniting the "white" nations of the British Empire—starting as a free trade and migration bloc but with designs to progress to a voting bloc at the United Nations (so much for sovereignty); and in early 2020 the Wolverines made the US ambassador to Australia an honorary member of their pack—also revealing of how they define sovereignty.

In the last few years these Wolverines have spearheaded an operation to align Australia's foreign policy with the sudden change in US foreign and defence policy enunciated in the final year of the Obama administration, which declared China and Russia to be greater threats to the USA than the murderous terrorism of Islamic State (ISIS). This operation included a relative handful of politicians (the Wolverines), journalists, academics, and Australia's intelligence agencies, specifically the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). The Citizens Party exposed this operation in a 2020 series of articles in the *Australian Alert Service* magazine called "The China Narrative"; part 5 of that series, headlined "[All roads lead to ASIO](#)", noted that ASIO operates in partnership with the so-called "Five Eyes" spying alliance comprising the intelligence agencies of the USA, UK, Canada, NZ and Australia, dominated by the CIA and MI6, and its activities should be seen as a foreign interference operation to bring Australia into line with the changing US (and UK) geopolitical strategy.

The series also documented the role in this anti-China operation of *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* investigative journalist Nick McKenzie, now with the Nine media company fronting stories for

60 Minutes, but previously with Four Corners. In the last few years McKenzie has aired many stories targeting China and China-connected Australians; these stories reveal his close connections to ASIO and the Wolverines, who are always his main sources. Numerous of these stories have resulted in McKenzie being involved in multiple losing defamation suits. For instance, ABC Four Corners had to settle a defamation action from a 2017 report by Nick McKenzie which had slandered a Chinese student Ms Lupin Lu, using a heavily edited video to make it appear she admitted to being a Chinese spy, when in fact she had denied it. ABC and Fairfax lost another defamation action from a Four Corners story by Nick McKenzie, which falsely accused Australian businessman Dr Chau Chak Wing of being an agent of the Chinese government.

In Anthony Byrne's 2018 text message to then-factional ally Adem Somyurek, he threatened a female Labor party activist in a way that boasted of his personal collusion with these dishonest media attacks relating to China: "If she mucks you up", Byrne texted, "I will make sure she guest stars on the next Four Corners hatchet job on China, which I'll be on." When Somyurek replied, "She appears to be OK", Byrne texted back: "OK. Watch her—she's a rat-f**ker."

So here we have an intelligence powerbroker and US-loyalist Wolverine admitting the Four Corners China stories that whipped up hysterical alarm in Australia about Chinese "interference" were deliberately fraudulent "hatchet jobs"; threatening to use the China hysteria in a McCarthyite way to terrorise a political opponent; and repeating a disgusting label for the Chinese that derives from then-PM Kevin Rudd's infamous outburst at the 2009 Copenhagen climate change summit. And both the media and his political opponents in the Liberal Party aren't interested?

Australia's exporters have suffered greatly from the collapse in Australia's relationship with China, and now every day we are edging closer to an unthinkable war of annihilation. Here we have evidence of a key participant in the agenda to push Australia to this position admitting to its deliberately fraudulent, and indeed viciously racist nature. If you see the sheer insanity of heading to war with China, recognise and reject the lies and liars that are paving the way.