**ACP: Reaction to Chinese research ship returning home from 56 days in NZ is hysterical, embarrassing; Chinese Embassy confirms route back to China based on turbulent weather**

Australian Citizens Party (ACP) Senate candidate for Victoria Robert Barwick today ridiculed the political and media hysteria over Chinese research ship *Tan Suo Yi* Hao passing Australia on its return to China.

Barwick accused media outlets including The Australian and Sky News, commentators Greg Sheridan, Peter Jennings, and Mike Pezzullo, and politicians Andrew Hastie and James Paterson, of stoking hysteria to undo the work to stabilise the Australia-China relationship.

He noted that the research ship had spent 56 days in New Zealand conducting joint research with seven other countries, including New Zealand, Malaysia, Denmark, Germany, France, Brazil, and India.

He also noted the ship is not “circumnavigating” Australia, but returning to China by going around WA, which a Chinese Embassy statement has explained was a decision made because of the bad weather off Queensland.

“This is embarrassing”, Barwick said. “The ship spends 56 days in NZ and the Kiwis are not just chill, they are grateful. It’s the only ship in the world equipped for the kind of deep ocean trench research the Kiwis needed.

“The NZ scientists involved, from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), their equivalent of the CSIRO, said they hope it comes back!

“But as soon as it gets within cooee of Australia, on its way home, the same China hawks and their media boosters who did so much to trash the relationship previously want Aussies to wet their pants.”

“They call it a ‘spy ship’, and they describe its presence as ‘aggression’ and ‘intimidating’.

“Meanwhile, the Kiwis are looking across the Tasman and must be wondering why some Australians are such hysterical babies!”

Barwick singled out Peter Jennings, calling him a “propagandist for a foreign power”.

“Peter Jennings has spent more than a decade inciting fear of Australia’s biggest and best trading partner, at the behest of a foreign power, the USA”, he said.

“His entire contribution to Australian public life has been to push Australia into criminal wars on behalf of Washington.

“He was John Howard’s advisor in 2003 who advised Howard to join the illegal, immoral and unprovoked invasion of Iraq, and his advice was that our involvement was justified not because Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, but simply to support the US alliance.

“For most of the last decade he headed the US-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), which pumped out repeated lies about China, paid for by the US and by weapons manufacturers which profited from the increased military spending that resulted from the tensions ASPI stoked, including the $368 billion AUKUS subs deal.

“Remember when the first online census failed in 2016, because IBM didn’t turn on a modem? Peter Jennings ran around screaming ‘China hacked the census’.

“Virtually every word out of this man’s mouth about China is a lie.”

Barwick called Jennings “disgusting” for trying to smear NZ scientists because they prove his lies are hysterical nonsense.

“NZ’s collaboration with this research ship makes Australia’s reaction look ridiculous, so Jennings has attacked their scientists, saying ‘There are few creatures on earth more clueless than New Zealand scientists when it comes to defence and security’.

“What a disgusting comment. Why is Jennings always given a platform to undermine Australia’s independent national interest, which is in having good relationships with other countries?

“These people are not acting in Australia’s best interest. They are neoconservatives who are loyal to the United States. They want to damage Australia’s trade with China again, and cost our exporters billions, to push us further into America’s grip.”

Barwick emphasised the ACP wants a truly independent foreign policy and to cancel AUKUS.