

Big gap in Australia's defence: do we need an infowar militia?

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Canberra: The Social Cyber Institute released a discussion paper calling for Australia to set up militia units based in the community to counter information warfare and provide open-source intelligence. ([*Crowdsourcing an Australian cyber intelligence and information militia*](#))

The author, Professor Dan Svantesson, called on the government to react more seriously to the threats of information warfare from Russia and China. He also said the country could exploit the opportunities offered by an engaged and well-educated citizenry to broaden its defences.

'Australia needs to prepare for things to get worse, including the risk of military conflict in our region', Svantesson said. 'In 2022, one month before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sweden set up a new Psychological Defence Agency to counter modern information warfare, but Australia has yet to react in a way that recognises the central role of the community in providing that defence.'

Svantesson also noted the historical precedents in Australia for community participation in open-source intelligence, particularly through Coastwatchers, set up after the First World War.

The paper also discusses the participation by Australians in citizen-based information warfare defence overseas, especially the unofficial [NAFO campaign](#) against Russian disinformation. 'There are many complex legal issues to be addressed about the participation of Australian citizens in foreign information wars', Svantesson said.

Svantesson is a Senior Fellow of the Social Cyber Institute specialising in international aspects of the IT society, a field within which he has authored or co-authored more than 280 publications. He is a Professor of Law at Bond University.

'Recent statements by ASIO chief Mike Burgess on the disinformation threat to Australia have not been matched by clarity on who leads on defeating such campaigns in their entirety', according to Professor Greg Austin. 'No existing Australian agency has the mission or the tools to combat these threats', Austin said, 'so this paper on an infowar militia is a wake-up call about a missing link in national defence'.

About the Social Cyber Institute

The [Social Cyber Institute](#) (SCI) creates new social science insights to complement technology in the fight for a more secure cyberspace. SCI is a non-profit organisation supported by the Social Cyber Group which offers advisory and training services in cyber policy.

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