
China's Plastinated Bodies and Specimen Industry - What is Australia's Responsibility?

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Background

1. In 2005, after longstanding denials, it was officially acknowledged that executed prisoners were harvested for their organs in China.¹
2. Before China introduced a pilot voluntary organ donation programme in 2010, over 90% of organs transplanted were procured from prisoners, many imprisoned because of their beliefs, having not received a fair trial, if a trial at all.²
3. China remains 'the only country in the world that still systematically takes organs from executed prisoners for the purpose of transplantation'.³
4. A United Nations (UN) human rights panel said recently stated that it had received many credible reports that "1 million ethnic Uighurs in China are held in what resembles a massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy."⁴
5. Gay McDougall, a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, "cited estimates that 2 million Uighurs and Muslim minorities were forced into 'political camps for indoctrination' in the western Xinjiang autonomous region".⁵
6. A recent ABC news article reports that China may have detained more than 1 million Uyghurs in labour camps on the basis of their religious beliefs.⁶ It is in these labour camps and "black jails"

¹ Huang J. "Ethical and legislative perspectives on liver transplantation in the People's Republic of China". *Liver Transplantation* 2007; 13: 193-196; 人民日报 (People's Daily).

² Norbert, W.P., Caplan, A., Shapiro, M.E., Els, C., Allison, K.C. and Huige, Li. 2017. "Human rights violations in organ procurement practice in China" in *BMC Medical Ethics* 18:11.

³ Delmonico, F, Chapman, J, Fung J, Danovitch, G, Levin A, Capron A, Busuttill R, O'Connell P. Open Letter of the People's Republic of China: China's fights against corruption in organ transplantation. *Transplantation*. 2014; 97(8):795-6

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-un/u-n-says-it-has-credible-reports-that-china-holds-million-uighurs-in-secret-camps-idUSKBN1KV1SU>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ China may have detained more than 1 million Uighurs in secret camps, UN human rights panel says, 11 August 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-11/china-holding-1-million-uighurs-in-secret-camps-un-says/10109290>

that organ trafficking is known to occur on an unprecedented scale, via the harvesting of organs and tissues from executed prisoners of conscience. The number of executions performed each year is a State secret but human rights organisations estimate that China carries out thousands of executions a year, more than the rest of the world put together.⁷

7. Gunter Von Hagen, a German doctor, created the plastination method and worked in China. He founded a plastination factory in China in 1999, the same year Falun Gong practitioners were detained on a mass scale in labor camps.⁸
8. Professor Sui Hongjiin, one of Von Hagen's protégés, established his own plastination company in China and is the founder of Dalian Hoffen Bio-technique Laboratory in China. He provides the plastinated bodies and specimens to Real Bodies -The Exhibition, as well as supplying over 40 countries worldwide.

Real Bodies – The Exhibition

9. Real Bodies - The Exhibition (Exhibition) is a for-profit business and involves a display of 20 plastinated human bodies and 200 plastinated human organs.
10. The Exhibition is currently in Sydney showing at The Entertainment Quarter.
11. Mr Tom Zaller, President and CEO of Imagine Exhibitions, the company responsible for the Exhibition, has publicly admitted that there is no documentation verifying the provenance and identity of the deceased persons, and any certification of the deceased's consent for display at the Exhibition.⁹
12. This raises serious questions about the legal and ethical operation of the Exhibition. The bodies have been sourced from the Dalian Hoffen Bio-technique Laboratory (Dalian Hoffen) in China. On their website, Dalian Hoffen advertise an extensive range of plastinated human corpses and specimens including the corpse of a pregnant woman¹⁰, any of which can be purchased within 6 to 8 months from the time of ordering. The company also supplies universities, museums and exhibitions in more than 40 countries, however they do not publicly state the source of the bodies and specimens.
13. There are grave ethical and human rights concerns about the circumstances surrounding how and where the bodies and organs in the Exhibition were sourced. Credible evidence suggests that the

⁷ Amnesty Intl., *Death Sentences and Executions in 2015*, p. 2, ACT 50/3487/2016, and Reprive, *Global executions in 2016*, <http://www.reprive.org.uk/press/global-executions-2016/>, Dec. 29, 2016

⁸ Gutman, E. *The Slaughter*. Prometheus Books, New York, p287-291

⁹ 'Real Bodies: The Exhibition', controversy about 'disturbing' origins of corpses. Megan Palin. news.com.au 9 April 2018. Available from: <https://www.news.com.au/technology/science/human-body/real-bodies-the-2>

¹⁰ <http://en.hoffen.com.cn/suhuabiaoben/guixiangjiaobiaoben/673.html>

exhibits may be the bodies and organs of executed prisoners of conscience including Falun Gong practitioners and Uyghurs, of whom there are currently over a million detained in China.¹¹

14. These concerns have led to the banning of exhibitions of this kind in other places including Hawaii, France, Seattle and Israel, and more recently in Vietnam where an exhibition of this type has been suspended until the organisers are able to provide legal documentation as to the origins of the specimens.¹²
15. Concerns about unethically sourced human remains in exhibitions are shared by leading Australian museums.¹³

Recommendations for Federal Parliament in Australia

1. Exhibitions displaying bodies and specimens be banned from entering Australia, or from exhibiting in Australia, unless legal documentation showing the provenance of the bodies and specimens, and the consent of the deceased to be displayed in this way, is produced by organisers of such exhibitions.
2. That the Australian Government request and demand transparent data from China regarding forced organ harvesting from all prisoners, including prisoners of conscience.
3. That the Australian Government publicly declare and condemn the practice of forced organ harvesting in China.
4. That the Australian Government investigate and address the human rights violations against prisoners of conscience in China.
5. That the Australian Government work with the international community and civil society to eradicate the serious and heinous crimes being committed in China as a result of religious and political persecution and oppression.

¹¹ Gutmann E. 2014. *The Slaughter*. Prometheus Books (Chapter 14); Kilgour D, Matas D, Gutmann E. 2016. *An Update* (chapter 11): <https://endtransplantabuse.org/an-update/>

¹² Exhibition of real body parts suspended in Vietnam, 7 July 2018, <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/travel-life/culturearts/exhibition-of-real-body-parts-suspended-in-vietnam-3774329.html>

¹³ Australia Museum <https://australianmuseum.net.au/exhibiting-human-remains>