



FALUN DAFA
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

Falun Dafa Association of Australia Submission
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
inquiry into issues facing diaspora communities in Australia

Federal Parliament

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Preface

The Falun Dafa Association of Australia Inc. appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee. This submission includes input from the Falun Dafa Association of Australia, Victoria Branch Inc., and the Falun Dafa Association of Australia, Queensland Branch Inc.

This submission focuses on the Chinese diaspora in Australia. It provides information on the challenges faced by the Falun Dafa community, the complexity of the Chinese diaspora, key influences on the Chinese diaspora, the importance of the Australian Government's responses, and addresses several terms of reference along with related recommendations.

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1 About Falun Dafa

1.1 Introduction

Falun Dafa, also called Falun Gong (the terms are often used interchangeably, as in this document) is a spiritual practice of the Buddhist tradition, indigenous to China. It consists of five meditative qigong exercises and a body of spiritual teachings which have been described as “profoundly moral.”¹

At the core of Falun Dafa’s belief system are the values of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance (in Chinese, Zhen 真, Shan 善, and Ren 忍). These qualities are taken by Falun Dafa practitioners to represent the Dao or Dharma – the essential law and quality of the universe.

In 1992, the founder of Falun Dafa, Mr Li Hongzhi² introduced the practice in China through a series of public lectures. Unlike monastic cultivation paths, Falun Dafa is practised openly in society, by people from all walks of life. Practitioners marry, raise children and pursue a wide variety of careers. Falun Dafa exercise and meditation classes are taught free of charge by volunteers and are open to the public and all communities.

The principles of the practice are explained in Mr Li’s book, *Zhuan Falun* (Rotating the Law Wheel)³ which is the foundation of the practice. The teachings emphasise ethical behaviour, high moral standards, personal growth, and responsibility for one’s own actions. Through consistent and dedicated practice, one is able to improve physical and mental health, purify the mind, improve character, and elevate spiritual awareness.

Falun Dafa is considered a religion in the West on the basis of its theological and moral teachings, its focus on spiritual development as well as its extensive body of scripture. For example, Falun Dafa meets the general description of a religion in the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG), 1996.⁴

For more information about Falun Dafa and the human right abuses in China please refer to Appendix A.

1.2 Falun Dafa in China

When Falun Dafa was first taught to the public in China in 1992, many people were drawn to its health benefits, and its traditional message. This can be summarised as: live your life according to truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance; let go of negative desires and attachments; be responsible to yourself and others. In 1998, the

¹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. January 25, 2006. <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/backgrounder-tribunal-finds-falun-gong-protected-creed-under-ontarios-human-rights-code>

² Practitioners of Falun Dafa respectfully refer to Li Hongzhi as *Shifu*, or Master Li, following traditional Chinese practice. He is referred to as Mr Li in this submission.

³ Li Hongzhi, *Zhuan Falun*, 2014 Taipei: Yih Chyun Book Co. Ltd.

⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/775012ef0058a77dca25697e00184bdc?opendocument>

State Sports Commission found there were over 70 million people practising Falun Gong in China. Freedom House notes that:

State media reports from that period laud the benefits of Falun Gong practice and show adherents receiving “healthy citizen awards.” In an event that would be unimaginable today, [Mr] Li gave a lecture at the Chinese embassy in Paris in 1995, at the government’s invitation.⁵

Despite its wide acceptance and perceived benefit through all levels of Chinese society, in July 1999, former communist leader Jiang Zemin began the Chinese Communist Party’s campaign to eliminate Falun Gong, which still continues today.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is expert at demonising a person or group they want to eliminate so that the Chinese people will ignore, or even support the atrocities committed against their targets. The persecution of Falun Gong by the CCP was founded on a massive state media operation to slander Falun Gong, conducted throughout China to all levels of society. The vilification has continued in workplaces and education institutions, right down to primary schools.

Clive Ansley, a Canadian barrister and solicitor who practised and taught law in China for 14 years, was living in China when the persecution began in 1999. He described the media barrage in an affidavit:⁶

I was resident in China from the time the persecution against the Falun Gong began in 1999 until the end of May, 2003. I witnessed on a daily basis during that period the unremitting vilification of Falun Gong and Falun Gong practitioners in all areas of the Chinese print and television media. It was the most extreme, and totally unjustified campaign of unmitigated hatred I have ever witnessed. Historically, the only comparable hate campaign of which I am aware is that conducted by Adolf Hitler against the Jews in Europe.

1.3 Falun Dafa in Australia

Falun Dafa was first introduced to Australia in 1995. After Mr Li gave lectures in Sydney in 1996 and 1999, the practice became more popular and accessible to people of Western backgrounds. Between 1995 and July 1999, Falun Dafa was practised in Australia without any interference. No one would find it much different to seeing Tai Chi practice in the park.

After July 1999, the key driver of vilification and interference in the Falun Dafa community in Australia has been the Chinese Communist Party and its related entities. Examples of this are provided in section 4.

One way this vilification manifests is in the CCP’s characterisation of Falun Gong activities as “anti-China”, which is a favourite term used to attack any group or person who does not toe the CCP party line. While many of our public activities advocate for freedom of religion and belief and expose the atrocities of the CCP – which would

⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/2017/battle-china-spirit-falun-gong-religious-freedom>

⁶ Clive Ansley, ‘Canadian Lawyer’s Testimony’, Falun Dafa Australia, 27 September 2006, Retrieved from <http://falunau.org/2006/09/canadian-lawyer-s-testimony/>

otherwise be unknown to many Australians – we are definitely not anti-China. The very opposite is true in fact: by exposing human rights abuses by the CCP, we support China and the Chinese people to access better human rights and freedom of belief and expression. We consider the Chinese people to be the biggest victims of the CCP. We are clear that the CCP does not equate to China, nor does it represent the real interests of Chinese people. In that sense though we oppose human rights abuses by the CCP, we are very much pro-China, pro-Chinese people and particularly pro-China's traditional values. The core tenets of Falun Dafa are based on China's traditional values.

2 Diversity of the Chinese diaspora

The Chinese community has a long history in Australia dating back to the gold-rush period in the 1850s and 1860s. Following the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1973 more Chinese immigrated to Australia, typically at first from South East Asian countries, then from China following the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, and from Hong Kong leading up to the handover in 1997. Australia is also home to a large population of Chinese from Taiwan, and over the past 20 years Australia has welcomed more immigrants from mainland China.

Chinese Falun Gong practitioners form another group within the Chinese community, as do ethnic and religious groups such as Tibetans and Uyghurs, who come from regions now under the rule of China's communist government.

In our experience, the reported 1.2 million Chinese living in Australia vary considerably in their attitudes towards China and the Chinese Communist Party. For example:

- Chinese people from Vietnam will generally be wary of Communism, having experienced its dangers first-hand, and will be supportive of the Australian system of democracy, freedom and representative government.
- Chinese people from mainland China, who stayed in Australia after the Tiananmen Square massacre, know the difference between life in China under Communism and they chose the new life they had found here.
- Chinese people from Hong Kong will also be wary of Communism, having experienced the British system of rule of law, and who have sought to live under such protection and freedom in Australia.
- Chinese people from Taiwan, who have chosen to make Australia their home, are also wary of Communism and value the democratic freedoms found in Taiwan and Australia.
- Chinese people who have arrived in Australia since China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, are most susceptible to the influence and controls of the Chinese Communist Party – as this has been a period during which Beijing has sought to expand its influence into countries like Australia.

- Chinese Falun Gong practitioners include Chinese from all the above areas. Like the Tibetan and Uyghur peoples, many of whom fled persecution in China, Falun Gong practitioners know the brutality of the Chinese Communist Party first-hand.

Thus, the Chinese diaspora is not a homogeneous mass. Chinese groups, councils or associations who claim to speak for the 'Chinese community' are not representative and cannot possibly do so. Perhaps the only thing that all people in the Australian Chinese diaspora have in common is that the Chinese Communist Party claims to speak for them and seeks to control them.

Amongst the Chinese diaspora, there is a wide range of commentary on the issue of Australia-China relations, but there are also frequent similarities in language selection.

Examples of common phrasing can include:

- "increasing hostility between Australia and China"
- "Chinese-Australians as collateral damage"
- "alienation of the Chinese community"
- "increased pressure on the Chinese community"
- "threat to cohesive, harmonious, stable society"

We note that such framing of Australia-China relations reflects messages used by the CCP to avoid responding to genuine criticism and cloaking itself in the cover of the "Chinese people."

A survey of Australia-based, Mandarin-speaking social media users by Professor Wanning Sun also highlights the importance of accurate naming in relation to "China". The survey noted:

35% of participants said they felt unhappy because of the hostility of the Australian media to China, regardless of whether or not the reporting was truthful.⁷

This suggests that the CCP's strategy of conflating the interests of the Party with the Chinese people, the Chinese nation and overseas Chinese can lead to negative feelings or a disconnect from Australian society, and this can be considered a large part of any damage to the harmony of Australia's multicultural community.

Professor John Fitzgerald addressed this important issue in his article, *Mind Your Tongue*, for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 2019:

In generalising about Chinese-Australians, all politicians, media and commentators should recognise the enormous diversity among communities and individuals and reflect this diversity in their speech and conduct.

In speaking or writing about China, Australian politicians, media and commentators should distinguish clearly between the Government of China, the CCP and the

⁷ <https://apac.news/chinese-australians-happy-to-promote-their-adopted-home/>

people of China, and distinguish Chinese-Australians and their many different communities from all of the above.⁸

3 Chinese Communist Party influence in Australia

Many China experts and researchers in Australia are exposing the Chinese Communist Party's methods of influence in Australia. We applaud this – it is something the Falun Dafa associations, and individual practitioners, have been doing since 1999, with varying degrees of success.

3.1 Exposing the CCP is not being anti-China or anti-Chinese

John Garnaut, former adviser to Prime Minister Turnbull, explained in an article for *Foreign Affairs* in March 2018:

Key to the party's operations in Australia is collapsing the categories of Chinese Communist Party, China, and the Chinese people into a single organic whole—until the point where the party can be dropped from polite conversation altogether. The conflation means that critics of the party's activities can be readily caricatured and attacked as anti-China, anti-Chinese, and Sinophobic.⁹

Professor John Fitzgerald's article, *Mind Your Tongue* for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 2019, notes:

China's party and government officials seek to divide Australian public opinion by suggesting that any hint of criticism of the CCP or its influence operations is bigoted or racist.

The CCP takes public diplomacy seriously, both as party and as government. Through its international propaganda arms, it has spent around A\$10 billion each year over the past decade to frame what people of other countries say and write about China.¹⁰

As a China researcher and student at the Australian National University in 2018, Alex Joske noted in an article for the *New York Times*, '*Beijing Is Silencing Chinese-Australians*'¹¹

Beijing's agents here are also keen to remind Australians of this country's shameful history of racism against Chinese. The result is that when a Chinese-Australian is accused of having ties to Beijing, he may cry racism, saying that he's being tarnished by connections to Beijing only because he's ethnic Chinese. In the absence of balanced reporting in the Chinese-language media, many Australians are inclined to believe these claims.

The United Front Department Work¹² extends the Chinese Communist Party's influence through Chinese provincial associations, business associations, professional

⁸ <https://www.aspi.org.au/index.php/report/mind-your-tongue>

⁹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-03-09/how-china-interferes-australia>

¹⁰ <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/mind-your-tongue>

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/06/opinion/beijing-chinese-australians-censorship.html>

¹² <https://jamestown.org/program/reorganizing-the-united-front-work-department-new-structures-for-a-new-era-of-diaspora-and-religious-affairs-work/>

and scientific associations, Chinese students and scholars associations, Confucius Institutes, and various cultural and religious groups in Australia.

Now an analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Alex Joske notes in his June 2020 report, *The party speaks for you – Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist Party's united front system*:

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is strengthening its influence by co-opting representatives of ethnic minority groups, religious movements, and business, science and political groups. It claims the right to speak on behalf of those groups and uses them to claim legitimacy.

These efforts are carried out by the united front system, which is a network of party and state agencies responsible for influencing groups outside the party, particularly those claiming to represent civil society.¹³

All groups within the Chinese community in Australia are impacted by the CCP's focus on 'Overseas Chinese Work'. However, recent arrivals from mainland China can be more susceptible to Beijing's calls on their 'national pride' and loyalty to the Chinese state. The 2016 Census¹⁴ recorded 509,555 Australians born in mainland China, an increase of 59.8 per cent from the 2011 Census. A May 2016 article in the Lowy Institute, *The Interpreter*, by John Fitzgerald titled, 'Loyalty through links and control: The long history of Chinese diaspora diplomacy', notes:

Securing the loyalty of Chinese Australians to the values, aims, objectives, policies, conduct and leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is the over-riding goal of China's diaspora-diplomacy program in Australia.¹⁵

Falun Dafa practitioners, Tibetans and Uyghurs are victims of vilification and hatred among the Chinese community here in Australia. This occurs through the Chinese Communist Party's use of Chinese groups they control and the efforts of the Chinese embassy and consulates. Hong Kong students at Australian universities expressing support for freedom and human rights for Hong Kong people have been attacked by pro-Beijing students who see any protests as 'anti-China separatist activities'.

Today, the true nature of China's authoritarian regime has also been exposed by its response to Australia and other nations that have called for an independent investigation into the coronavirus. Many civilised countries are awakening to the real face of the Communist regime and are developing new ways to deal with it. Further, many Chinese people – both in China and Australia – are rejecting the Chinese Communist Party and refusing to be held hostage by its propaganda any longer.

Since the persecution began in July 1999, Chinese Embassy and Consulates in Australia, and their envoys in the fields of business, media and academia, have engaged in

¹³ <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/party-speaks-you>

¹⁴ <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-china.PDF>

¹⁵ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/loyalty-through-links-and-control-long-history-chinese-diaspora-diplomacy>

vilification and incitement to discrimination and hatred against Falun Dafa's teachings and against practitioners.

A common method of interference is by emails and letters sent by embassy and consulate representatives to politicians and other prominent members of the community, as well as various institutions such as theatres and council facilities, warning them not to have anything to do with Falun Gong practitioners or their activities, otherwise there would be repercussions with regard to that person's or institution's future relations with China. This has resulted in legally registered Falun Dafa associations being refused participation in parades, festivals and use of venues in their local areas. Refer to examples in section 4.

3.2 Media

Over the past decade, top CCP officials have overseen a dramatic expansion in efforts to shape media content and narratives around the world, affecting every region and multiple languages. As Freedom House reported in a Special Report 2020 *Beijing's Global Megaphone*¹⁶, the goals of the CCP's efforts are:

“to promote a positive view of China and of the CCP's authoritarian regime; to encourage foreign investment in China and openness to Chinese investment and strategic engagement abroad; and to marginalize, demonize, or entirely suppress anti-CCP voices, incisive political commentary, and exposés that present the Chinese government and its leaders in a negative light.”

As part of its so-called soft power campaign, the CCP has slowly gained control of the vast majority of Chinese language media in Australia.¹⁷ Using a combination of financial inducements and subtle coercion, newspapers are periodically persuaded to publish CCP-prepared propaganda articles defaming Falun Gong and its founder with the aim of whipping up hatred and demonising Falun Gong and its practitioners among the Chinese immigrant community.

An example of the CCP's recent soft power extension into Western media was the China Daily deal brokered with Fairfax Media Ltd, as well as other newspaper publishers around the world, allowing them to pay for a supplement titled *China Watch* containing CCP propaganda articles inserted into *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Financial Review*. A supplement published in January 2017 contained articles that vilified Falun Gong. The ultimate purpose is to undermine Australian and democratic values in favour of the CCP authoritarian system and world view.

Professor John Fitzgerald's 2016 article, “*Was the ABC shanghaied by Beijing?*” reported on the ABC's efforts to expand its business relationships with China/CCP via the Shanghai Media Group. Professor Fitzgerald notes:

¹⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/beijings-global-megaphone>

¹⁷ Kelsey Munro and Philip Wen ‘Chinese language newspapers in Australia: Beijing controls messaging, propaganda in press’, *The Age*, 10 July 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.theage.com.au/national/chinese-language-newspapers-in-australia-beijing-controls-messaging-propaganda-in-press-20160610-gpg0s3.html>

...when national public institutions – like the billion-dollar-a-year, taxpayer-funded ABC – endorse and encourage Beijing’s efforts to silence critical voices at home and abroad. Everyday compromises by our national institutions betray not just Chinese Australians, but the rest of us as well.¹⁸

In 2017, an internal document was leaked from the CCP’s Leading Group on Preventing and Dealing with Heretical Religions (aka the 610 Office), an extra-legal agency set up on 10 June 1999 to lead the persecution against Falun Gong. The document clearly outlines the CCP’s strategy of cultivating foreign sources to report on Falun Gong in a manner that more closely matches Beijing’s own demonization of the practice:

By ... cultivating non-governmental forces, we can fight heretical religions such as “Falun Gong,” thereby mobilizing influential and friendly people such as experts, scholars, journalists, and overseas Chinese community leaders to speak up. We should strive to have foreign media take a tone more favorable to us [on Falun Gong].

3.3 Recent example from the ABC

It was truly disappointing to see how Australia’s national broadcaster misrepresented Falun Gong in recent *Foreign Correspondent* and *Background Briefing* programs.

Under the claim of “scrutiny” the ABC has used biased framing to depict Falun Gong beliefs as divisive, alien, threatening and “cult-like,” and to thereby predispose viewers to regard Falun Gong with contempt, prejudice, hostility, and hatred. We consider this to be an extremely unfair, uncharitable, and negligent approach to news coverage.

These programs have caused misunderstanding, hatred and discrimination of a culturally foreign faith practice, and have exacerbated the trauma of Falun Gong practitioners in Australia who have fled political persecution as refugees.

After the release of these programs, the ABC’s work has already been widely promoted and used by Chinese Communist Party agencies in its anti-Falun Gong propaganda efforts.

On July 17, the website run by the 610 Office, an extra-legal Gestapo-like security organisation established to carry out the persecution of Falun Gong, published a report promoting the ABC’s then-forthcoming documentary attacking Falun Gong. The report said, among other things: “Since July 1999 China has publicly attacked and dealt with the ‘Falun Gong’ evil religion, warning the world about ‘Falun Gong’s’ evil religious essence. Now a whole 21 years later, Australia’s national broadcaster has just begun to face up to and expose the ‘Falun Gong’ evil religion and the grave harms it brings to the spiritual and physical health of the country’s people. Such harms include the deaths of citizens who refuse medication after becoming infatuated with ‘Falun Gong’s’ preposterous heresies.”

¹⁸ <https://insidestory.org.au/was-the-abc-shanghaied-by-beijing/>

A series of follow-up reports on the same website, and other state-controlled websites, echoed the same ideas. Anti-Falun Gong propaganda agencies in China have thus seized on the ABC's reporting to justify the persecution of the practice in China.

The ABC's reporting works so well as anti-Falun Gong propaganda for the Chinese government because it contains nothing at all that challenges Chinese official narratives on Falun Gong, and everything to endorse them. It is in fact almost *identical* to official state propaganda, and has been directly translated and circulated to that end.

Following publication of these ABC programs, Falun Gong practitioners in Australia have also begun experiencing an increasing number of abusive and discriminatory incidents from members of the public. These attacks mimic vilifying comments presented in the ABC programs.

To illustrate further, consider whether the ABC would have found it appropriate to run a documentary and podcast series on the "dangerous" religious beliefs and cultural practices of Uyghur Muslims. Like Falun Gong, Uyghur Muslims hold conservative views on sexuality, and like many Falun Gong practitioners, many Uyghurs support Donald Trump's hard line approach to the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁹ Yet such a program would, rightly, never be allowed to go to air due to the religious intolerance it would exhibit, and the violation of individuals' rights to practice their own faith without fear of vilification.

The ABC's Code of Practice, 7.Harm and offence, Principles: states in part:

The ABC broadcasts comprehensive and innovative content that aims to inform, entertain and educate diverse audiences. This involves a willingness to take risks, invent and experiment with new ideas. It can result in challenging content which may offend some of the audience some of the time.²⁰

We submit that no media, including the ABC should be allowed to "take risks, invent and experiment" where the impact of such journalism is to vilify and cause distress, mental anguish and harm to Falun Dafa practitioners in Australia and around the world – and particularly in China, where ABC's programs are used by the CCP to validate its persecution of millions.

We view the ABC's conduct in this matter as an unconscionable form of bullying.

4 Safety concerns and barriers to participation

This section addresses some of the issues facing Falun Gong practitioners who are part of the Chinese diaspora, with particular reference to the terms of reference regarding

¹⁹ Both Falun Gong's conservative teachings on sexuality, and the fact that some practitioners support the strong anti-China stance of the Trump administration, were used by the ABC as negative examples of Falun Gong's teachings and beliefs.

²⁰ <https://about.abc.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CODE-final-15-01-2019.pdf>

safety concerns and barriers to participation in Australia's democratic and social institutions.

There have been many occasions where unknown individuals turn up at public Falun Gong events in Australia and shout abuses at practitioners and try to create a scene. Some unknown Chinese also come and secretly or openly take photos or videos of practitioners – and of particular concern– they take photos or videos of practitioners who still have family members in China.

Fraudulent email campaigns

One of the CCP's many strategies to demonise Falun Gong practitioners in Australia includes multiple campaigns of sending malicious emails, purporting to be from local Falun Gong practitioners. This method of political propaganda has been used since 2010 to all three levels of government bodies in various parts of Australia.

The senders of these emails often claim to be local Falun Gong practitioners and make bizarre and sometimes insulting claims against elected representatives. In other cases, the emails portray practitioners as threatening, intolerant and otherwise undeserving of sympathy or respect.

These, and similar fraudulent emails sent to officials, NGOs, journalists and human rights groups around the world have been traced back to IP addresses in China.

It is clear from feedback we have received that some of these emails have succeeded in achieving their purpose, which is to arouse distrust and disdain for practitioners in Australia and persuade Australian officials that Falun Dafa practitioners are extreme religious believers, the something that the Chinese Communist Party has tried to achieve for over a decade.

A statement by the Falun Dafa Information Centre in New York sums up this campaign as follows:

As the Communist Party finds that people in the West can see through their direct propaganda and vilification of Falun Gong, it resorts to this kind of underhanded tactic to make practitioners appear irrational, push would-be supporters away, and indirectly justify the torture and killing of innocent people in China.

These fraudulent e-mails are part of a much broader campaign of misinformation, cyber attacks, and online espionage carried out by Chinese agents against Falun Gong practitioners outside China.

The remainder of this section highlights some examples of Falun Gong practitioners being blocked from taking part in various events in Australia. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the interference we have been subjected to from CCP influence in Australia over the past 21 years. Refusals to participate in community events are often denied with excuses that – on the surface – may seem reasonable, such as *fully booked, only music and entertainment, already have enough Chinese groups* etc. In almost every case, with careful investigation, we find out that the same criteria have

not been applied to other Chinese or martial arts groups, and the real reason is direct or indirect interference from the CCP, Confucius Institutes, or related groups.

4.1 Queensland

2018 Chinese New Year Event, Chinatown Gold Coast

The Falun Dafa Association of Australia, Queensland Branch Inc, applied to be included in the stage program for Chinese New Year in 2018 in Chinatown Gold Coast, but was rejected due to pressure from members of the Chinese community. When the event organisers rejected the application, they advised that, "*Falun Dafa makes some members of the wider Chinese community uncomfortable.*" They also said that they will only have musical and entertainment acts on stage. Yet, Tai Chi and martial arts groups did perform, and the stage was not confined to only music and entertainment acts.

2020 Chinese New Year Event, Chinatown Gold Coast

In 2019, the Falun Dafa Association of Australia, Queensland Branch applied to participate in the 2020 Chinese New Year event. The application was denied with the reason that the group was deemed political and that this decision had come from the Council of City of Gold Coast. It took another two months, several emails and meetings to resolve. Finally, on 21 January 2020, the application for a Falun Dafa stall was approved

4.2 News South Wales

Chinese Consulate

In 2014, the Chinese Consulate in Sydney issued a press release to other Consuls-General and NSW MPs titled, "Facts about Falun Gong and the so-called Shen Yun Performing Arts," deriding Shen Yun and claiming Falun Gong was "undermining China-Australia relations" and is a "downright anti-China political group." The influence of the Consulate has meant that MPs do not attend Shen Yun performances and are reticent to accept meetings with Falun Dafa practitioners.

In August 2015,²¹ the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the Chinese Consul-General in Sydney, Huaxin Li, had written to the president of the NSW Legislative Council, Don Harwin and asked him to forward his letter to all NSW MPs. The letter described Falun Gong as a "downright anti-China group" and pressed MPs not to attend a briefing on international human organ harvesting and trafficking. Nine State MPs, who had previously confirmed their attendance, then cancelled after receipt of this letter.²²

Local council

In 2013, several local councils obstructed the Falun Dafa Association's attempts to book council facilities to display the 'Zhen-Shan-Ren Art Exhibition' ('The Art of Truthfulness, Compassion'). This was an exhibition of paintings by artists who practice Falun Dafa and featured scenes both of the beauty of Falun Dafa meditation and of the

²¹ Sean Nicholls, China issues veiled threat to NSW MPs over attendance at organ trade forum, 10 August 2015, *Sydney Morning Herald*

²² Media release: China threatens and MP's buckle, 12 August 2015

suffering caused by the persecution in China. The exhibition had been successfully displayed at the Australian Parliament in Canberra, the NSW State Parliament and local councils such as Manly, Auburn, Waverly and Canada Bay. However, Bankstown and Leichhardt councils found reasons to obstruct a booking for the exhibition.

Initially, Bankstown Council accepted a booking at the Bankstown Arts Centre, but this was later cancelled. The then-mayor of Bankstown wrote to explain the cancellation and said, "I hope you can appreciate Council's need to exercise its discretion in the interest of community harmony...."

The Falun Dafa Association's attempts to book Balmain Town Hall for the exhibition foundered on Leichhardt Council's refusal to accept our application for a community rate, despite the non-profit charitable status of our group.

4.3 Victoria

Chinese Consulate

In 2007, *The Age*²³ reported that in August 2006 Victor Perton, a member of Victoria's State Parliament, sent an email to all Victorian MPs inviting them to a briefing on a report into organ harvesting in China. Within hours, the Chinese Consul-General in Melbourne Shugen Liang apparently had a copy of Perton's email. What surprised Perton was that one of his colleagues would send his email straight to the Consul-General, who then sent an email to all state MPs, pressing them not to attend the briefing.

In March 2008, *The Age*²⁴ reported that China's Melbourne Consul-General Shugen Liang wrote to Victorian politicians urging them not to accept invitations to see Shen Yun and stated, "In view of the good relations between China and Victoria it's my sincere hope that you will not attend the performance and will also avoid any future contact with Falun Gong and its affiliates." Mr Liang also described Falun Gong as a "despicable" group trying to gain support for its "anti-society, anti-human, anti-science motives under the disguise of cultural activities".

University

A December 2018 article by *The Weekend Australian*²⁵ revealed that Victoria University accepted and then cancelled a booking to screen the documentary film *In the Name of Confucius*, which shows Canadian experiences of how Confucius Institutes are used by the CCP to spread its influence in Western universities and schools. Practitioners later learned that the event was cancelled following pressure from the Chinese Consulate and involvement from the directors of Victoria University's own Confucius Institute.

²³ Tom Hyland, Hard power, soft targets, 11 November 2007, *The Age*

²⁴ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/china-pressured-state-mps-to-skip-show-20080331-ge6wr1.html>

²⁵ <https://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/victoria-university-stops-anti-china-communist-party-film-after-query-the-australian/>

Local council

In Melbourne's suburb of Box Hill, where more than one-third of the population has Chinese ancestry, Falun Dafa practitioners have encountered difficulties over many years when trying to inform local Chinese people about *Tuidang* (退党)²⁶, which in Mandarin Chinese means to "withdraw from the Party." Practitioners have encountered obstructions in obtaining permits for public activities from White Horse City Council and felt intimidated by council officers.

4.4 South Australia

Adelaide University

Between 2017 and 2019, Falun Dafa practitioners in Adelaide have been rejected from booking a lecture theatre in Adelaide University to show documentaries *In the Name of Confucius* and *Human Harvest*, with the reason that they did not have a student or professor to support their application.

In October 2019, a local Falun Dafa practitioner Helen enrolled at Adelaide University to study for her Master of Business Management. Helen lodged an online application to book a lecture theatre to screen another documentary, *Letter from Masanjia*, that exposes the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China's Masanjia labor camp. Her application was accepted, and a lecture theatre booking was confirmed. However, later the university staff replied, "*This particular request was reviewed and declined by senior staff who advised that this type of event would be better suited to an external cinema or other such location rather than the University.*"

Local practitioners believe that these decisions are being influenced by staff from Adelaide University's Confucius Institute and potentially also by the local Chinese Consulate.

CCP interference in Adelaide Chinese New Year event

Every year since 2008, Falun Dafa practitioners have applied, and been rejected, from joining the celebration of Chinese Lunar Year at Moonta Street Chinatown in Adelaide.

On 14 December 2018, they applied again for the 9 February 2019 event. Almost two months after their application, and three days before the event, on 6 February 2019 they were notified that their application could not be accepted as their group is registered in Victoria. The group who applied to participate in an Adelaide event are Adelaide residents – only their public liability insurance is provided by the Falun Dafa Association in Victoria. An ex-member of the China Town Association told a local practitioner that the Chinatown Association members would find all kinds of reasons to refuse Falun Gong stalls because the Chinese consulate representatives would attend the celebration.

²⁶ <https://en.tuidang.org/> Tuidang is the act of publicly renouncing the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliate organizations: the Communist Young Pioneers and the Communist Youth League. It seeks to educate people about the destructive character of Communism.

4.5 Western Australia

Chinese Consulate complaints

Falun Dafa practitioners hold regular peaceful protests throughout the City of Perth, including near the Chinese Consulate, to raise awareness about the persecution in China. The Consulate responds by trying to shut down these protests.

WAtoday has confirmed that Chinese consular officials regularly contact members of the City's executive management team to complain about the Falun Gong protests, but have been rebuffed.²⁷ The City of Perth notes the Consulate's concerns, but allows the Falun Dafa activities to continue as they always comply with the City's permits.

Restriction on participating in Christmas Pageant in Perth

Local Falun Dafa practitioners registered to join the 2018 Christmas Pageant in Perth and had been issued with participant wristbands on 1 December, the morning of the parade. They then received a call from the pageant parade organiser, Seven West Media, and were told they could not display any references to Falun Gong or Falun Dafa, in English or Chinese. We were later advised that the organisers had received a complaint about the Falun Gong group, claiming that Falun Gong is "anti-Chinese" and "anti-Chinese government."

Former head of China analysis for Australia's defence intelligence organisation, Dr Paul Monk, described this event to the *Epoch Times* as:

...a case of political interference from Beijing...If the Chinese community in Perth hold a festival and Falun Gong, who were well represented in that community cannot go along and identify their particular affiliation, then we are being interfered with.²⁸

5 Recommendations

Our recommendations to this Inquiry and the Australian government are below.

1. It is encouraging to note that many MPs now separate the Chinese Communist Party from China and the Chinese people in their language. We recommend use of the phrase "Australians of Chinese descent" or "Australians of Chinese heritage" rather than "Chinese-Australians". In addition to reminding the CCP that these people are now Australians, this accuracy in language could help mitigate anti-Chinese feelings among other Australians.
2. Make it a requirement that any Chinese person who becomes a citizen or permanent resident in Australia must renounce their membership of the Chinese Communist Party. It is inconceivable that someone can become an Australian citizen while they are still a member of the ruling party of a foreign country whose

²⁷ <https://www.watoday.com.au/politics/western-australia/chinese-government-leans-on-city-of-perth-to-shut-down-lawful-protests-20200206-p53yhs.html>

²⁸ https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinese-consulate-tried-to-exclude-falun-gong-from-perth-christmas-parade-coordinator-says_2729259.html

national interests frequently do not align with Australia values and national interests.

3. Support independent Chinese language media that report on China-related topics and that don't always show the CCP in a positive light. These independent media could be supported with government advertising funds, for example by publishing government notices with these media, or government grants.
4. Support events hosted or presented by Falun Gong practitioners, such as local culture events, documentary screenings or Shen Yun performances. We believe this is the best response to emails and letters from the Chinese Consulate asking our elected representatives not to attend and support these events.
5. Deny entry to Australia to CCP officials who have been identified as carrying out, or being complicit in the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, or involved in the illegal procurement and transplantation of human organs without donor consent. This could be under the provisions of the Migration Act, and also sanctioned and exposed under a Magnitsky Act which we recommend is introduced in Australia.

Appendix A 21 years of persecution and resilience

20 July 2020 marked the 21st anniversary of the Chinese regime's brutal campaign to eliminate Falun Gong. While this campaign has targeted people who practice Falun Gong in China, its impact is being felt around the world, including among the Falun Dafa community in Australia. The following article was published by the [Falun Dafa Info Center](#) in July 2019. It is reproduced here with permission to provide background information, which remains relevant for this submission in 2020.

[Falun Gong](#), also known as Falun Dafa, is a traditional spiritual practice that consists of gentle, meditative exercises and a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.

The practice became widely popular in China during the 1990s, and by 1999, according to Chinese state-run T.V., there were [100 million people](#) practicing Falun Gong in China. That's a staggering 1 of every 13 people in the country. Furthermore, as the *Washington Post* reported in 1999, many influential people in the party, the government and the military practiced Falun Gong, in addition to those found in just about every sector of society; from farmers to university professors, factory workers to corporate leaders, high school students to members of the communist party's top leadership.

Yet, in the summer of 1999, former communist leader Jiang Zemin ordered the traditional meditation practice be eliminated. China experts at the time say Jiang was jealous that Falun Gong's widespread popularity was overshadowing his own legacy, and at the same time, Jiang hoped to use the campaign against Falun Gong to build up his own powerbase.

Over the past 20 years, millions of people have been abducted or imprisoned. Hundreds of thousands have been tortured or suffered terrible abuse in custody. Thousands have been tortured to death, and those are just the cases we know about.

Even more horrific are findings from independent investigators concerning the systematic killing of Falun Gong practitioners so their organs could be used to fuel China's booming organ transplant business. In 2016, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed House Resolution 343, which cites "persistent and credible reports of systematic, state-sanctioned organ harvesting from large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners."²⁹ In June 2019, an independent tribunal³⁰ – chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, who previously prosecuted war criminals – released its conclusion that Falun Gong practitioners have been, and continue to be, killed for their organs "on a significant scale."

The persecution of Falun Gong in China continues to this day.

²⁹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/343/text>

³⁰ <https://chinatribunal.com/final-judgement-report/>

In its 2018 annual report, Amnesty International stated, “Falun Gong practitioners continued to be subjected to persecution, arbitrary detention, unfair trials and torture and other ill-treatment.”³¹ In its 2019 annual human rights report, the US State Department³² detailed how people who practice Falun Gong have been victims of “systematic torture in custody” by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Clearly, this persecution campaign has destroyed the lives of millions of people. Yet, the impact of this persecution extends beyond the community of Falun Gong practitioners inside China. It is felt throughout Chinese society, and to some extent, around the globe.

How?

First, let’s consider the scale and nature of what’s happened in China. When the communist leadership targeted Falun Gong, they were targeting 100 million people who were simply trying to live their lives according to truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. This set in motion a system of punishing good people and rewarding immoral, even criminal behavior nationwide.

The result has been far-reaching.

The campaign against Falun Gong has served as an incubator of persecution tactics now being deployed against other targeted groups in China. For example, the methods of physical and psychological torture refined on Falun Gong are now used against Tibetans, Uyghurs and Christians.

The Communist Party’s incentive system used in implementing the campaign against Falun Gong has drastically undermined good governance and societal morality. For example, officials who refuse to persecute Falun Gong risk halted career advancement, demotion, or even being fired. Conversely, those willing to engage in the lawlessness rise through the ranks, gaining more power and influence.

Some medical doctors in China have literally become killers, viewing Falun Gong practitioners as little more than a source for organs. By the same token, international patients who travel to China for an organ often become unknowingly complicit in the killing.

China’s state-run media has so saturated public discourse with false narratives vilifying Falun Gong that even some Western scholars and government officials have unwittingly bought into the lies, and publish or govern accordingly.

And the blatant disregard for international agreements and norms displayed by Chinese communist officials have rendered many international agreements useless, and created hostile, even criminal, market forces that affect industries around the world.

³¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/china/report-china/>

³² <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china-includes-tibet-hong-kong-and-macau-china/>

In short, the persecution of Falun Gong has played a key role in fermenting a society where dishonesty is rampant. It has promoted corrupt officials within the Chinese regime that persecute their own people and continually defraud the international community.

As the 20th anniversary of this brutal persecution approaches, we implore the international community to speak up. We must give a voice to and take action for the tens of millions of people in China that have been targeted by the communist regime, and who live their daily lives under threat of arbitrary detention, imprisonment, torture or worse simply for practicing Falun Gong.

Regaining freedom and justice for Falun Gong in China will not only end the persecution they face, it will go a long way for regaining freedom and justice for all the Chinese people, and by doing so, help China become a responsible member of the international community. And that benefits everyone, the world over.