

WeChat denies Australia PM's account was hacked

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Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison opened his WeChat account in 2019 ahead of Australian elections that year.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison's WeChat account has disappeared, prompting accusations of Chinese "interference" from

senior members of his government Monday.

But Tencent, the Chinese tech giant that owns WeChat, has denied that the prime minister's account was hacked or removed from its platform.

"Based on our information, this appears to be a dispute over account ownership—the account in question was originally registered by a PRC individual and was subsequently transferred to its current operator, a technology services company," a Tencent spokesman said.

Morrison's account on the Chinese social media app, which was launched in February 2019, appears to have been replaced with one titled "Australian Chinese new life."

The name was registered by Fuzhou 985 Technology Co., Ltd. on October 28, 2021.

However the account has posts dating back to February 1, 2019, including Morrison's first, which reads: "I'm very happy to open my official WeChat account".

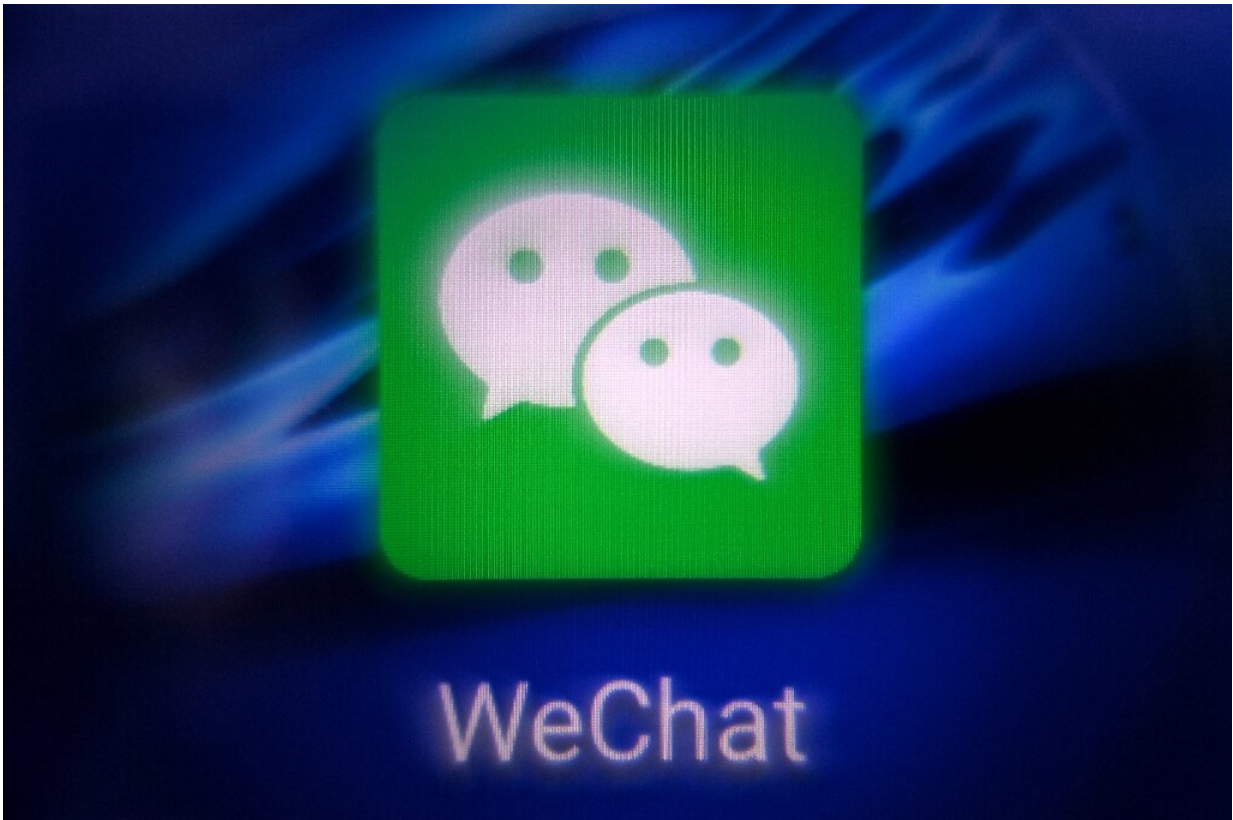
It's understood the Australian prime minister had a Weixin account, which needs to be registered by someone in mainland China, rather than a WeChat account, which can be accessed by overseas users.

Fuzhuo 985's legal representative Huang Aipeng told SBS on Monday that the purchase of the account was legal.

There was no immediate comment from Morrison but a senator from his ruling centre-right Liberal Party accused Beijing of being behind the change.

"What the Chinese government has done by shutting down the [prime](#)

[minister](#)'s account is effectively [foreign interference](#) in our democracy," James Paterson told 2GB radio on Monday.



WeChat is China's most-used messaging app and social media platform.

Paterson called on Australian politicians to boycott WeChat in response.

Immigration Minister Alex Hawke and Coalition MP Gladys Liu have joined the boycott.

Morrison first launched his WeChat account to communicate with Australia's sizable Chinese-Australian community ahead of the country's

last federal election in 2019.

That year, Morrison was asked by reporters whether there was a risk his account could be censored by the Chinese Communist Party.

"We haven't experienced any such censorship," he said.

In December 2020, WeChat removed a post from Morrison that defended Australia's investigation into allegations of war crimes perpetrated by Australian soldiers.

The post also criticised Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian, who had tweeted a fake image of an Australian soldier holding a knife.

The last post on the "Australian Chinese new life" account is from July 9, 2021.

The Daily Telegraph reported Morrison has been locked out of his account since then.

All of the posts on the "Australian Chinese new life" [account](#) relate to Australian government announcements or messages from Morrison.

Tencent said the company "will continue to look into this matter."

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