



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

September 2020

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President's Report

Hi everyone.

I know it's a trying time for all under COVID-19 Stage 4, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. As this virus is so active, we cannot relax completely for a while and we must follow the rules so we don't have to revisit strict measures. Please stay safe and unless absolutely necessary, stay home!

Vale Betty Little/O'Shea

I sadly report the passing of our long-time member, Mrs Betty Little, on Sunday 9 August 2020. She was one of the very first to go to China in the 60's and meet Chairman Mao and Premier Chou Enlai. A staunch supporter of the ACFS, in her later years Betty suffered from ill-health but kept a vibrant interest. We have gained much from her enthusiasm and contributions over such a long, distinguished time as a member. On behalf of all those who had the pleasure of knowing her, and all members, I extend our condolences to her family and our heartfelt thanks for her lifelong service to upholding the values of the ACFS. She was indeed a true friend of China.

Masks

We have been extremely fortunate to have been given masks by Shanghai People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (PAFFC) and the head organisation, the Chinese PAFFC. Happily, many of our members have availed themselves of the generous offers. We do have opportunity to get more if there is a demand, but for now we have none left. Our grateful thanks to our kind donors and hopefully, as things improve, we will have far less need.

Zoom meetings

Over the past few weeks, in her role as National President, Robin Matthews has been asked to speak at various online meetings. The latest was on September 2, speaking at a Zoom meeting of world Friendship Associations

hosted by Beijing PAFFC. With 17 international speakers, the topic was how Friendship Associations can work within the confines of COVID-19, its effects, and spreading the word about the Belt and Road Initiative. Robin spoke about our contributions here in Australia and our role in the Pacific China Friendship Association. Chair Mme Zhang was very interested in the letter Robin sent the Prime Minister regarding the Australian government's unfortunate attitude and treatment of China and Chinese. Robin was interviewed by Beijing media around this and other topics on 4 September.

Finally...

Again, my sincere thanks to those who hold the fort – the workers, the medical and support staff, those who are keeping society functioning and still sane. And to you who are doing the right thing, thank you too for keeping us all safe and relatively well. COVID-19 is real, it is dangerous and we must never underestimate the threat. To ignore the experiences in other countries and lift (or worse, ignore) the restrictions now could well mean disastrous results. Stay well, stay safe and I look forward to our meeting in happier, safer times.

Anthony Leong

2020 BEIJING INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON PEOPLE TO PEOPLE FRIENDSHIP

I participated in Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries on-line forum *People to People Friendly Cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative* on 4 September

The forum was chaired by Mme Zhang Qian from BPAFFC and consisted of welcome from, Mme He Luli Honary President BPAFFC and key note address from H.E. Ambassador Lin Songtian President of CPAFFC.

As National President of ACFS Ltd, I was honored to be invited to address the forum where over 150 people attended from across the world. Seventeen speakers representing world-wide Chinese Friendship Associations spoke about the BRI in people to people cooperation. Below is a copy of my speech.

ACFS President Robin Matthews

IBPAFFC ON-LINE FORUM 2 SEPTEMBER 2020

People-to-people Friendly Cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative

Robin Matthews
President Australia China Friendship Society Ltd

Your Excellency Ambassador Lin, Mme Zhang,
Honourable Guests
Friends

Ni Hao, and greetings from the Australia China Friendship Society.

It is a great honour that I have been invited to participate in this international forum and to share with our friends in Beijing and around the world.

Even though we are not meeting face to face, nevertheless, we are pleased we can still maintain relationships with friends.

I hope everyone is healthy and staying safe from COVID19 and I am pleased we are joined by a number of my ACFS colleagues.

Now to address How Friendship Associations can play a better role in the Belt and Road Initiative.

My Society, was founded in 1951, recognising the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Our work was non-political, promoting friendship and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China.

In the early days, we operated as the main tourist agency between Australia and China, with educational and cultural exchanges, but with world-wide communications now, our role has changed.

The Belt and Road Initiative presents great opportunities to people around the world, and I believe Societies and Associations such as ours can play a significant role.

In 2018, the Victorian Government here in Australia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Development and Reform Commission of the PRC on cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Among certain sections of our community, there continues to be great consternation about the State Government's involvement with the BRI, so this is an opportunity for Friendship Associations to explain the nature and benefits of the BRI.

The BRI is like a "rising tide to lift all boats", meaning lifting standards of living, especially emerging countries, such as small Pacific nations.

The ACFS has had its own ways to promote the BRI. We were instrumental in the creation of the Pacific China Friendship Association (PCFA) in 2016.

The PCFA is an umbrella organisation for China Friendship Associations in the Pacific, promoting friendly relations between island nations and China. One of its key principles is to have a Pacific version of the BRI, namely the *Maritime Pearl Road*, to boost all fields of endeavour, growth and harmony within the region.

Friendship Associations are volunteer organisations but strategically are in a good position to explain China's socio-political philosophy, but we need materials to help achieve this.

Critics of China equate "difference" with "wrong". Just because a country has different cultural values does not mean it is wrong. Understanding and being respectful of any country's culture will inevitably lead to a more peaceful and harmonious world.

With Australia's history and involvement with the people of China, it is in a good position to be a peacemaker, not an antagonist. Both countries have benefitted from a cordial relationship for over 150 years, extending to before white people even reached Australia's shores.

(Cooperation in the field of people's livelihood in the BRI)

Now earlier I mentioned the PCFA. This organisation is a great example of raising standards. Through the Maritime Pearl Road, projects are built using Chinese expertise to train and employ local labour.

Multilateral technical and manufacturing initiatives have been established, focusing on clean, green production and development of sustainable energy techniques.

The PCFA is also engaged in economic technical Research and Development, such as block chain and e-commerce. Discovery of new markets, new products and new suppliers are all significant and important developments of the Maritime Pearl Road, which is part of the BRI for the Pacific region.

Now what can we all do for cooperation during the global pandemic?

With the present 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.

Speaking locally, any will take the opportunity to attack China and anything Chinese, so we must stand firm and counter racism via various means.

Currently there are many challenges that Australia and China must address, namely:

- Anti-China political rhetoric (for instance “the Wuhan/China virus”)

- Racism

- Fear

- Deliberate lies and misinformation, and

- Western internal politicking – nothing to do with China geopolitics

We should remember that on Dec. 24, 2019, Chinese scientists identified and first reported on the Novel Corona Virus 19. This information was immediately shared with the WHO.

China has done nothing wrong and has willingly shared its research knowledge and helped the world with supply of PPE and medical expertise.

It is important to have the facts and to refute the lies and fake news. It takes a bit of time, but the information is there to collate.

I should mention here the ACFS is most grateful and has been the recent recipient of masks kindly donated by Chinese Friendship Associations.

There are many positive stories to be told in this realm and in the absence of mainstream media, it is up to Friendship Associations to disseminate positive stories.

During this time of COVID and to counter some of the racist anti-Chinese commentary, ACFS members across Australia have shared media posts, reports and information on social media, as well as speaking on television and radio to inform the public of the true situation.

As reported on 10 July, Tedros Adhanon Ghebreyesus said *“Can’t we understand that the divisions and the cracks between us are an advantage for the virus”*. A community is one which shares and has certain attitudes and interests in common and this equally applies to the treacherous challenge racism presents.

Participation in international forums such as this brings greater understanding of our different cultures. Future relations between all countries is based on a platform of open and honest dialogue to promote the well-being of all nations.

I thank BPAFFC for your support over the years and look forward to a future free of these challenges so we can promote respect and understanding between all nations.

Xie Xie

Chinese Museum

Call out to families of Chinese Australians who enlisted in WWII

Are you a family member of an Australian soldier of Chinese Ancestry? Do you have personal memories, photographs and memorabilia of a Chinese-Australian’s WWII service to Australia? If so, 2020 marks the 75th year since the end of Second World War. We, with support from the Victorian Government, will undertake research into the loyal participation of Chinese Australian women and men in this war to be published in a freshly researched book.



please help us with our research by providing your information: <https://www.chinesemuseum.com.au>

VALE BETTY LITTLE

At the beginning of August, the ACFS learned of the sad news of the passing of Betty Little / O'Shea. Betty was a strong supporter of the ACFS and served as President of the Victorian Branch 1997 to 2000. The last ACFS activity that Betty attended was the ACFS 60th Anniversary at the Victorian Parliament in 2012. Attached photos Betty with Chinese Ambassador Chen Yuming shows Betty at this happy event.

Betty lived at Moubray House for her last years where she maintained her interest in the ACFS and avidly read our newsletters.

Her family were able to spend time with their Mum over her last weeks, and celebrated her 97th birthday on the 31st July.

We pay our condolences to her family and our deepest gratitude for her invaluable contribution in our formative years and beyond.



Betty Little/O'shea with Chinese Ambassador CHEN Yuming

Betty Little-O'Shea

- a great friend of the Chinese people

Much loved former ACFS President, Betty Little-O'Shea, died on August 10, 2020, at the age of 97. Betty had been a member of the ACFS for decades and served as President of the Victorian Branch from 1997 to 2000.

Betty did not have an easy life. For many years she worked as a machinist in clothing factories along Sydney Road, Brunswick, Melbourne, where she was deeply involved in struggles of clothing factory workers, many of them migrant women. Betty organised strikes, go-slows and pickets outside the factory gates. She was warm, deeply interested and cared for people. Her working class roots gave her deep insight and respect for workers' lives and struggles.

Decades prior to the recent uncovering of the institutional sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy, Betty repeatedly condemned the systematic violation of children practised, promoted and protected by groups of powerful men, who paraded their sanctity and moral authority.



**Betty Little & world peace leaders
with Chinese leaders, Beijing 1964**



Betty Little meets Chairman Mao Zedong, Beijing 1964

She expressed the strongest feelings of international solidarity and friendship with the struggles of oppressed peoples and nations across the world and was a spirited defender of the Chinese Revolution and the contribution of Mao Zedong. Through her work in the ACFS she helped to break down the propaganda barriers, leading to the opening of extensive trade links and Australian government diplomatic recognition of the PRC.

International friendship societies were promoted by the late premier of the PRC, Zhou Enlai, to foster people-to-people contacts. Betty repeatedly explained that the ACFS was not a political organisation but necessarily involved people-to-people politics. As with her other areas of work, Betty practiced her political beliefs and commitments of listening and guiding in her role in the ACFS. She met Mao Zedong in Beijing in 1964.

Betty was proud of her family, her daughters and grandchildren who admired and supported Betty in her work.

John Breheny (ACFS former Vic Branch and National ACFS President)
Liz O'Connor (ACFS Member)

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