

Chinese community in Australia voices concern over xenophobic “foreign interference” campaign

James Cogan
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Some 128 Chinese community organisations in Australia have put their name to a statement, published on February 16, opposing the stripping of permanent residency from billionaire Huang Xiangmo by the Home Affairs ministry.

On the advice of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), Huang, who has lived in Australia since 2011 and whose family still resides in Sydney, has been denied re-entry into the country on the grounds that he is suspected of being an agent of “foreign interference” of the Chinese government.

Three major Chinese language newspapers, *Singtao*, *Australian Chinese Daily* and the *Daily Chinese Herald*, published a full-page advertisement featuring the statement and the endorsing organisations. It conveys concern and alarm that the banishment of Huang is the prelude to a xenophobic campaign directed against all Australian citizens and permanent residents of Chinese background.

The statement notes that the accusations against Huang are “groundless,” as his donations to both the Liberal and Labor parties were legal. Huang himself has stressed in interviews the remarkable fact that he has been condemned for supporting the reunification of China and Taiwan. Reunification has been the official position of the Australian government since 1972, when Canberra adopted the “One China” policy and ended diplomatic recognition of Taiwan as an independent state, in order to develop Australian economic ties with mainland China.

ASIO has also deemed Huang to be an agent of the Chinese government because he sponsored academic and other initiatives that are aimed at strengthening economic, political and cultural ties between China and

Australia. Such initiatives and activities involve hundreds of thousands of Australians of Chinese background.

Pointing to fears of mass persecution, the statement declared: “What happens to Mr Huang today, could happen to any of us tomorrow. If we cannot defend Mr Huang’s lawful rights today, no one can defend our lawful rights tomorrow.”

In a column published on February 16 by the *Saturday Paper*, David Brophy, a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney, also highlighted the broader implications of the stripping of residency from Huang Xiangmo.

Brody observed: “That Huang would be the first big fish to be caught in the foreign interference net was predictable. For some time, he has been the *bête noire* of journalists on the hunt for nefarious Chinese influence on Australia’s political system.”

He drew attention to the “vague wording” in statements in the *Australian Financial Review* justifying ASIO’s advice. The intelligence agency reportedly told Home Affairs minister Peter Dutton to strip Huang of his residency rights because he was “*amenable* to conducting acts of foreign interference.” [emphasis added]

Huang Xiangmo is certainly a member of the Chinese financial and corporate elite that has been spawned since the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist regime in Beijing from 1978 on. Like all Chinese oligarchs, he has connections inside the misnamed Chinese Communist Party. However, beyond encouraging closer relations between the capitalist classes of Australia and China—and developing his own connections with the major parliamentary parties—there

is no evidence he was directly carrying out actions on behalf of the Chinese government or any of its agencies.

Brody commented: “To point this out is not to defend Huang’s actions, but to highlight the expanding use of discretionary authority to exclude individuals from the body politic. For decades, only non-citizens convicted of serious offences were vulnerable to this form of modern-day banishment.”

The academic noted that if Huang’s involvement in various Australian-Chinese associations was “sufficient to prompt visa-threatening questions of character, then hundreds, maybe thousands of Chinese Australians must now be wondering where Home Affairs intends to draw the line.”

Such concerns are entirely legitimate. As part of its February 7 coverage of Huang’s denial of permanent residency, for example, the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* published a chilling sidebar which stated:

“In Australia, security agencies estimate there could be anything up to 1,000 agents of influence, ranging from actual spies seeking to gain political insight and details of military and energy projects and infrastructure, through to local Chinese community leaders, university students and associations pushing Beijing’s lines.”

In the conclusion of his 2018 inflammatory book *Silent Invasion: China’s influence in Australia*, Green Party member and pro-US ideologue Clive Hamilton provocatively asked: “What proportion of the one million Chinese-Australians are loyal to Beijing first and what proportion are loyal to Australia first?”

This is the language of xenophobic witch-hunts against anyone of Chinese background who exercises their right to criticise Australia’s militarist alliance with US imperialism in an escalating and increasingly open drive toward confrontation with China over economic and strategic dominance.

More broadly, the ever-mounting hysteria over “Chinese interference” poses immense dangers to the democratic rights of the entire working class. As the Australian ruling class prepares for the prospect of joining a US-led war against China, it is preparing state repression against all anti-war opposition, on the pretext that it must be inspired by “foreign” influence.

In its campaign in the 2019 federal election, the Socialist Equality Party will raise as one of its central

policies the immediate repudiation of the battery of anti-democratic foreign interference laws rammed through the parliament by the Coalition government and Labor opposition last June.

The author recommends:

Chinese billionaire stripped of Australian residency as “foreign interference” campaign ramps up
[7 February 2019]

The author also recommends readers watch:

The Facebook video of the July 15, 2018 Socialist Equality Party meeting:

The New “Foreign Interference” Laws: Moving Towards Dictatorship and War



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