



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hopefully you are enjoying milder weather and all is well.

The past few months have been fairly quiet apart from our picnic in March and planning for our major fundraiser, the wonderful concert with the fantastic Shu-Cheen Yu and her students in the Sunday 18 August. More on this later.

We're also putting the finishing touches to our Gala event, the ACFS Vic. Achievement Award, as well as the second year of our Student Language and Culture Awards. Again, this is to further our aims of promoting friendship and understanding between our peoples. These will happen mid-year and late November as well, so we will keep you informed of the dates as they are confirmed.

The other thing we're looking at is a 'home' for lunch and yum cha functions, so we're restaurant-hopping at present to find one which is just right in size and being quiet! I look forward to inviting you to our next food event at the new venue when we find it.

Our sister-association, the Pacific China Friendship Association, is opening an office soon in Beijing, in conjunction with the Pacific Island Development Forum, so Federal Director John Breheny will travel there in his capacity as our delegate to the PCFA Board. There will be meetings with other organisations and partners, so it should be a busy time as well as fascinating.

That's all we have for now, so I will report back when there is more news.

Best wishes.

Anthony.

Briefing from Australian Federal Attorney-General's Office on Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (FITS), 20 March 2019

The tone was set when one of the two Attorney-General's Office staff began with the comment that the [Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme \(FITS\)](#) "... applies to *all* countries...". It is significant this was one of her first sentences, tacitly acknowledging intrinsic racism.

Most Chinese at this briefing hosted by the Chinese Community Council of Australia (Vic. Chapter) were concerned and angry at the legislation ostensibly targeting Chinese. Almost all who asked questions voiced apprehension at undue surveillance, onerous reporting and hair-splitting definitions and regulations.

The Act itself is hazy and almost impenetrable to read, especially for those whose native language is not English. However, the Federal Attorney-General's representatives made the following points:

FITS covers 3rd parties (countries or their agents) at a Federal, not State or Territory level;

Covers all countries, not just China/Chinese;

The Act is to give more transparency over who is behind community groups and actions;

24 companies registered so far from all over the globe, not just China; Organisations may register, members not required to do so, unless acting alone;

Registration/reporting only applies if a 3rd party specifically asks an Australian party or person to act on their behalf, without directly mentioning such 3rd party;

Donations given by 3rd parties for local events do not require registration *if* at the request of the organiser of the event(s);

If an organisation lobbies a Federal MP or political party at the behest of a 3rd party, such actions and meetings must be registered and details given;

If a 3rd party gives an organisation material to publish under that organisation's name, that must be registered;

If a 3rd party gives money or material to distribute or give away under that organisation's name, such transactions must be registered and recorded;

With the exception of two who supported the legislation, the room was mostly hostile to the Act and troubled with the inherent racism. The point was made that other ethnic groups did not feel as isolated and at risk as the Chinese.

One of the speakers ill-advisedly said that ASIO and the Australian Federal Police were nothing to do with this legislation, but she was quickly contradicted with the account of the Tasmanian Australia-China Friendship Society President being visited by the security services inquiring into the ACFS (Tas) activities.

It was also unclear as to who would oversee this Act and enforce the registration rules. Concern was expressed that even petty encounters could be misconstrued and penalties and breaches imposed arbitrarily as a result.

Anthony Leong
President ACFS Vic Branch

STOP PRESS:

Special concert for ACFS members and friends.

A private audience with one of Australia's most talented sopranos and ensemble.

An ACFS exclusive, a unique experience not to be missed, featuring international diva Shu Cheen Yu with her talented protégés.

When: Sunday 18 August 2019

Time: 3.00 PM – 5.00 PM

Where: Unitarian Church, 110 Grey Street, East Melbourne

Cost: \$35.00 / \$25.00 concession (finger food provided)



“Sharp Power – *Autocratic Nations threatening democratic nations like Australia in the 21st Century*”. This was the topic of a talk that I attended on 19 March 2019 by Clive Hamilton.

Hamilton spoke about China engaging in *sharp power* i.e so-called China bullying democratically elected countries through direct political interference, using trade as a weapon of influence and using elites as influencers.

He tried to legitimise his talk by informing the gathering of his early anti US stances, study of Chinese history and visits to Taiwan.

The anti China diatribe continued with untruths and myths throughout the talk using scant examples perpetuated in the popular media.

I was astounded at his attitude and directly challenged him on his statement that “Any organisation with *friendship* in its title is a Communist Party front”. I explained he was just plain wrong! He also questioned the loyalty of Chinese - Australians.

There was no mention of all the benefits that engaging with China and its peoples have brought to Australia and the rest of the world.

I found the opinions expressed by Hamilton were xenophobic and racist and appeared to be parroting the rhetoric espoused by the United States and right wing propagandists. This was most disappointing to hear.

Hamilton also spent a lot of time discrediting Gareth Evans, former Foreign Affairs Minister over his interview with Fran Kelly ABC the previous week.

This was a regretful and most disappointing talk advocating the type of attitude that was around fifty years ago.

Robin Matthews

The opinions expressed in this article are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the ACFS.

ACFS PICNIC

Our picnic held on Saturday 16 March was a most enjoyable event providing the opportunity to meet in a relaxed and social occasion.

Special guest was Mr Long Zhou our newly arrived Consul General and his partner Ms Chu Wenrong. Among other guests were ACFS Life Members Maurice and Eunice Leong.

The weather was pleasantly warm and we made the most of the shady trees in the Fitzroy Gardens.

Members feasted on luscious mouthwatering delicacies provided courtesy of the Consulate chef and other appetizing shared food.



PHOTOS FROM ACFS PICNIC

CULTURAL NOTES

There is not much to report on this time after the rush of activities around Spring Festival. However, I thought you might be interested in some items coming up, hoping that you can secure tickets.

1. Friday, April 5th , Recital Centre, 7:30pm
Tang Xianzu's "The Peony Pavilion" ,Shanghai Conservatory of Music Orchestra. Conductor: Zhou Ke

2. Sunday, May 5th, Elizabeth Murdoch Hall, Recital Centre, 2:30pm David Fung plays Bach Concertos with Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

3. Thursday, July 4th, Concert Hall, 7:30pm
Lang Lang with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO)
(you will need "guangxi "to get a ticket for this one!)

4. Thursday, August 22nd ,7:30 pm and Saturday, August 24th, 2:00pm Jiang Wang in concert with MSO, plays Cello Concerto No. 1 by Saint-Saens . Also in the same concert is Berlioz's "Symphony Fantastique".



Films and other items are coming at theatres and cinemas so good luck and enjoy!

Lia Cross
ACFS cultural scout

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Family Name (Mr /Mrs/Ms/Other)

Given Names

Address P/code.....

Phone Email

VICTORIAN MEMBERSHIP RATES

Family \$40.00 Single \$30.00 Concession \$15.00

Corporate on Application

I/We support the Society's aims: Signature/s

I/We enclose the sum of \$ for my/our membership subscription.

Pay directly into the ACFS Victoria Branch Account,
Commonwealth Bank BSB: 063-019, Account number: 10040625

Please put your name in the subject line & email REFERENCE to
acfs.vic@gmail.com

You may send cheques to the Treasurer at the ACFS office address
YOUR DONATION WOULD BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED

Promoting Friendship and Understanding Between the
Australian and Chinese People

THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY'S AIMS

Cultivate friendly relations with the people of China by fostering the study of China's history, language, culture, social and political structure.

Promote mutual understanding through friendly exchanges between the people of China and Australia. Strengthening ties with travel, the exchange of ideas, information and trade between the two countries.

To seek to clarify misunderstandings between the peoples of China and Australia, which may arise from the misrepresentation of information.

The ACFS Victorian Branch

PRESIDENT: Anthony Leong

SECRETARY: Robin Matthews

VICE PRESIDENT: Damon Feng

TREASURER: Dong Chen

Tower Liu

COMMITTEE: Lia Cross

John Breheny

We are always looking for interesting stories and articles to share with our members. Any members who have great stories to tell please contact ACFS office or e-mail to acfs.vic@gmail.com