




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Christensen, Mr G

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.54 pm): The Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals leader, Barnaby Joyce, has said words to the effect that he cannot tell the member for Dawson, George Christensen, what to do. The facts I am about to outline will confirm that Mr Joyce's attitude is a gross dereliction of duty. Over at least eight years, the member for Dawson has had a consistent track record of making statements that support Russia and are in alignment with Russian disinformation. Given the Russian attempts to destabilise the West and the invasion of Ukraine, those statements are damaging to our democracy and to Australia's national interest.

On 2 March 2014, the member for Dawson posted a tweet opposing US intervention in Ukraine after the Russian invasion of Crimea. That position was at odds with that of his own government. The tweet stated—

East Ukraine is ethnically Russian & wants to be part of Russia. Obama should leave well alone.

I table a copy of that tweet and a copy of the 2014 ABC Online article that recorded it. The tweet was deleted after the member for Dawson left Twitter in January 2020.

Tabled paper: Extract, dated 2 March 2014, from the Twitter account of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, relating to Ukraine and an article from the ABC news website, dated 2 March 2014, titled 'Ukraine warns of war as Russia approves deployment of troops in region' [421](#).

In February 2017, on Twitter he made several pro-Russian assertions that were reported by Australian media outlets. I table those tweets and copies of the articles that reported them.

Tabled paper: Bundle of social media extracts and articles regarding the Russia and Ukraine conflict [422](#).

In those tweets he made the following pro-Russian assertions: 'Russia is demonised unfairly'; 'Russia is not a threat to the West'; 'Russia is a democracy; and Russia did not shoot down MH17'. Those tweets became the subject of media scrutiny and the following morning they were deleted. He stated they were a 'distraction'. He also modified his position on the shooting down of MH17, claiming that it was done by Russian-backed Ukrainian separatists. Such a claim whitewashes the source of the missiles that shot down MH17—Russia.

Another example of the role of Russia in spreading disinformation about the 2020 US election result has been well documented. Mr Christensen was vocal on Facebook that the election was stolen from Donald Trump. On 8 July last year, the member for Dawson appeared in an interview on Russia Today, a well-known propaganda tool of the Kremlin. That video has now been removed from YouTube, as all Russia Today's videos have been removed as disinformation, but I table a screenshot.

Tabled paper: Extract, dated 8 July 2021, from YouTube depicting a screenshot of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, during a television interview [423](#).

Mr Christensen's alignment with Russian disinformation has continued during the COVID pandemic. On 10 August 2021 he made a member's statement to the House of Representatives, claiming that lockdowns and face masks do not work. Many of the assertions in his speech reflected Russian disinformation, identified by the European External Action Service's East StratCom Task Force. I table a summary of those links.

Tabled paper: Bundle of documents relating to statements allegedly made by the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, in the House of Representatives and document, undated, titled 'Coronavirus: Stay up to date' [424](#).

Russia has used the Coronavirus pandemic as another opportunity to destabilise Western democracies through disinformation.

The member for Dawson has promoted conspiracy theories, such as the 'Great Reset', which links the pandemic with a looming totalitarian society implemented by global elites. The 'Great Reset' conspiracy theory is also a theme in Russian disinformation. I table an excerpt from Christensen's 'Great Reset' website and an excerpt from the EUvsDisinfo database.

Tabled paper: Bundle of extracts from the webpage of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, titled 'Reject the great reset' and document, undated, titled 'Coronavirus: Stay up to date' [425](#).

Some of Mr Christensen's Facebook posts on the invasion of Ukraine have also been concerning. While he has not endorsed the invasion or Putin, he has made posts in alignment with Russian disinformation. In a 1 March 2022 Facebook post, Christensen labelled the Western media coverage of the invasion 'fake news' and shared a video portraying the coverage as 'pro-Ukraine lies'. I table the post.

Tabled paper: Extract, dated 1 March 2022, from the Facebook page of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, regarding YouTube post titled 'The first casualty of war is truth' [426](#).

On 4 March 2022, his Facebook post shared a link to a ZeroHedge website article casting scorn on a Russian ban from international cat judging competitions. I table the post.

Tabled paper: Extract, dated 4 March 2002, from the Facebook page of the Federal member for Dawson, Mr George Christensen MP, regarding banning Russian cats from competitions [427](#).

ZeroHedge has been identified by US intelligence as an amplifier of Kremlin propaganda. I table a copy of the ABC America online report.

Tabled paper: Articles, dated 4 March 2022, from the ZeroHedge website regarding banning Russian cats from all competitions [429](#).

While the post was covered by a clickbait photo of a fluffy cat, it was a story culminating in a YouTube video that maligns other more substantial acts of Western solidarity with Ukraine. Christensen's clickbait drags readers into a more sinister piece of pro-Russian propaganda. I table the article and the link.

Tabled paper: Article from the ABC news website, dated 16 February 2022, titled 'US accuses financial website of spreading Russian propaganda' [428](#).

What I have raised is no secret. It can be uncovered with a Google search. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister are entrusted with our nation's security, but they have not lifted a finger when it has been compromised by the actions of the member for Dawson. Barnaby Joyce did not want to poke the bear. In these acts Mr Christensen may have been an active part of Russian disinformation. Alternatively, if he was unaware of the Russian disinformation he was repeating, he was in effect Putin's patsy. Which one is he? I call on Scott Morrison and Barnaby Joyce to explain why they have turned a blind eye to Mr Christensen's acts against our national interest for so long.