

Our position on China's Confucius Institutes

Australia Tibet Council is committed to protecting the human rights and freedoms of Tibetans.

While Chinese President Xi Jinping has implemented a brutal crackdown on human rights defenders at home, he has elevated China's push for global soft power. The Confucius Institutes embedded in universities and schools across Australia and worldwide play a vital role in this effort. By the Chinese government's own admission, they are "an important part of China's overseas propaganda set-up."

The Chinese government uses its soft power as a Trojan Horse to stifle global discourse on sensitive human rights issues including Tibet. As such, the Chinese government-funded and controlled language programs are a threat to our cherished values of academic freedom and freedom of expression.

We have witnessed how the Confucius Institute has served the Chinese government to misrepresent the human rights situation in Tibet. Hence our universities' partnerships with China on this program undermines the future of all whose fundamental rights the Chinese government violently subdues, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, Chinese democracy activists, Falun Gong practitioners, as well as the people of Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Our recommendations:

We call on Australian universities and schools to:

- encourage academics and students to critically examine issues such as Tibet and human rights, and
- close the Confucius Institutes, as they have a demonstrated track record of misrepresenting and stifling discussion of the actual human rights situation in Tibet and other important issues.

If the universities fail to close the Confucius Institutes, ATC calls upon them to immediately introduce reforms to ensure that CI programs are balanced, including by requiring at least one public lecture every year on topics that are currently forbidden, such as human rights in Tibet, and to ensure greater transparency about their partnerships and hiring processes.