

# Foreign Interference

## *What is foreign interference?*

Foreign interference is formally described as activities carried out by, or on behalf of, a foreign actor, and is coercive, corrupting, deceptive or clandestine, and contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests.

Putting it more simply, foreign interference is about foreign powers seeking to secretly and improperly interfere in Australia's society to advance their strategic, political, military, social or economic goals, at the expense of Australia's own. It can reach right across Australian society, targeting the people, information and infrastructure of governments, industry, academia, the media, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

It is important to distinguish foreign interference from foreign influence. All governments, including the Australian Government, seek to influence deliberations on 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.

## *Electoral interference*

Australia's enduring democratic values are grounded in the principles of freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect. Our commitment to these values, and the institutions which uphold them, gives us confidence in the strength of our government and democratic processes.

Australia's electoral processes form an integral part of Australia's democratic system. Any interference in that process by a foreign power could have a damaging impact on public confidence in the credibility and integrity of an election or referendum outcome.

Foreign interference in our electoral system could take many forms. One form is disinformation that is created or amplified by a foreign State actor (or their proxy). This disinformation can spread quickly across the community. Where disinformation may amount to foreign interference, our law enforcement and security agencies will investigate the matter as a possible criminal offence. Tips on protecting yourself against disinformation can be found in our disinformation factsheet on the Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce [webpage](#).

The multi-agency [Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce](#) has been established to protect the integrity of Australia's electoral processes.

Countering foreign interference requires a whole-of-society response. **Contact the [National Security Hotline](#)** if you believe you have information on possible foreign interference activity, or have seen or heard something suspicious that may need investigation by security agencies. If you believe you or anyone else is in physical danger, please contact your local police immediately.