



FALUN DAFA
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
Review of the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018*

29 November 2021

The Falun Dafa Association of Australia appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security.

We note that the committee is required by Section 70 of the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018* (FITS Act) to conduct this inquiry into the operation, effectiveness, and implications of the scheme.

While we understand the FITS Act applies to all countries, this submission focuses on the importance of ensuring greater transparency of foreign influence from the Chinese Communist Party and government in Australia.

We trust the committee will find this submission and its recommendations of assistance in its inquiry and review.

Note: Appendices A and B are confidential and not for publication.

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Background and context

The Falun Dafa Association is a charitable organisation with volunteer committee members who work in an honorary capacity.¹

Falun Dafa, also called Falun Gong, is a spiritual practice of cultivation in the Buddhist tradition. It includes meditation and gentle exercises and was introduced to the public in 1992 by Mr Li Hongzhi. While indigenous to China, it is now practiced in over 80 countries, including Australia. Its teachings primarily focus on personal health and spiritual growth.

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), which represent the Dao or Dharma – the essential law and principles of the universe. Based on its theological and moral teachings, it is considered a religion in the West, and it conforms to the general description in the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG), 1996.²

Falun Dafa is not a political or a social movement. However, after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began a persecution campaign to eliminate Falun Dafa in China in 1999, the CCP has systematically demonised Falun Dafa and claimed it to be an “anti-China political group”. In this hostile environment, over the past 22 years, Falun Dafa practitioners have stood up for their right to freedom of belief and peacefully and continuously exposed the human right abuses and evil nature of the CCP, and the threat it poses to the world.

Our concerns

The CCP is unique among political entities of foreign countries that may seek to influence or interfere with Australia's democratic and political processes. It is an authoritarian regime driven by its Leninist-Marxist roots with separate intelligence units that belong to the party, state and military, all tasked with maintaining CCP rule within China and expanding its control outside China.

We are concerned that the FITS Act, as it stands, may not be effective in dealing with the CCP. The specific tests and information required to apply the designation of ‘foreign government’ or ‘foreign principal’ may not be practicable. The CCP has the capacity to subvert or avoid altogether the intentions of controls implemented by Australia and other liberal democracies.

Protecting Australia from the CCP's overt and covert campaigns of influence and interference requires an approach that understands and targets the techniques used by the CCP.

Daniel Ward, a visiting fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, noted:

*We should recognise this basic truth: foreign influence transparency requirements must be more stringent in relation to some source countries than others.*³

Foreign influence for Australia is united front work for the CCP

Professor Anne Marie Brady, who specialises in Chinese politics (including foreign policy), stated the following in her submission to the New Zealand Justice Select Committee Inquiry into Foreign Interference (updated September 2020):

The terms used by the CCP government to describe the phenomena observed by outside commentators as “foreign interference” and “foreign influence” are united front work (统一战线); which can be broken down into

¹ The Association helps facilitate free classes to teach Falun Dafa meditation and organises large scale activities such as parades and conferences. It also does advocacy work to governments, non-governmental bodies and media, and supports known practitioners seeking humanitarian protection.

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/775012ef0058a77dca25697e00184bdc?opendocument>

³ <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/losing-our-agnosticism-how-make-australias-foreign-influence-laws-work>

“international united front work” (国际统战工作), as well as foreign affairs work (外事工作), and Overseas Chinese affairs work (侨务工作).⁴

This submission looks at examples of the CCP’s attempts to control the Chinese diaspora in Australia and influence elected officials and the Chinese community to form a negative view of Falun Dafa and isolate Falun Dafa practitioners from the community and government.

Control of the Chinese diaspora

Professor Brady notes:

The CCP adopts a carrot and stick approach to those it targets within the Chinese diaspora community: financial opportunities and honours for those who cooperate; harassment, denial of passport or visa rights, and detention for family members living in China for those who do not.

and that the CCP:

*Utilise PRC embassy staff and local united front organisations, to control the diaspora community by setting and policing the boundaries on what constitutes Chinese culture. Excludes: Falungong, Tibetan Buddhism, Taiwanese identity, Cantonese or other regional languages or cultures.*⁵

Professor Brady also refers to the CCP’s tactics of inserting ‘CCP-supported diaspora political and business leaders into their home political systems as candidates and donors’.

Appendix A provides an example of suspected interference via CCP support of local political candidates.

Interference in local council election in Ryde NSW

On the 15-16 November 2021, local residents in the West Ward of Ryde Council area received the flyer shown in the following Figures 1 and 2. Falun Dafa practitioners who live in the West Ward area found these flyers distributed in letterboxes around the corner of Shaftsbury Road and Rutledge Street, in Bellevue Avenue (close to Trelawny Street) and in Doomben Avenue in Eastwood. The same flyer was identified in letterboxes in Eastwood again on 28 November 2021.

This flyer was not produced by Falun Dafa practitioners or by Dr Kim or Dr Lin.



Figure 1: Flyer circulated in the West Ward of Ryde Council area (purporting to be from Falun Gong practitioners).

⁴ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2019/05/08/575479/anne-marie-bradys-full-submission>

⁵ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2019/05/08/575479/anne-marie-bradys-full-submission>



Figure 2: Flyer circulated in the West Ward of Ryde Council area (reverse side) showing an image of Falun Gong practitioners character formation in Liberty Square, Taipei, Taiwan.

Ryde electorate has a high percentage of Chinese-born residents. Due to persistent CCP-media influence and infiltration over the past 22 years, many of them have been heavily influenced against Falun Dafa. In this context, the flyer appears to be a perverse attempt to both turn the candidates against local Falun Dafa practitioners, as well as turning Chinese-Australian voters against the independent candidates named in the flyer.

Dr Peter Kim, an Independent councillor on Ryde Council, supports the human rights of Falun Gong practitioners and freedom of belief. He provided a letter of support which was read out at the rally shown on the flyer (Figure 1), outside Sydney's Customs House in May 2021.

Dr Bin Lin, a Sydney academic and Ryde resident is also standing as an Independent in the 4 December local council election and is a supporter of human rights in Hong Kong.

We believe this fake flyer is from CCP agents trying to discredit the Falun Gong community and disadvantage local candidates who support human rights and freedom of belief. It should rightly be seen as serious interference that undermines the fair electoral process and freedom in Australia.

We are in the process of reporting this to relevant agencies in the Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce.

Influencing elected officials

CCP's malicious 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 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 include a politician's photo next to a Falun Gong symbol and claim these MPs support Falun Gong. We are very concerned that this ongoing disinformation has led to a misunderstanding of Falun Dafa and has understandably upset some politicians who assume Falun Dafa practitioners used their photo without permission. This has resulted in politicians distancing themselves from the Falun Dafa community. We believe this is exactly what the CCP intended with such emails.

Appendix B provides one such example of a fake email sent to an Australian Member of Parliament in NSW, which was subsequently received by the Falun Dafa Association. Appendix B also presents a letter from the Falun Dafa Association to a Federal Shadow Minister in 2020, explaining why the bogus email they had received was not from Falun Gong practitioners.

Such fake email campaigns are not limited to Australia. Since 2010, bogus emails attempting to discredit Falun Gong have also been received by Canadian members of parliament.

In March 2019, the office of Canadian MP, Mr Peter Julian received an email from someone named “Cathy” who began by thanking him, then said odd things about Falun Gong and referred to an image the sender had attached of Mr Julian superimposed on a poster.

“I have made a poster using your photograph to show how your support the fine arts and Falun Gong. I am sure that you would be glad to see the posters around the world,” the email read.⁶

In 2018, Canadian Liberal MP Judy Sgro, received a similar email to Peter Julian’s, with a superimposed image of her stating that it would be posted everywhere to show that she supports Falun Gong. (Refer to typical image example at Figure 3 below).



Figure 3: Misappropriation of the “Falun” symbol, on image sent to MPs in Australia and Canada with their names and photos

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations for the Australian Government.

1. Modify the FITS Act and scheme to apply specific strategies to identify, monitor and control foreign influence and interference from the Chinese Communist Party and government, particularly via Chinese language media/social media, and in local government areas.
2. Develop programs and services to foster positive relationships with all groups within the Chinese diaspora to help them become more resilient and aware of CCP attempts to influence or control them. All Australians of Chinese heritage deserve the opportunity to live here free from the corrupting propaganda of the CCP.
3. Proactively support freedom of belief for Falun Dafa practitioners by exposing the CCP’s influence efforts of vilification and harassment, and by offering positive, visible support for the Falun Dafa

⁶ https://www.theepochtimes.com/fake-letter-sent-in-trudeaus-name-not-isolated-case-in-chinas-disinformation-campaign_2909445.html

community. That would help break down CCP interference and propaganda that has fostered hatred and bias against Falun Dafa practitioners in sectors of the Chinese diaspora.

4. Inform Members of Parliament that any odd or suspicious email or information they receive claiming to be from Falun Gong practitioners should be passed to the appropriate government agency, as it is potentially a covert attempt to influence them and interfere with the rights and freedoms of Australian residents. It would also be helpful to inform Falun Dafa Association of such matters of concerns.
5. Provide resources to educate the public on the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party. The books *Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party* and [*How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World*](#) would be a useful resource to make widely available.