



Australian Government  
 Department of Home Affairs

## TALKING POINTS

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Operational Activity</b>	
<b>Date</b>	26 June 2020	<b>Version: 1</b>
<b>Type</b>	Whole of Government	
<b>Media Officer:</b>	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	<b>Media Ph:</b> 02 6264 2244

### ISSUE

*The below whole-of-government media talking points are provided to support possible operational activity by law enforcement and national security agencies.  
 Please note: no comment should be provided prior to the operational activity commencing.  
 Please note: these TPs will be updated as required.*

### TALKING POINTS UNCLASSIFIED

I am aware of recent operational activity in regard to the execution of search warrants in NSW and related media reporting.

There is no threat to public safety.

As per long standing practice, the Government does not provide ongoing commentary on operational matters.

Questions on law enforcement activity should be directed to the Australian Federal Police.



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Department of Home Affairs

## TALKING POINTS

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Countering Foreign Interference</b>	
<b>Date</b>	26 June 2020	<b>Version: 2</b>
<b>Type</b>	Whole of Government	
<b>Media Officer:</b>	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	<b>Media Ph: 02 6264 2244</b>

### ISSUE

*The below whole-of-government media talking points are provided to support reported operational activity by law enforcement and national security agencies. They are only to be used if asked.*

### TALKING POINTS **UNCLASSIFIED**

The number one priority for our Government is to keep Australians safe from those who seek to do us harm.

Espionage and foreign interference represent a serious threat to Australia's sovereignty and security and the integrity of our national institutions.

I am aware of recent operational activity in regard to the execution of search warrants in NSW and related media reporting.

There is no threat to public safety.

As per long standing practice, the Government will not provide ongoing commentary on operational matters.

***If asked: Who was the subject of the searches?***

I will not provide any detail in relation to ongoing operational matters.

***If asked: Does this activity relate to China?***

I will not provide any detail in relation to ongoing operational matters.

***If asked: Has anyone been arrested or charged?***

Questions on law enforcement activity are best directed to the Australian Federal Police

***If asked: is this activity related to the PM's announcement about a cyber-attack?***

I am not aware of any connection. The PM's announcement was about cyber security; this activity involves alleged foreign interference.

***If asked: what determined the timing of this activity?***

I'm advised the timing was determined by operational necessity.

***If pressed: what operational activity?***

The operational activity that is currently being reported in the media relating to the execution of search warrants in NSW. As I have previously said, and in accordance with long-standing practice, I cannot comment on operation details.

***If asked: What is the scale of foreign interference in Australia?***

- Australia's Director General of Security has stated "ASIO assesses that the current scale of foreign intelligence activity against Australian interests remains at an unacceptably high level. Hostile intelligence activity continues to pose a real threat to Australia, our sovereignty and our security."
  - We have seen foreign interference activities directed at our decision makers in government, our academic and research sector and in our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
  - Left unchecked these activities can undermine our democratic systems and erode our sovereignty.

***If asked: Is this activity related to the new Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce***

- The Australian Government has taken significant steps to strengthen Australia's capacity to protect us from foreign interference. As the Prime Minister has said, Australians can be assured that the resources have never been stronger, the laws have never been tougher and the Government has never been more determined to keep Australians free and safe from foreign interference.
- In December 2019, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce to disrupt and deter anyone attempting to undermine our national interests.
  - This operational taskforce is led by a senior ASIO officer, with representatives from ASIO, the AFP, the Australian Transactions Report and Analysis Centre, the Australian Signals Directorate, the Australian Geospatial Intelligence Organisation and the Office of National Intelligence all contributing to its work.
- The taskforce has been instrumental in the law enforcement and intelligence activity related to these events.

***If asked: What is the Government doing about foreign interference?***

- In 2018 a number of legislative measures were passed to make it more difficult for foreign actors to interfere, including:
  - the *Espionage and Foreign Interference Act*,

- the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme and
- electoral funding and disclosure reforms.
- In April 2018, the Government appointed the National Counter Foreign Interference Coordinator, to coordinate whole-of-government efforts to respond to acts of foreign interference and administer Australia's Counter Foreign Interference Strategy.
- Recognising the scale of the threat, the Government has supplemented Australia's capacity to counter foreign interference by providing \$126.6 million since 2018-19.
- On 14 November 2019 the Government and the University sector released guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian University sector, to protect Australian research, intellectual property and data held on university systems from foreign interference.

***If asked: Are these measures targeting China?***

- These measures are not targeted against specific foreign states but focus on building resilience in the sectors of Australian society most at risk to foreign interference.
- The multicultural makeup of modern Australia is one of our greatest assets.

***If pushed: Won't these actions further impact Australia's relationship with China?***

- The threat of foreign interference is not confined to any one particular nation—Australia's counter foreign interference approach applies equally to all countries.
- Our approach seeks to strengthen Australia's capacity to protect our sovereignty and our own interests from all acts of foreign interference.

**Broad statements on relationship with China**

- We value our relationship with China, an important and longstanding partner underpinned by strong fundamentals and shared interests.
- The Australian Government is committed to a constructive relationship with China.
  - There are many areas where Australia and China share common objectives but, like all partners, from time to time we have different views, including on some important issues.
  - The relationship is, nevertheless, fundamentally a robust one, founded on our natural economic partnership and strong people-to-people links.

***If asked: What is the difference between foreign interference and foreign influence?***

- It is important to distinguish between foreign influence and interference.
- All governments, including Australia's, try to influence deliberations on issues of importance to them.
  - These activities, when conducted in an open and transparent manner, can contribute positively to public debate and are welcome in Australia.
  - Interference involves coercive, clandestine, deceptive or corrupting activities undertaken by, or on behalf of a foreign actor, and which are contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests.

***If asked: Given that the threat is at unprecedented levels, how many prosecutions are underway?***

- Note that the provisions of the *Espionage and Foreign Interference* legislation cannot be applied retrospectively.
- As a matter of longstanding practice, the Australian Government does not comment on matters of intelligence or law enforcement operations.



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Department of Home Affairs

## TALKING POINTS

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Countering Foreign Interference</b>	
<b>Date</b>	30 June 2020	<b>Version: 3</b>
<b>Type</b>	Whole of Government	
<b>Media Officer:</b>	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	<b>Media Ph: 02 6264 2244</b>

### ISSUE

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### TALKING POINTS UNCLASSIFIED

The number one priority for our Government is to keep Australians safe from those who seek to do us harm.

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I am aware of recent operational activity in regard to the execution of search warrants in NSW and related media reporting.

There is no threat to public safety.

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  - We have seen foreign interference activities directed at our decision makers in government, our academic and research sector and in our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
  - Left unchecked these activities can undermine our democratic systems and erode our sovereignty.

***If asked: Is this activity related to the new Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce***

- The Australian Government has taken significant steps to strengthen Australia's capacity to protect us from foreign interference.
  - As the Prime Minister has said, Australians can be assured that the resources have never been stronger, the laws have never been tougher and the Government has never been more determined to keep Australians free and safe from foreign interference.
- In December 2019, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce to disrupt and deter anyone attempting to undermine our national interests.
  - This operational taskforce is led by a senior ASIO officer, with representatives from ASIO, the AFP, the Australian Transactions Report and Analysis Centre, the Australian Signals Directorate, the Australian Geospatial Intelligence Organisation and the Office of National Intelligence all contributing to its work.
- The taskforce has been instrumental in the law enforcement and intelligence activity related to these events.

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  - the Espionage and Foreign Interference Act,
  - the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme and
  - electoral funding and disclosure reforms.
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- Recognising the scale of the threat, the Government has supplemented Australia's capacity to counter foreign interference by providing \$126.6 million since 2018-19.
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***If asked: Are these measures targeting China?***

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- The multicultural makeup of modern Australia is one of our greatest assets.

***If pushed: Won't these actions further impact Australia's relationship with China?***

- The threat of foreign interference is not confined to any one particular nation—Australia's counter foreign interference approach applies equally to all countries.
- Our approach seeks to strengthen Australia's capacity to protect our sovereignty and our own interests from all acts of foreign interference.

***If asked about allegations of Australian intelligence activity in China in the Global Times newspaper?***

- Australia will not comment on intelligence allegations. Consistent with long-standing practice by successive governments we neither confirm nor deny intelligence matters.
- Australia's intelligence and security agencies are committed to protecting our national security, including the important work of countering the serious threat of foreign interference.

**Broad statements on relationship with China**



- We value our relationship with China, an important and longstanding partner underpinned by strong fundamentals and shared interests.
- The Australian Government is committed to a constructive relationship with China.
  - There are many areas where Australia and China share common objectives but, like all partners, from time to time we have different views, including on some important issues.
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***If asked: Given that the threat is at unprecedented levels, how many prosecutions are underway?***

- Note that the provisions of the Espionage and Foreign Interference legislation cannot be applied retrospectively.
- As a matter of longstanding practice, the Australian Government does not comment on matters of intelligence or law enforcement operations.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

**BACKGROUND (not for public release)**

There has been continued media reporting and commentary on this operation since Friday, 26 June starting with initial online reports by Nick McKenzie <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/nsw-mp-s-sydney-home-raided-as-asio-probes-china-links-20200626-p556f6.html>

A follow-up report from Nick McKenzie was aired on 60 Minutes on Sunday, 28 June <https://9now.nine.com.au/60-minutes/asio-investigation-alleged-foreign-interference-china-60-minutes/6939c129-181f-4bfd-8228-e4da4d17540b>

In an article on 29 June 2020, the Global Times alleged Australian security intelligence agencies engaged in a range of “espionage activities and surveillance” in China.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

**CLEARANCE:**

Drafted by	Title	Time/Date drafted
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Director, National Security and Crisis Media and Public Affairs	29 June
<b>Consultation</b>	DFAT, s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	30 June

Cleared by	Title	Time/Date cleared
Neil Hawkins	Assistant Secretary Engagement, Office of the National Counter-Interference Coordinator	5:26pm 30 June 2020
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Director, National Security and Crisis Media and Public Affairs	5:32pm 30 June 2020