



16 June 2020

**Letter to the Editor, *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun***

The article by Ellen Whinnett in the 14 June 2020 edition of both the *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun* contained demonstrable falsehoods and defamatory insinuations about the work of China Matters, and the supporter circle of the organisation.

China Matters does not have an institutional view. It is for this reason that heads of Federal Government Departments have for five years supported its work, believing strongly, as does the Board of Directors of China Matters, in the contest of ideas in public policy and the critical importance of such contest in regard to China. Department heads and other senior public servants have welcomed the diversity of views China Matters brings to its national meetings and briefings, and commended China Matters for including in these meetings representatives of all political parties and factions.

Department heads have also welcomed the expertise about the People's Republic of China (PRC) which China Matters provides, which they have said helps them inform policy deliberations.

China Matters does not, has not, and will not lobby against Australia or the Australian national interest. Advocacy of ongoing engagement with the PRC does not make one a stooge of the Communist Party of China or an agent of influence. One can call out the government in Beijing and at the same time strongly support – in the national interest – engagement with the PRC. What is detrimental to Australia's national interest is the labelling of such people as pro-Beijing.

The article incorrectly states that Ms Linda Jakobson “pushed back against the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme” in her 2018 submissions to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for the Inquiry into the National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Bill 2017, two of a total of 143 submissions.



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Ms Jakobson's submissions in fact sought to strengthen the scheme by recommending: a) that the language used in the legislation avoid demonising the 1.3 million Australians of Chinese ethnicity; b) that the security and intelligence agencies provide the Australian public with basic facts about wrong-doings by PRC officials in Australia, taking into consideration the sensitivity of classified information, in order to promote a sophisticated understanding among Australians of the nature of the foreign interference; and c) that the Committee commission an independent discussion paper by a diverse group of experts to canvas the pros and cons of the proposed legislation. These recommendations are consistent with and supportive of the values of an open, equal, and democratic society. The submissions are available on the China Matters website.

Sincerely

Kevin McCann AO

Chair, Board of Directors

China Matters



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