



Defining foreign interference

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Foreign interference occurs when activity carried out by, or on behalf of, a foreign power, is coercive, corrupting, deceptive or clandestine, and contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests.

It involves foreign powers trying to secretly and improperly interfere in Australian society to advance their strategic, political, military, social or economic goals, at our expense.

The impacts of foreign interference can reach right across Australian society adversely affecting:

- individuals
- information and infrastructure of governments
- industry
- academia
- the media
- communities.

It can occur alongside espionage, disinformation and other forms of malign influence.

Those who engage in foreign interference try to shape Australia's sovereign decision-making and alter outcomes by:

- cultivating and manipulating people through personal, political, business and diplomatic relationships to gain an improper advantage
- limiting freedom of expression and shaping the media and communications landscape to spread propaganda, dominating foreign language media or undermining and misguiding public discourse on matters of national significance
- targeting sections of the community through pressure and manipulation to sow discord, silence dissent or damage the cohesion of our society.

It is important to distinguish foreign interference from foreign influence. All governments, including the Australian Government, seek to influence issues of importance to them. Australia is not concerned with foreign influence activity that is open and transparent and that respects our people, society and systems.

Last updated:
5 June 2023

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The Department of Home Affairs acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and to their Elders past and present.

Artwork: Protecting Country and People | Luke Penrith, July 2022

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