



# Australian Citizens Party

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### ACP asks anti-corruption watchdog to investigate Scott Morrison for cashing in on his AUKUS plot

Yesterday, 31 January, Australian Citizens Party (ACP) Research Director Robert Barwick wrote to the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) referring former Prime Minister Scott Morrison for investigation. The ACP asked the NACC to investigate Morrison's decision to leave Parliament for private sector jobs in companies profiting from his "extraordinary, unilateral, and secretive decision" to establish the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) "trilateral security partnership" and the massive defence expenditure it involves.

The referral letter urges the Commission to investigate:

- Mr Morrison's secretive, unilateral scheming to establish AUKUS at great cost to Australia;
- his personal, intimate relationship with fellow AUKUS architect Mike Pompeo; and
- his subsequent move into the private sector with Mr Pompeo to pursue business opportunities from the massive expenditure on AUKUS—and whether, combined, they constitute conduct that adversely affected the honest or impartial exercise of his powers as prime minister, and/or a breach of public trust, and/or abuse of his office as prime minister, as corruption is defined under the *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022*.

The following excerpt from the ACP's letter details the evidence for the referral.

#### AUKUS

As PM, Mr Morrison launched the AUKUS partnership with the announcement of a financial commitment from the Commonwealth of Australia to purchase from the USA, and develop with the UK, nuclear-powered submarines.

The estimated cost to the Commonwealth of Australia from this deal is—so far—AUS\$368 billion.

The nature of the AUKUS partnership and associated nuclear-powered submarines deal is highly controversial, not least the secrecy with which it was negotiated.

For example, at the National Press Club on 15 March 2023 former Prime Minister Paul Keating criticised the AUKUS agreement, noting the following elements:

- *"we [Morrison] approached the United States—not the other way around";*
- *"And that approach was to have the United States supply nuclear submarines for deep and joint operations against China";*
- *"Scott Morrison summoned Anthony Albanese, Penny Wong and Richard Marles to unveil his secretly negotiated AUKUS agreement";*
- *"In the afternoon of Wednesday 20 September 2021, Morrison gave Labor a confidential briefing on dumping the French submarine to take up the US Virginia class boat and less than 24 hours later Labor adopted the policy unqualifiedly";*
- *"And in the meantime, no White Paper, no major ministerial or Prime Ministerial statement to explain to the Australian people what exactly is the threat we are supposedly facing and why nuclear submarines costing more than any national project since Federation were the best way to respond to such a threat."*

According to his public statements, Mr Morrison negotiated AUKUS first with then-UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and then the US Trump Administration, before the Biden Administration concluded the negotiations.

During the Trump Administration, however, Mr Morrison didn't communicate regularly with President Donald Trump, but with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, with whom he was in weekly contact, according to Paul Kelly in *The Australian* in February 2022.

Paul Kelly attributed this regular, unconventional contact between the Australian Prime Minister and US Secretary of State to their shared "faith relationship"; however, it is likely the regularity of the contact was due to their secret collaboration on AUKUS, as effectively acknowledged in a 31 May 2023

US Hudson Institute forum, which acknowledged Mike Pompeo, alongside Scott Morrison and Boris Johnson, as the “architects” of AUKUS.

Unlike formal calls with President Trump, Mr Morrison’s weekly informal calls with Mr Pompeo were not recorded and transcribed.

### **Special relationship with Mike Pompeo**

Since losing the federal election in May 2022, Mr Morrison has teamed up with former Secretary of State Mr Pompeo:

- In November 2022, Mr Morrison joined the Strategic Advisory Board of the aforementioned Hudson Institute’s China Centre, at the invitation of his “dear friend” Mike Pompeo, who chairs the same Strategic Advisory Board.
- Mr Morrison has been echoing Mr Pompeo’s statements regarding Taiwan, and following in Mr Pompeo’s footsteps by visiting Taiwan to give provocative speeches that fuel tensions in the Asia-Pacific region:
  - Mr Pompeo visited Taiwan in March 2022 and gave a speech calling for the USA to ditch its One China policy by giving diplomatic recognition to Taiwan;
  - Mr Morrison visited Taiwan in October 2023, giving a speech at the Yushan Forum provocatively calling for a revision of Australia’s One China policy.
- Soon after Mr Pompeo visited Taiwan in March 2022, two news outlets in Taiwan, United Daily News and CNews, published the leaked contract which showed that the Taiwan government’s Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) paid Mr Pompeo US\$150,000 for his speech.
- Mr Morrison has not disclosed if he was similarly paid for his speech; however, TECRO is regularly among the largest donors to the Hudson Institute, and another former prime minister, Liz Truss from the UK, received £80,000 from Taiwan’s Prospect Foundation, the co-organiser of the Yushan Forum which Mr Morrison addressed, for a May 2023 speech in Taipei.

### **Post-government**

Since losing government and his position as prime minister in May 2022, Mr Morrison has pursued political opportunities in global geostrategic affairs relating to his AUKUS plotting.

These include his role with the US Hudson Institute, and a position on the Board of Advisors of the US Centre for New American Security (CNAS); both organisations receive substantial funding from major weapons manufacturers such as Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and BAE Systems, which are already profiting from the Australian government’s massive AUKUS expenditure.

Although a backbencher, Mr Morrison was still a public official as defined by the Act, not to mention paid by the taxpayer, but his Parliamentary Register of Interests reveals him to have been very busy in this period, flying around the world in pursuit of his interests, accepting business class and first class flights and accommodation from various organisations related to his interests. It is a reasonable assumption that in this period on the backbench, Mr Morrison, while still a public official, arranged to leave Parliament for private sector roles with businesses profiting from his AUKUS decision.

On 23 January 2024, Mr Morrison announced his departure from Parliament “... and that he would be taking up a series of global strategic advisory roles and private boards, focussed on the US and Indo-Pacific, drawing on his experience and networks in the region, in particular through AUKUS and the Quad...”.

The private boards he is joining are American Global Strategies, and DYNE Ventures which has also employed Mike Pompeo as a strategic advisor. In a 26 January statement, DYNE Ventures openly boasted that it was Mr Morrison’s role as architect of AUKUS from which the company expects to profit:

*“Having the actual architect of the agreement is a huge show of strength for the alliance; this is bigger than any one country or any one firm”, DYNE founder Tom Hennessey said. “AUKUS’ Pillar II is about leveraging the strengths of each participant and utilizing the best of private markets to catalyze advanced capabilities in the Indo-Pacific for the public good. We’re honored to have Mr. Morrison aboard so we can fully capitalize on innovation across geographies and do our part to bring critical technologies to market.” (Emphasis added.)*

The Australian government has a statement of ministerial standards which acknowledges the impropriety of a minister joining a private firm that profits from an area of the minister’s portfolio responsibility; the statement restricts ministers from lobbying in an area of their portfolio responsibility for 18 months.

Since losing government on 21 May 2022, Mr Morrison waited 20 months to resign from Parliament to pursue personal business opportunities related to AUKUS.

While his decision accords with the existing ministerial standards, that is more a reflection of the weakness of the standards than evidence of Mr Morrison's ethics; as weak as they are, *the standards exist because of the potential for ministers to improperly, and potentially corruptly, profit from their former portfolio responsibilities.*

*End of excerpt.*

Robert Barwick explained: "The ACP is referring Mr Morrison to the NACC because it's one thing that we believe he has endangered Australia's national security by escalating military tensions in the Asia-Pacific, but it's another thing entirely that he is climbing aboard the AUKUS gravy train to personally cash in on his policy.

"This sort of corruption is too common in Australia, but both sides of politics do it, so nobody does anything about it.

"However, in this case, it is too shameless, and the stakes are too high—his agenda pushed us towards war with China! So, the ACP is asking the NACC to investigate Morrison and his buddy Mike Pompeo, and whether their current private business arrangements may have in any way influenced their secret plot which put the Australian taxpayer on the hook for \$368 billion that they and their cronies are tapping into post-government."