

Australia's Actions and Commitments Summit for Democracy 2021

Australia has a proud history of stable governance and strong institutions, underpinning our modern, multicultural, and prosperous society and based on our values of freedom, respect, fairness, and equal opportunity. We continue to build resilience to strengthen our democracy in the face of new challenges. The following is a summary of Australia's key actions to protect and further democracy at home and abroad.

Defending free and fair elections

The Australian Government is committed to protecting the integrity of Australia's electoral processes and provides electoral assistance to neighbouring countries. Australia participates in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism as a leader on countering foreign interference, particularly in relation to the university sector and election integrity.

- **Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce:** Australia has established a Taskforce to mitigate risks that may compromise the real or perceived integrity of Australian elections and electoral events. This includes cyber or physical security incidents, foreign interference, and disinformation. In 2021 Australia built a new command centre to enable Government agencies to work effectively together to address electoral threats.
- **Transparency Register:** Australia has changed legislation to ensure information about electoral processes, parties, political actors and donors can be easily accessed at [Transparency Register](#).
- **Digital disinformation resilience:** Australia is supporting work to enhance resilience to digital disinformation across the Indo-Pacific region. This includes supporting the [International Foundation for Electoral Systems](#) to deliver digital workshops to countries in Southeast Asia to strengthen local civil society efforts to counter COVID-19 disinformation and build media literacy.
- **Supporting Pacific elections:** Australia has a longstanding history of supporting election administration in the Pacific – we currently provide electoral support to 16 Pacific Island countries. Australia has committed new funding to the [Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network](#) to train and support election management bodies to conduct free and fair elections.

- **Coalition for Securing Electoral Integrity:** Australia will join the Coalition for Securing Electoral Integrity in 2022.

Protecting and promoting human rights at home and abroad

The Australian Government has taken action to address family, domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking, and modern slavery and has legalised same-sex marriage. Australia is a member of the [Freedom Online Coalition](#), which works to protect human rights online.

- **Strengthening discrimination laws:** In Australia, it is unlawful to discriminate based on age, disability, race, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation. In 2021, the Australian Government [introduced legislation to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or activity](#).
- **Supporting the rights of women and girls:** The Australian Government is committed to ensuring women across Australia are safe from violence, economically secure, realise their potential and enjoy good health. Australia committed 1.1 billion dollars for women's safety measures in 2021. The next [National Plan to end violence against women and children](#) will come into effect in mid-2022.
 - Australia continues to support the rights of women and girls in our region and has committed 170 million dollars over five years to the [Pacific Women Lead program](#), which focuses on women's leadership and women's rights.
- **Reforms to autonomous sanctions Laws:** The Australian Government is [Reforming and modernising Australia's autonomous sanctions laws](#). The reforms expand Australia's sanctions framework to specify conduct to which sanctions could be applied, such as serious human rights violations, significant cyber incidents, and serious corruption.
 - These reforms will ensure our framework is up to date, fit for purpose and reflects Australia's national interest and foreign policy interests.

Fighting corruption and foreign interference

Australia's legislative framework is accessible, transparent, and subject to scrutiny by the public, elected representatives and independent bodies. Australia is a leader in fighting corruption, as reflected in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. The Australian Government has a zero-tolerance approach to foreign bribery and other forms of corruption and has reformed laws to make it easier for corporate sector whistle-blowers to report foreign bribery.

- **Foreign bribery offences:** The Australian Government has [Introduced legislation to strengthen existing foreign bribery laws](#) and establish a new corporate offence for failure to prevent foreign bribery by an associate.
- **Autonomous sanctions laws:** Australia's autonomous sanctions laws will allow Australia to use sanctions, where it is in our national interest, to address serious corruption.
- **Integrity Commission:** The Australian Government has committed to establish a Commonwealth Integrity Commission to strengthen the integrity arrangements of the federal public sector.
- **Protecting against foreign interference:** In November 2021 the Australian Government released [Australian Universities Updated guidelines](#) to assist Australian universities to strengthen their resilience to foreign interference, building on existing strong measures to counter foreign interference.
- **Joint Statement on the Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative:** Australia will work with partners towards a voluntary code of conduct to prevent the proliferation of technologies used to enable serious human rights abuses. This statement aligns with Australian policy on export controls, human rights and our [International Cyber and Critical Technology Engagement Strategy](#).

Protecting a free and independent media

The Australian Government supports a sustainable, competitive, and diverse news media sector that provides for public interest news; counters disinformation; and ensures the representation of Australian, regional and local voices. Australia is a member of the [Media Freedom Coalition](#), which advocates for freedom of the media and the safety of journalists.

- **News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code:** The [Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code](#) helps support the sustainability of public interest journalism. Since it commenced in 2021, digital platforms and Australian news businesses have reached several deals.
- **Supporting regional media impacted by COVID-19:** The Government has invested 50 million dollars in the [Public Interest News Gathering program](#) to provide support for regional media severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Funding for national broadcasters:** Australia's national broadcasters have legislated independence from Government and play a critical role in supporting the creation and delivery of Australian news. The Government is providing 4 billion dollars over three years from 2019 to 2020 for the national broadcasters.