



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

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June 2020



President's Report

Hi everyone. This was to be a time of relaxing the strictures and trying to return to normal after COVID-19, but sadly this has not happened. It appears unless we redouble our efforts, we will be back in trouble again. Stay safe, stay indoors if you can and keep your distance as well as isolating.

Unfortunately with the rise of anti-Chinese sentiments comes racism and there are some who are not helping by commenting on China and Chinese as being responsible for the virus. Some of us have been at pains to counter these allegations via local media, but getting the story across is not easy. I am growing tired of the endless racism of social media and the mainstream press.

About 3 weeks ago, we had a Zoom conference with the Mme. Zhang Qian, executive vice president the BPAFFC, where the Directors of ACFS Ltd (our Federal body) chatted about how things were progressing in China and the challenges we all face with COVID-19. It was a very pleasant distraction from the daily reports of terrible difficulties and the possibility of outbreaks. That aside, we felt those in China were positive, though cautious, about the country's recovery, in humanitarian and economic terms.

As we have no other visitors or visits to report, please stay safe, warm and well. Hopefully we will only have to endure this for another six weeks or so, but follow the advice of the medical professionals.

When we finally have a face-to-face function, it will be a terrific celebration!

Anthony Leong

ACFS LTD PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO AGM

27 MAY 2020

COVID19

At this time, I hope everyone is healthy and staying safe from COVID19. For this AGM, it is disappointing that we are not meeting face to face, but we must stay safe and protect the health of everyone.

In my report last year, I wrote “The ACFS was established sixty six years ago to promote the friendship between the peoples of Australia and China. Although still as important today as it was all those years ago, times and circumstances have changed significantly”. Well, times and circumstances have certainly changed significantly since our last AGM, twelve months ago with COVID19 and the Australian Government attitude to China and the increase in racism.

RACISM

With the present difficulties, criticisms and anti-Chinese sentiments, the ACFS is always ready to help bridge the knowledge gap. We must not be deterred by the bias & lies, perpetrated by some of the media, especially now. Many will take the opportunity to attack China and anything Chinese, so we must stand firm and counter racism via your various means.

I acknowledge the efforts of our members who have shared and posted many reports and information on social media to inform us of the true situation.

The ACFS seeks to promote the friendship and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China, this is not being political, just telling the truth. That understanding and respect is vital for the maintenance and promotion of peace and harmony in our region.

GOODWILL MESSAGES

The ACFS received messages of goodwill from our various associations in China due to COVID19 and these were reciprocated. Recently I received welcome notification that CPAFFC were sending us a shipment of masks. As soon as they arrive here in Australia, I will dispatch them for use of our Members.

RETIREMENT OF MME LI & APPOINTMENT OF HE AMBASSADOR MR LIN SONGTIAN

Early in April, the ACFS Ltd was informed of the retirement of Mme Li Xiaolin, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the appointment of HE Ambassador Mr Lin Songtian as the new President. I wrote a letter to Mme Li thanking her for her work in promoting friendship between our two countries and her leadership of CPAFFC which has brought together many friends across the world, especially during the International Friendship Forums. A letter was also sent to HE Ambassador Mr Lin Songtian welcoming him to the new role and how we look forward to working with him.

ZHEJIANG PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION FOR FRIENDSHIP WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES

In September 2019, I hosted a delegation from Hangzhou after their visit to Perth. The delegation was keen to further develop mutually beneficial activities between our two organisation which will help to promote greater understanding between our two countries.

70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

As National President, I attended a number of functions in October 2019 in Melbourne to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

2020 ACFS EVENTS

Events such as 2020 Chinese New Year functions in Victoria were cancelled, but we look forward to celebrating next year. ACFS activities in other States are also curtailed due to COVID19, but gives us time to plan more events as soon as lockdown is lifted. I note the 6th Shanghai International Youth Interactive Camp was cancelled along with other tours to China, notably the photographic and bird watching tours. Hopefully these tours will be resurrected next year.

I wish to thank the Western Australian Branch for their early preparation work for our 2020 National Conference which has sadly been cancelled because of the COVID19 outbreak.

PCFA

The ACFS continues to participate in the Pacific China Friendship Association

with John Breheny as our representative and Anthony Leong as Secretary General.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

We have many friends here and in China and we thank them for their support and look forward to further development of stronger interaction between our organisations. Ideas for future interactions and projects are welcomed.

Individual Branches are working hard to promote the ideals of our organisation, and I appreciate that work.

I thank the Board for your involvement and support over the last year and look forward to the next year of activities COVID19 free to promote greater understanding between the peoples of Australia and China.



Robin Matthews
National President
ACFS Ltd

ACFS Ltd AGM 27 May 2020

VICTORIAN BRANCH REPORT

It has been a confusing and confused time all around the world and this crisis has brought out the best and disastrous worst in many, especially in America and Australia. One of the most disappointing has been the hardening of attitudes to the role China has played with COVID-19, both as victim and source of aid. While we have all heard the old saying, 'Never let the truth get in the way of a good story', it has been astonishing the amount of misinformation being put into the public arena by a myriad of mischievous outlets of varying reputation.

For obvious reasons, the normal round of events and celebrations for New Year were muted and several events were cancelled as a result of performers and guests from China self-quarantining or staying home in China. I am grateful for their selfless acts for and on behalf of beleaguered communities in China.

A number of Chinese organisations including the ACFS Vic Branch were concerned about the anti-Chinese sentiment when Wuhan was reported as the epicentre for the virus, so *Open for business* was the theme for a lunch at Shark Finn House, one of Melbourne's well-known Chinese restaurants to rally support for China and especially Wuhan.

Last year, prior to COVID-19, the Victorian Branch was engaged in a variety of events. In July, the Branch hosted a concert featuring soprano Shu Cheen Yu and her ensemble. This was a great event and we would like to have similar concerts in the future.

The Chinese Museum of Australian and Chinese History held a number of events that ACFS attended, namely their annual fundraising dinner, opening of the exhibition "One Million Stories" and importantly the celebration of Maurice Leong's 100th Birthday who is our oldest member.

National President Robin Matthews, Vice President Tower Liu and I visited Melbourne Girls' School on July 1, to witness their China Culture and Language Program. We congratulate the school and students for their hard work and hope this continues long into the future. Later that month, I represented the ACFS at the annual celebration of the Jiangsu Sister-State relationship at Government House. The well attended event was a fitting tribute to the friendship between the two States.

In September Victorian Branch members met with a delegation of ZPAFFC officials from Hangzhou who are keen to develop ongoing projects to promote greater understanding and friendship between Zhejiang Province and Victoria.

October was a busy month with celebrations of Chinese National Day in Melbourne and a visit to Beijing.

The ACFS was delighted to co-host the annual 2019 Cultural and Language Awards at the Chinese Consulate for the People's Republic of China in Melbourne. The Award encourages students learning Chinese language and culture, and to reward the top students selected by their tutors for exemplary achievement in their studies. In recognition of their achievements, ten outstanding students from University of Melbourne, Monash University, La Trobe University, Deakin University and RMIT received a certificate, plaque and Lenovo computer. Most of the students have visited China to study at Chinese institutions and participated in exchange programs.

The ACFS was invited to the opening of the refurbished Chinese pagoda at the Melbourne General Cemetery also in October and earlier this year to the opening of the new Springvale Centre for Care and Wellbeing Botanical Cemetery.

The ACFS Victorian Branch is grateful to the Chinese Consulate for their on-going support of our Branch and look forward to continuing this close relationship.

Dwindling membership numbers has been a concern of our branch and our planned drive has been curtailed due to COVID-19, but hope to revive it later in the year.

Anthony Leong
President ACFS Victorian Branch INC



Museum of Chinese Australian History
22 Cohen Place Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
Open daily 10am - 4pm
(Closed on public holidays)
Email: info@chinesemuseum.com.au
Ph: +61 3 9662 2888

澳華歷史博物館
CHINESE MUSEUM

Asian Australians are presently being persecuted with the prevalence of racism throughout society. This cannot be stopped by enforcing laws or penalties alone.

The purpose of the Chinese Museum is to build a more harmonious Australian society by celebrating our identity and fostering understanding and mutual respect amongst all in the community.

The Chinese Museum works to achieve this goal by presenting various education and public programs, exhibitions and cultural activities - positive ways of sharing of our culture and history.

Please help us through these challenging times by making an end of financial year donation to the Museum.

All donations over \$2 are tax-deductible and Donors are automatically provided with a tax-deductible receipt.

Please visit <https://www.chinesemuseum.com.au/donate/helping-us-build-a-healthy-and-respectful-society/10/credit-card>



AUSTRALIA CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY Ltd

The Hon. Scott Morrison PM
PO Box 6500
Canberra ACT 2600

ACFS Ltd
Ross House
247 Flinders Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

29 May 2020

Dear Prime Minister

The Australia China Friendship Society Ltd calls for an urgent change in the attitude and behaviour of Australian politicians before further and devastating damage is done to Australia and to our relationship with China.

The ACFS has a proud history of promoting friendship and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China for nearly seventy years.

We view with concern the recent comments by you and other members of the Coalition parliamentary team which quite clearly point the finger of blame at China for its alleged “cover-up” and failure to act promptly in the face of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the virus was first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, recent reports from Italy, France and the United States suggest the virus was already present in their countries prior to this date, and patient zero is yet to be identified. There is an emerging consensus that the corona virus originated with transmission from a wild animal virus, and such zoonotic viral epidemics can occur in any part of the world.

Apart from the dubious and misrepresented scientific basis upon which your Government’s remarks are founded, there are further risks posed by the Government’s intemperate and poorly-judged statements. China is not only Australia’s largest trading partner by a considerable margin, it is also the largest source of foreign students, the largest source of foreign tourists, and the ninth- largest source of foreign investment.

With but few exceptions, the government and media interpreted the interview the Chinese Ambassador Cheng Jingye gave the Australian Financial Review on 26 April as being a threat of a trade war. It was no such thing. He mentioned, after considerable prodding, that he thought some Chinese would regard Australia as hostile if it persisted in political moves aimed against China and may be reluctant to go as tourists to Australia or send their children there as

students. In the context of the whole interview, it came only at the end and was certainly not central. Further, an allusion to what some individual Chinese *might* do is not in any sense a threat of a trade war.

Most of the statements and behaviour of Australian politicians (from all three major parties) are contrary to Australia's national interest, in that they appear to go out of their way to insult a country with whom we have built a strong friendship over a number of decades. China and Australia matter to each other.

The current attitude of the Australian Government does not represent the views of many Australian citizens. We wish for and promote a peaceful and harmonious relationship with our neighbours, and reject aggressive political posturing that threatens the peace of our region.

Yours sincerely



Robin Matthews
National President
ACFS Ltd

CC

Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Hon. Anthony Albanese, Leader of Opposition

Senator Penny Wong, Opposition Spokesperson Foreign Affairs

Report “People’s Daily”

ACFS president to Australian PM: Reject aggressive political posturing

2020-06-06

Robin Matthews, president of the Australia China Friendship Society Ltd (ACFS), has called for an urgent change in the attitude and behaviour of Australian politicians before further and devastating damage is done to Australia and its relationship with China, in a letter written to the Australian Prime Minister on May 29.

Directors and delegates from ACFS met via teleconference to attend its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday evening, May 27. Members expressed their views and reiterated that the current attitude of the Australian government does not represent the views of many Australian citizens. Matthews then issued the letter based on the views expressed by the members.

Matthews mentioned in the letter that the ACFS “views with concern the recent comments by you and other members of the Coalition parliamentary team which quite clearly point the finger of blame at China for its alleged ‘cover-up’ and failure to act promptly in the face of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the virus was first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, recent reports from Italy, France and the United State suggest the virus was already present in their countries prior to this date, and patient zero is yet to be identified.”

“We hope the virus crisis will be resolved soon so everyone can resume their normal activities and we can again concentrate on promoting peace and understanding between our two countries’. Matthews noted, “Unfortunately the coronavirus has provided an opportunity for unscrupulous people to spread mistruths and fear and this should be condemned. ••• misinformation should be challenged and called out for what it is - racism’.

Matthews pointed out that most of the statements and actions of Australian politicians (from all three major parties) go against Australia’s national interest in that they appear to go out of their way to insult a country that Australia has built a strong friendship with ••• a number of decades, adding that China and Australia matter to each other.

She further noted that the current attitude of the Australian government does not represent the views of many Australian citizens. “We wish for and promote a peaceful and harmonious relationship with our neighbours, and reject aggressive political posturing that threatens the peace of our region’.

MASKS DONATION

The National office of the ACFS received a generous offer of 1000 masks from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

We were delighted to receive this generous donation and we thank CPAFFC for their kind contribution.

Each State Branch received their requested allocation for use by their members and Victoria made a donation to the Elderly Chinese Home in Parkville of the remaining masks.

David from CPAFFC wrote "In face of the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide, we have no choice but to cooperate with each other".

"The ACFS is very grateful for this gesture and it helps strengthen the goodwill between the peoples of Australia and China".

Robin Matthews
National President
ACFS Ltd



*Robin presenting the masks to Lina and her staff
at the Elderly Chinese Home in Parkville.*

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

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