



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Morrison's WeChat Saga

The barrage of lies continues to soften up the Australian public to accept the 'inevitable' war with China.

Now that the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's (ASPI) lies about Uyghur "forced labour" in China have been thoroughly discredited (in a 70-page analysis by Jaq James, see AAS Vol. 24 Nos. [1-2](#) & [4](#)), the anti-China hawks have explosively announced the alleged blocking by China of the "official" WeChat account of the Prime Minister.

This has quickly turned out to be completely false.

The story was first carried by the *Daily Telegraph* on 24 January. It was quickly picked up by Bloomberg, CNN, Reuters and others. Reuters and SBS took the trouble to investigate and made enquiries to WeChat. This is what they learned.

An "official" account on WeChat is a blog like every other blog on the World Wide Web, with a name to identify the blog and a registered "entity" which controls the blog. Scott Morrison was not the registered entity for the account which bore his name.

The "official" WeChat account (blog) with the name "Scott Morrison" was set up, owned and operated by a person in China with the surname of Ji—the registered "entity" with control of the account. It is not known whether this was done independently or at the behest of Scott Morrison or his office.

Under WeChat rules, which are the same as other social media platforms, such as Twitter, the entity which owns the account may transfer ownership (sell) to another entity. WeChat notifies followers/users of the account that a transfer is occurring.

In this case the "entity" Ji transferred the account to a new "entity" called Fuzhou 985 Information Technology Ltd, which renamed the account "Australia China New Life". This was a perfectly legitimate commercial transaction in which neither the Chinese Government nor the Communist Party of China (CPC) was involved. Such transactions are not uncommon, as purchasers typically want to make money from the blog's followers, such as by running ads.

Nevertheless, Senator James Paterson, Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, leapt in to state on radio that "There's 1.2 million Australians of Chinese descent who overwhelmingly use this service and now can no longer access news and information from their Prime Minister".

Having complained that the PM had effectively been locked out of communicating with the Australian Chinese voters, he then called on all politicians to boycott WeChat and thus voluntarily lock themselves out of communicating with Australian Chinese voters. That seems a less than intelligent recommendation in an election year.

The ABC invited journalist Bill Birtles to comment. He stated that the PM had been obliged to use an agent in China to set up "his" account, because Australians could not set up WeChat accounts directly and that WeChat accounts are regularly censored by the CPC. But the Australian Embassy in China has been running an account, with the Embassy publicly certified by WeChat as the "entity" that owns and controls the account. Perhaps our diplomats know something Birtles and Morrison do not?

The transaction between Ji (the entity who owned and controlled the WeChat blog "Scott Morrison") and the infotech company which acquired it, occurred a few months ago, but only now has been seized upon as a stick to beat China with.

The *Daily Telegraph* asserted that the PM's WeChat blog had been rebranded as a "propaganda outfit" (for the People's Republic of China). In this case the purchaser apparently has not even made up its mind—the PM's messages on the blog remain untouched. No new posts have emerged. The whole episode is a transparent attempt at further "China bashing", completely devoid of truth.

The above article was authored by retired senior Australian diplomat John Lander, who worked in the China section of the Department of Foreign Affairs in the lead-up to the recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1972 and several other occasions in the 1970s and 1980s. He was deputy

ambassador in Beijing 1974-76 (including a couple of stints as Chargé d'Affaires). He was heavily involved in negotiation of many aspects in the early development of Australia-China relations, especially student/teacher exchange, air traffic agreement and consular relations. He has made numerous visits to China in the years 2000-19.

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