

# Marise Payne says Australia won't trade away values to restart China dialogue

Anthony Galloway – *Sydney Morning Herald* - 20 March 2021

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Foreign Minister Marise Payne says the Biden Administration has shown it has Australia's back after guaranteeing it will not grant China any improvement in relations until Beijing stops its economic coercion of Australia.

Senator Payne also revealed she had again reached out to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in recent months to restart dialogue, but he had not responded. She reiterated Australia's stance that it would not trade away important principles and values in order to get talks started again.

The White House's Indo-Pacific co-ordinator, Kurt Campbell, this week said US President Joe Biden's administration had told the Chinese government that [“we are not going to leave Australia alone on the field”](#).

Beijing has imposed more than \$20 billion in trade strikes on Australia over the past year in response to a number of moves by the Australian government, including its push for an independent inquiry into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an exclusive interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, Senator Payne said Mr Campbell's intervention was a “very clear and unequivocal statement of the importance of allies and partners, and is very much acknowledged and appreciated”.

“We very much welcome the approach of this administration to its work with allies and partners,” she said.

“So I absolutely acknowledge and welcome Kurt Campbell's comments. We have been with the United States, and they with us.

“Kurt Campbell's statement is a very clear and unequivocal statement of the importance of allies and partners, and is very much acknowledged and appreciated.”

Senator Payne said the Morrison government had already forged a close relationship with the new Biden administration, highlighting talks between Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Mr Biden, herself and Secretary of State Tony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

China's trade stoush with Australia now covers beef, barley, wine and coal after a diplomatic dispute over the coronavirus inquiry, human rights and key national security decisions. Along with the coronavirus inquiry, Australia has also angered China by enacting [foreign interference laws](#), [banning tech giant Huawei](#) from next-generation networks and [blocking foreign investment deals](#).

After senior Chinese government officials refused to return the phone calls of Australian government ministers for more than a year, Senator Payne said she would welcome dialogue at the ministerial or leader level. But she said Australia would not trade away any of its principles or values to achieve it.

“There are a set of basic principles and democratic values that underpin our responses in our national interests which this government will never trade way,” she said.

“I would always welcome appropriate dialogue, and I have encouraged it.

“I have exchanged correspondence with State Councillor Wang Yi in the last few months and I think it would be a constructive and sensible step, but ultimately that is a matter for our counterparts.

“I hope to see positive engagements and we have made offers of course to engage at any time.”

Chinese embassy officials last year released a [list of 14 grievances](#) and warned it was up to the Australian government to fix its policies on Huawei and the South China Sea, turn off funding for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and stop unfriendly media coverage.

Security tries to exit media from the US-China in Alaska talks as a frosty exchange takes place regarding some opening remarks from the US.

Senator Payne said the government would always counter foreign interference, reject foreign investment which was not in the national interest, protect the telecommunications system and stand up for the freedom of the Australian press and think tanks.

“I think the expectation of counterparts, no matter who they are, China or others, should be that Australia will always prioritise our national interests,” she said.

“It’s not ambiguous, it’s not in any doubt. It’s not something about which we have been unclear – we have considered and consistent and calm in saying that.”

She said Australia wanted to maintain the “rules-based global order” which ensures “might is not right and power does not mean everything”.

“We want a positive, mutually beneficial relationship with China, and that has been the approach of governments over many, many years.”

Senator Payne said Australia welcomed the emergence and growth of China but with those advances came a “set of responsibilities about how countries with great strength and great power act in the international environment.”

“That responsibility about how you exercise strength and power is, I think, a very important one for countries to consider, no matter who they are, no matter where they are. So we have differences of opinion with China, we articulate them very clearly,” she said.

Australia announced this week it will [ask the World Trade Organisation to decide if Beijing broke free trade rules over tariffs that wiped out Australia’s barley trade with China.](#)

“We reject clearly false assertions about our behaviours [in trade], and barley is a good example of that,” Senator Payne said.

“We will use the mechanisms that are available to us, and we would expect any other country to do that, and frankly they do.”