

Special concert for ACFS members and friends



Join **acclaimed, multi-Award-Winning opera singer Shu-Cheen Yu** and **Lotus Wind Choir** for a **special afternoon concert** on **Saturday, February 28 afternoon** at **St. John's Anglican Church, Toorak**.

Presented with pride by **ACFS**, this concert celebrates Australia's multicultural spirit through song – uniting voices and hearts across cultures. Enjoy an unforgettable musical journey featuring beloved tunes and treasured melodies, both old and new, sung in multiple languages – blending the best of East and West.

All proceeds from tickets sales and Ms. Yu's CDs sales will be donated to **ACFS** in support of community initiatives.

Date: Saturday 28 February 2026 2:00 PM (UTC+10)

After the concert, please join us for **refreshments**.

Address: St John's Anglican Church, 86 Clendon Rd, Toorak VIC 3142

Tickets are \$40 for non-members and \$30 for members, available via the ACFS or <https://www.trybooking.com/DFFGF>
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: treasurer@acfs-vic.org





Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

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February 2026

President's Report

It is sometimes incorrectly said that Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" contains the maxim "Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake". More commonly, it is attributed to Napoleon. The source for the latter is a paraphrase from Archibald Alison "History of Europe" (1836) where Napoleon apparently cautioned his marshals at the Battle of Austerlitz, "when the enemy is making a false movement we must take good care not to interrupt him."

Recent months illustrate the maxim and draw a great deal of attention to the differing foreign policies of the United States and of China. Continuing what has been a chaotic and belligerent administration, determined to threaten long-term allies away, the Trump administration argued for the incorporation of Greenland into the U.S., despite no historical connection and against the wishes of Greenlanders. The fact that the U.S. government did not rule out the use of military force to acquire Greenland led to twelve NATO members to deploy a small number of troops in Greenland in "Operation Arctic Endurance". The operation was organised by Denmark, and included forces from the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Nordic countries and others.



Happy Chinese New Year - Year of Horse

春節快樂

Faced with such a united opposition, the U.S. backed down, giving credence to the saying that the best way to deal with a school-yard bully is to stand up to them. Of course, one must do so from a position of strength. In the meantime, Europe and Canada have seen that their old ally is not reliable and is acting in their own self-interest. Commentators even more cynical than I would possibly remark that it took them long enough. In any case, Prime Minister Carney of Canada has visited China resulting in reduced tariffs, the export of agricultural products from Canada, the import of electric vehicles from China, and collaboration in energy and green technologies, such as solar, wind, and battery storage. Canada currently sends about 70% of its exports to the US; but that is changing as Canada realises that China is a more stable partner.

Canada is not doing this alone; in December French President Emmanuel Macron also visited with a statement covering population demographics, wildlife conservation, and nuclear energy. Difficult talks were also conducted with President Xi Jinping about the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which was a priority and one which both China and France will play a pivotal role. Further, Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, visited China in late January; a delicate meeting of course, given the UK's historic leading role in the "national humiliation" of China. Like France, the British made some fairly good trade agreements on pharmaceuticals and the establishment of visa-free travel for British citizens, and an agreement to work toward improving access for British businesses to the Chinese market, including lower tariffs. Perhaps more importantly, for two countries that have historically had some very significant difference, an engagement has opened up - and it was not one that the US president is happy with declaring, with an implied threat, that it was "very dangerous" for the British to do business with China.

It is interesting to witness how, through belligerence and threats, the United States has managed to put off some of historic closest allies and how this has resulted with such allies looking toward improved relations with the People's Republic. Political differences remain, of course, and full and frank discussions will continue, but from a position that respects the autonomy of each country to make their own decisions and, even when such differences are ongoing, to continue working together on the economic matters that benefit all parties. Whilst it is almost certain that he will not be attentive to such things, the US President is reminded of an actual quote from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War": "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the height of skill" (Bù zhàn ér qū rén zhī bīng, shàn zhī shàn zhě yě, 不戰而屈人之兵，善之善者也). Perhaps President Trump's aggressiveness will be subdued people exchange goods in the spirit of friendship and peace, rather than from threats.

Closer to home, the ACFS is preparing itself for a new year. With a new committee and more youthful faces in the group, the first event we have planned is our upcoming concert with Shu Cheen Yu and Lotus Wind Choir. This event, on Saturday 28 February 2026 in Toorak, will be a major activity of the Society and one which promises to be of outstanding quality, as the Choir is internationally known as was nominated at the ARIA Music Awards of 2001. Members and friends are strongly encouraged to attend this event; further information is available in this issue of the newsletter. The following month there is a remarkable ACFS tour planned for Guizhou and Sichuan, which includes visits to a Miao village, the "Sky Bridge" in Pingtang County, radio telescope, Qingyan and Hejiang Yaoba Ancient Towns, the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre, and much more. Again, more information in this newsletter.

In the meantime, we welcome the year of the Fire Horse, which I am told represents the elements of activity and momentum whilst directed with strength and steadfastness. That certainly does serve as a good metaphor for the coming year.

Lev Lafayette, President, Australia-China Friendship Society (Victoria)

THE TRUTH ABOUT JIMMY LAI THE FORMER HONG KONG MEDIA TYCOON

Joe Montero

There is an astonishing volume of astonishing noise about an alleged injustice by the Hong Kong Court's verdict handed down in the case of former media mogul Jimmy Lai. The claim is that this is about silencing a freedom fighter and denial of the right to speak and publish.

Not really. Even a cursory examination of the facts of the case show a vastly different story. First of all, the main charges are under British law, which had been imposed and still operates according to the terms of the agreement handing back the former colony to China. It was not Chinese law.

In any case. Both British and Chinese law are clear that working with agents of a foreign government to impose the political will of a foreign government on Hong Kong is highly illegal and constitutes treason. And the mountains of tested evidence provided to the court over the 156 days trial that Jimmy Lai and his legal counsel couldn't and didn't deny. This included lists of names of contacts, evidence of money's paid, and even the testimony of former allies who turned against the accused. The trial judges brought down an 855 pages verdict. This explained everything in minute detail.



Jimmy Lai is arrested by police at his home in April 2020. The media tycoon was sentenced to 20 years in prison on Monday. Photograph: Vincent Yu/AP

The two laws spelt provided a maximum penalty of execution. Jimmy Lai was sentenced to 20 years. He has the possibility to appeal and get some time off. To many Hong Kong residents this is far too lenient. Ditto with much of the population of the rest of China. Nevertheless, what the judges came down with might prove to be wise. This is a time to heal the wounds and build community cohesion for the future.

Lesser charges relating to publishing material to cause division and harm to Hong Kong society has merit when you consider this was also made possible with the assistance of the United States and

British governments. The court had the facts about this too.

Referring to the anti-China cold war rhetoric of the Trump administration he said the following: “You have the nuclear weapon. You can finish them in a minute”. On a television show he stated the following. “We really want the US to interfere in Hong Kong.”

Foreign scribes and their publishers would do much better to actually look at and admit the facts instead trying so hard to manufacture stories fitting into a preconceived narrative. Jimmy Lia admitted much of what he was accused. Not because he was repentant. Jimmy stated more than once that there was nothing wrong in what he did. This is his view.

One of the witnesses, former US naval intelligence officer Mark Simon, admitted helping Lai to betray his own nation. He helped Lai channel money to certain groups, to build a movement. Much of the is money was found to have come from the American CIA, the National for Democracy (NED), and other similar Washington sources.

A key contact in Hong Kong revealed at the trial was the former US Consul James Cunningham, who assisted in establishing an international movement to destabilise Hong Kong. In uncontested evidence at the trial, Cunningham wrote: “The danger of this outside movement is collusion with foreign influence is a serious crime.”

Evidence of US involvement, up to having a direct hand in planning violent disturbances, the so-called democracy movement quickly lost legitimacy within its own ranks. This was the cause of its demise, rather than the state response. A significant part of this delegitimization has been Jimmy Lai’s exposure. Lai’s Apple Daily printed to notorious Complete Resistance Manual, that explicitly promoted violent riots, how to evade police, and how to make weapons. Lia was instrumental in placing US agents into powerful positions in Hong Kong.

Jimmy Lia was born into a wealthy Guangdong family on the wrong side of the revolution that culminated in its 1949 victory. He escaped to Hong Kong when he was 12, and soon ended up in the United Kingdom, of which he eventually became a citizen. Little is known about his life during these times. He returned to Hong Kong later in life with the means to become a major figure in the business world. Jimmy Lai emerged as owner of the global clothing company called Giordano. Later on, he turned his attention to media.

Jimmy’s political views are not hard to find. Here we see a virulent anti-Communist, becoming a supporter of ultra-right-wing movements in other countries. He has been a vocal supporter of Israel’s current President Benyamin Netanyahu and Israeli Zionism and donated a lot of money to Donald Trump’s election campaign. Jimmy Lai has repeatedly called for direct western intervention in Hong Kong.

His political views and evidence in the trial match and underline that he is not a freedom fighter. His tabloid Apple Daily had a history of using sensationalism, gossip, and fabricated stories. Smut and violence were its constant diet. Social division was promoted through inciting hatred, glorifying violence, and outright racism.

After the return of Hong Kong to China, Jimmy took on a new tack. He turned to the former British rulers and the United States. They funded his operations and waged the propaganda war. Jimmy Lia suddenly became a fighter for Hong Kong democracy.

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ACFS President's Speech to the Quanzhou Delegation

(K.Ho Contemporary Chinese Cuisine Restaurant, November 2025)

I am deeply honoured to be invited to attend and speak at this event, hosted by the Fujian Association of Victoria, and to welcome an official delegation from Quanzhou. I'd like to thank Jimmy Li from the Fujian Association for inviting me, and to welcome the delegation lead, Mr Huang Shijie, along with Director Zhong, Director Wang, and Director Chen.

I would like to also acknowledge that we meet on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, who are part of the Kulin Nation. We give our respects to the elders past, present, and emerging, and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

I am here tonight representing the Australia-China Friendship Society, Victorian branch. We were founded in 1951, growing out of the International Club at the University of Melbourne. At the time, the Society took the unpopular position that Australia should accept political reality and not only recognise the new People's Republic of China, but also extend the hand of friendship.

I like to think that we have achieved at least that part of our objectives. China is, of course, Australia's largest trading partner in terms of imports and exports. That is a great achievement in its own right. But I am sure that the future will see this relationship grow even further. Economic prosperity for Australia and China will depend so much on good relations between our countries.

And we also have a vibrant Chinese community here in Victoria, and one which has enriched us so much through culture, community, language, and - most appropriate to say in Box Hill - cuisine. And I'd like to think that, despite our much smaller population, that increasingly there are good connections from Australia to China. I'd like to see more young Australian students in China, learning about Chinese



culture, language, and society, just as so many young Chinese have learned about the Australian way of life.

I understand that Fujian has a rich history, with many cultural influences, and with a stunning geography; “eight parts mountain, one part water, and one part farmland”. Of course, like much of the coastal provinces of China, Fujian is an economic powerhouse, especially in manufacturing and high technologies, with at least a dozen special Economic and Technological Zones. This provide a great deal of future opportunities for Victorian primary industries, health and medical research, and education.

But real friendship is not just established through the trade of goods and services, but through shared understanding and respect. Whilst backward-thinking people always try to divide us, forward looking people see that different experiences are a source of a stronger unity. Fujian is recognised as one of the culturally and linguistically diverse provinces in China. Victoria, is the most culturally and linguistically diverse state in Australia. Both our people understood the strength this brings in building our own culture and relationship with others. It is in this spirit that the Australia China Friendship Society was formed, and we will always continue with that spirit. May Victoria and Fujian be not only great trading partners, but also great friends.

50th Anniversary of the Death of Premier Zhou Enlai (8 January)

Len Hartnett

On 8 January 1976, China suffered a great loss with the death of Premier Zhou Enlai. Fifty years on, his life and legacy continue to shape how China understands the journey from revolution to nation-building.

Born in 1898 in Huai’an, Jiangsu, Zhou Enlai was raised amid the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the uncertainties of early republican China. Educated first in China and later in Japan and France, he absorbed a broad intellectual formation that combined Confucian discipline with exposure to Western political thought. It was during his time in Europe that Zhou embraced Marxism, joining a generation of Chinese radicals determined to end warlordism, foreign domination, and social inequality.

Zhou was as a key organiser and strategist within the Chinese Communist movement during the 1920s and 1930s. He was known for precision, patience, and an ability to reconcile differences. During the Long March and the subsequent war against Japan, Zhou played a vital role in maintaining unity within the Communist leadership and in coordinating with non-Communist forces when survival demanded pragmatism. He was always a loyal Communist and a follower of Mao Zedong.

With the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Zhou became the country’s first Premier and its principal diplomatic face. Working closely with Chairman [Mao Zedong](#), Zhou was instrumental in translating revolutionary victory into the practical machinery of state. He helped build China’s administrative institutions, oversaw economic reconstruction after decades of war, and guided foreign policy during the fraught early years of the Cold War. His presence at the 1954 Geneva Conference and later efforts to open relations with the developing world marked China’s re-entry onto the global stage.

Perhaps Zhou’s enduring reputation lies also in his conduct during periods of extreme political upheaval, particularly the Cultural Revolution. While unable to halt its excesses, he is widely credited with shielding countless officials, intellectuals, and cultural institutions from total destruction by the ultra leftists. His loyalty to the Party was matched by a deep sense of responsibility for the people.

Zhou Enlai died after a long illness only months before Mao and the end of an era. The spontaneous public mourning that followed revealed the depth of popular attachment to a leader remembered for integrity, restraint, and service. Half a century later, Zhou remains a symbol of disciplined service and humane governance in the making of modern China.



Premier Zhou Enlai meet ACFS delegation in 1970's. The photo was Dr Clive & Mrs Barbara Sandy - founding members of the ACS from Victoria

Are You Dead? China's viral app reveals a complex reality of solo living and changing social ties

From: The Conversation January 30, 2026

A Chinese personal safety app called Are You Dead? – recently rebranded as Demumu – has gone viral in recent weeks, attracting widespread media attention.

Behind its sudden popularity lie deeper social transformations, including demographic shifts and changing personal and family relationships. At the same time, demand is growing for trust-based, non-medical, easy-to-use care networks tailored to the rapid rise of one-person households.

Demumu also shows how digital technologies are not only responding to everyday safety concerns but also reshaping social and cultural norms. As traditional kinship ties and community support structures weaken, technology is stepping in to fill – and capitalise on – the gaps.

Demumu's virality: from local to global

In mid-2025, with a development cost of around 1,500 yuan (US\$210), three young Chinese professionals from Moonscape Technologies launched a personal safety app called Are You Dead?.

The app was designed to address the safety concerns of China's growing population of people who live alone. As described on its [official store page](#), the app aims to "protect every solitary moment with simple solutions and build a solid safety line for solo living".

Users are prompted to click an on-screen button daily or fortnightly via their smartphone to verify they are alive. If a user fails to do so, the system automatically sends email alerts to two nominated emergency contacts.

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Shortly after the app's release, it went viral and quickly became the most downloaded paid app in China. A 10% stake in the company reportedly increased in value from 1 million yuan (US\$140,000) to nearly 10 million yuan (US\$1.4 million) within three days. This suggests an overall valuation of close to 100 million yuan (US\$14 million) for the developer.

In mid-January 2026, the app rebranded as Demumu as part of a global expansion. It has now gained traction in more than 40 countries and ranking near the top in global markets such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada.

China is moving towards smaller families and more individualised lives

The 2020 China Population Census showed there were more than 125 million one-person households in China. That's one in every four households in the country.

Around two thirds of these solo dwellers are aged between 20 and 59. It is estimated there will be 200 million such households by 2030.

The rapid rise of solo living in China can be attributed to several factors. First, a growing number of "empty nest" older adults. This has been caused by population ageing, and the decline of marriage and fertility while divorce rates rise. These trends have been intensified by longer life expectancy and the legacy of the decades-long One Child Policy.

Second, intimate relationships and family formation have become less attainable for many. Men are often expected to own a home and a car even at the courtship stage, which is increasingly difficult due to rising living costs and high property prices. "Bride prices" – paid by a man's family to a woman's before marriage – are also escalating.

Third, large-scale migration from rural to urban areas and between cities has produced many "split households". Millions of "empty-nest youths" live alone for extended periods under intense work-related pressures before forming or reuniting with families. A common anxiety among this group is "disappearing in loneliness".

Numerous reports have documented "empty nesters" who died and were only found days, weeks, or even months later, particularly in gated urban communities. These incidents highlight the vulnerabilities associated with solo living, as well as the absence of trust-based safety networks. This is a problem Demumu seeks to address.

Moreover, among younger generations in China – particularly highly educated urban women – attitudes towards marriage and singlehood are shifting. Living alone is increasingly a deliberate choice.

Career development and personal autonomy are becoming higher priorities. Many women wish to avoid taking on a disproportionate share of domestic and caregiving responsibilities.

Solo living: a high-potential market

China's singles economy is booming, and the market still has significant room to grow.

In major metropolitan centres such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, products and services tailored to people living alone are more and more visible.

These include one-person hotpot restaurants, single-person karaoke booths, and micro-apartments designed for solo dwellers. Compact household appliances such as mini-fridges, coffee machines, and kettles are also readily available, as well as solo travel packages offered by tourism agencies.

A single-person karaoke booth (often called a mini KTV) in a shopping centre in Changping district, Beijing. These booths are commonly installed in shopping malls, entertainment complexes, and commercial streets. Pan Wang, CC BY

Companionship of various kinds is also on offer. Owning pets – particularly dogs and cats – often plays an important role in the everyday lives of people who live alone.

The intimate services market has also expanded rapidly through digital platforms and smartphone apps. This includes love mentoring and relationship counselling, online dating and digital romance games. AI-powered chatbot companions and humanoid dolls designed to meet the emotional and relational needs of solo dwellers are also becoming more common.

There's also an emerging niche business known as date-renting. This practice was initially popularised among young "bare branches" seeking to bring a temporary partner home for Lunar New Year family gatherings.

However, date-renting has since evolved into a personalised service economy in which individuals exchange intimacy, companionship, and dating experiences. In the process, dating is transformed into an "emotional commodity," made visible for public consumption and increasingly shaped by platform profiteering.

Together with the emergence of safety apps such as Demumu, these singles-oriented businesses and technologies are energising China's solo-driven economy. More importantly, they are also filling the gaps left by shrinking families and increasingly individualised living arrangements. In the process, they are reshaping contemporary social and personal relations and normalising single-centred cultures and lifestyles in everyday life.



Author Pan Wang

Associate Professor in Chinese and Asian Studies, UNSW Sydney

Disclosure statement

Wang does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

ACFS need your help

We have set up a charity within CDS Victoria for recycling of cans and bottles. This will allow you to direct your refund to The Australia China Friendship Society.

It is rather a simple process:


1. If you haven't already downloaded the CDS Victoria app to your trusty mobile phone.
2. Locate your nearest return centre at this location <https://cdsvic.org.au/locations>. There are three zones in Victoria East North and West.

CDS Vic is made up of 3 zones, North, East and West.


Each zone is managed by one of our Zone Operators who manage payments and refunds in their zone.

For more information about each of our Zone Operators, you can visit their websites by clicking the links below.


North Zone
Operated by [Visy](#)

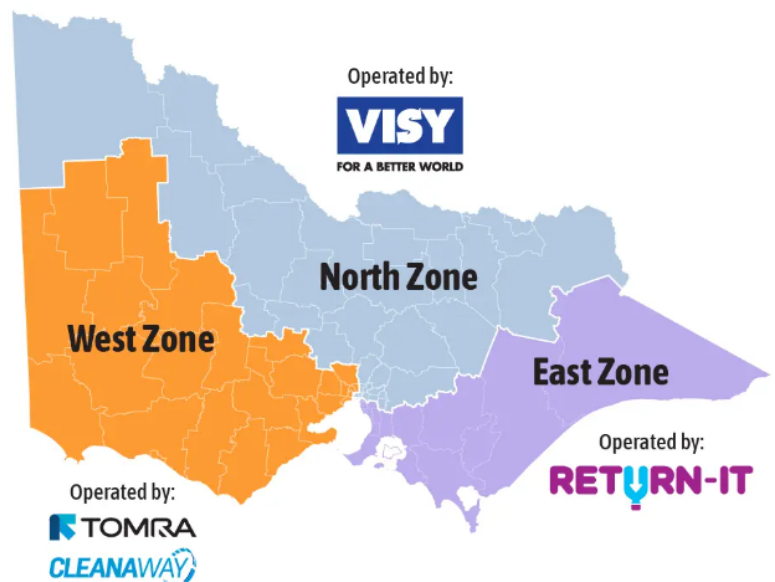


East Zone
Operated by [Return-It](#)



West Zone
Operated by [TOMRA Cleanaway](#)





3. Take your cans etc. to the centre, open the app on your phone and scan the barcode at the return machines. Make sure your phone is on the brightest setting so the machine can see the barcode.
4. When you have finished, tap the "Bank Transfer" button and search Charities, Select donation, and search for Australia China friendship Society Victorian Branch Inc,
5. Choose to transfer your refund to this account.
6. Easy as that.

Thank you very much for your support

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: Lev Lafayette
VICE PRESIDENT: Tower Liu
SECRETARY: Edith Wilson
TREASURER: Ian Parker
COMMITTEE: Joe Montero, James Doery, Suzana Dewa, Ethan Dattiulo

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 secretary@acfs-vic.org

ACFS (VICTORIA) Inc. A0038007M ABN NO. 39 746 574 225

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Address P/code.....
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Family \$40.00 Single \$30.00 Concession \$15.00
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Corporate on Application

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

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Promoting Friendship and Understanding Between the Australian and Chinese People