



June 2025

Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc). ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

4TH FLOOR, ROSS HOUSE, 247-251 FLINDERS LANE, MELBOURNE VIC 3000

E-MAIL: SECRETARY@ACFS-VIC.ORG WEB: WWW.ACFS-VIC.ORG

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President's Report

A feature and weakness of Australian mass democracy is that it requires an informed electorate to provide the most optimal result. Because the electorate is often poorly informed some politicians acting out of ignorance or malice (we assign blame, by default, to the former motivation) engage in the an unfortunate demagoguery which, invariably, targets minorities as desperate scare tactics which, regrettably, often work.

In the recent Federal election, Victorian Senator Jane Hume of the Liberal Party, claimed that “Chinese spies” volunteered for Labor candidate Clare O’Neil. The claim was unsubstantiated of course, but it did feed into existing anti-Chinese prejudice and racism. To their credit, former Liberal member for Chisholm and the first person of Chinese heritage to be elected to Australia’s House of Representatives in 2019, Gladys Liu, demanded a formal apology from Senator Jane Hume.

The response of the Australian Chinese community was, unsurprisingly, one of deep disappointment that political discourse could fall to such a low and irresponsible level. According to former Chinese diplomat, Han Yang, the claim resulted in “discomfort and resentment”. With over a million people in Australia with Chinese heritage, young Chinese in particular were not afraid to voice their disappointment by mocking the comments on social media. Despite this confidence in their response, we must not forget the underlying reality – that a Federal Senator targeted and questioned the loyalty of a section of the community because of their ethnic background.

It should be noted that such ill-informed expressions such as that by the Senator can have the opposite effect. In electorates with larger Chinese populations – such as Bennelong, Chisolm, Menzies, and Reid – voters made their feelings on the matter clear at the ballot box, with swings against the Liberal Party who lost each of these seats. The lesson about engaging with communities without discrimination should be clear.

For our own part the Australia-China Friendship Society is an organisation that is stridently opposed to racism and, in accord with our objectives, against racism directed against Chinese. We have stood alongside Chinese people and the Chinese community since the organisation was founded and when it was far less popular, indeed sometimes dangerous, to do so. Quite clearly work in this regard is far from complete, and that is why, in my role as president of this Society, I am taking the opportunity to announce a campaign against racism directed against Chinese. Input is encouraged for appropriate actions, and the next issue of the newsletter will have a more fully developed statement.

It has been, of course, a very busy period for the Australia-China Friendship Society. We are hardly a large and well-resourced body, but we do have history, connections, and influence. As advertised in our last newsletter, in May we held a successful social dinner at David’s Hot Pot in the city, followed by meeting with a delegation from Sichuan who also held their own showcase presentation the economic and social development of the Province, and then meeting a delegation from Guizhou Province, who sought to elaborate ties in culture and education.



Further, most recently four Australians representative from the ACFS (including three from Victoria) travelled to Nanjing, for the the Jiangsu People-to-People Conference and the celebration of the 70th anniversary Commemoration of the JSPAFFC (Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries). There were over 40 countries represented by some 145 attendees, with 17 international speakers, including myself and the ACFS National President Jan Everett. Our hosts were impressive beyond measure, with the conference providing visits to China old and new, including the City Wall and Zhonghua Gate, and the Baoen Museum Buddhist Temple in Nanjing, along with the Huishan Old Town, Wuxi e-scooter industrial park, and precision textiles centre.

Further, the Australia-China Friendship Society has been honoured to host another Yum Cha (in what looks like is becoming an annual event) with Dr Fiona Swee-Lin Price providing an insightful, clever, and often humorous address on various on bi-cultural experiences, history, and need for understanding.

The Yum-Cha was also preceded by a very significant change to the constitution of the Australia-China Friendship Society (Victorian branch), as follows:

(11) (a) In addition to ordinary annual membership, there will be the option for Life Membership, which can be purchased at ten times the rate of ordinary annual membership.

(b) In addition to Life Membership, a member may be granted Honorary Life Membership. This will be granted by motion at the Annual General Meeting of the Association to members who have contributed significantly to the objects of the Association over many years.

This change has a three-fold benefit. The first is that Life Membership will provide an quick cash-injection for the Society which is needed. The second is that it will provide significant benefit in reducing administrative transaction – pay once, for life, and you're done. This will free up human and even technological resources to engage in more direct activities with and for members. Obviously, we encourage each and every member and former member to take up this superb opportunity. Finally, Honorary Life Membership will provide recognition for those whose contributions have been so exceptional that they shall be rewarded and remembered for what they have done and achieved.

In summary, the Australia-China Friendship Society (Victorian branch) has been engaged in a very busy past two months with visitors, visiting, social events, and strengthening the organisation. You may very well assume that the next few months are going to be very similar. We are an organisation that is taking real action that strengthens the connections between Australians and Chinese as well as between Australia and China. We invite you to join us on this worthwhile and historical journey.

Zàiliánxi!

Lev Lafayette
President, Australia-China Friendship Society (Victorian branch)

Speech to Jiangsu People-to-People Conference

*By ACFS (Victoria) President, Lev Lafayette
Nanjing, June 2025*

It is a genuine honour to be here today at this, the 70th anniversary of the Jiangsu People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. It is my privilege and responsibility to speak on behalf of the delegation from the Australia-China Friendship Society.

Our Society was established in 1951 so like our honourable guests, our association is also in its eighth decade. Our society was initially formed out of the International Students' Club at the University of Melbourne, and during our early years a great deal of effort of was spent encouraging the Australian government to respect reality and recognise the People's Republic of China. One can just imagine how challenging that was given the environment at the time; not only did we have to manage the cultural differences and prejudices, but also significant ideological challenges. How times have changed! China is now Australia's largest trading partner in exports and imports and there are more than 200,000 Chinese students in Australia, more than any other country.

Nevertheless the Australia-China Friendship Society grew with branches established in other states and territories, resulting in a National Council formed in 1972. Today, there are branches of the Australia-China Friendship Society throughout the states and territories of Australia.

Whilst each branch is an independent organisation, we do all have a great deal in common. We all seek to establish contact and friendship between Australia and China and Australian and Chinese people. We encourage an understanding of Chinese culture, language, history, and society. We always welcome and host delegations from China, promote "sister City" relationships between Australian and Chinese municipalities, organise specialist tours to China and assist with tours into Australia, and advise on Australian-China interactions, including matters of trade and business.

My fellow Australian representatives will forgive me if I diverge a little into the specific relationship that my state of Victoria has with the Jiangsu Province of China. For over forty five years there has been a special relationship between our two locales, with Victoria's city of Dandenong having a sister-city relationship with Jiangsu's Xuzhou, the city of Bendigo with Haimen, and the city of Geelong with Lianyungang. In addition, the Southeast University at Suzhou has a joint graduate school with Victoria's Monash University, and there is the Victoria-Jiangsu Health Collaboration Agreement which has involved hundreds of medical workers and researchers in joint ventures in biotechnology, medicine and medical devices, information and communication technology, food and fibre industries, and advanced manufacturing and aerospace.

We are proud of our deep and continuing connections with Chinese communities in Australia, and we will always come to their aid. It must be said, that elements of the Australian media and Australian politicians do have anti-Chinese prejudices and anti-Chinese racism still exists among some sections of the Australian community. We, at the Australia-China Friendship Society, have always campaigned against such ignorance and we will always do so. We stand for international cooperation and friendship, and we know that the future of Australia is a future with China. We can learn so much from one another, and we can achieve so much together. It is better to be on that side of history.

70th anniversary of Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

As noted by Lev, Mid-June 4 representatives from our society attended the Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries conference in Nanjing China. Among others we listened to presentations from our National President Jan Everette and Victorian President Lev Lafayette. One address that really hit home from me was from Irene Pivetti, President of the Italy-China Friendship Association. Why? because everyone seemed to be focused on the economic/trade cooperation between Jiangsu and the 40 represented countries. Save one, Irene who focused on what we (ACFS) are about and that is the relationship between the peoples of China and countries around the world. Irene has kindly provided a copy of her address to the conference and given permission for it to be published in our newsletter, enjoy.

Ian Parker

Dear governor of Jiangsu province, dear president of the Chinese people's Association for friendship with foreign countries, Yang Wanming, dear friends, It is a pleasure and an honour for me to be here today, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (JSPAFFC).

Today, I really feel to be among friends, and my first feeling is gratitude, for all those who have made this commemorative event possible, from the president of the Jiangsu people's friendship association, to the members of the association, and also thank you from my heart to all the workers of the staff, who have practically supported these two days with their humble and precious effort. In a world so complex and often in conflict, the international network of the association for friendship with foreign countries is a precious contribution to peace and to mutual understanding.

Regardless of political changes in the world, we go on, seriously convinced that mutual knowledge comes first, and from it, appreciation comes, and then trust, which is the best solid ground for a real progress. Trust is necessary to have justice, and justice is the mother of peace.

We, in this hall, are all requested to testify once more our friendship and collaboration spirit, across the different seasons and years, blessing each other for the experiences that we shared, the good ones as well as the difficult ones. We know clearly that friendship today cannot merely mean smiling and enjoying good time and good food together. Indeed, during all these past years, each of us has operated in our countries. Creating continuous opportunities for welcoming each other and accompanying in a process



of reciprocal support that can never get to an end.

Some of these meetings generated also practical projects, bringing benefits to all the partners, in a serious win win strategy, and all of them contributed to a better Comprehension of China as it really is: fast and green development, social achievements, an impressive push towards the future which is still based upon a millennial cultural heritage. And an openness to the challenges of the present times always in a perspective of peace. Not everybody in the west is ready to accept this truth. That is why, each now and then, friendship to China may also mean to face some criticisms, or even some attack. It can happen; it happens indeed, but it is worthwhile.

I feel much stronger today that when i started coming to China, looking for opportunities for cultural initiatives and for enterprises from Italy. I know more and I am better known, now, and I learned that through sharing our experience we can help each other to reduce the number of our mistakes. So, ultimately, friendship is also a way of learning, and of teaching, each other the truth. As members, and local chairmen, of friendship association with China we have also another task. Among our responsibilities there is also a correct and conscious use of the media, as they can be a powerful tool to make people in our countries learn the real truth about China. Because reputation is also an important asset, and China deserves its good reputation as a real big world power, modern, open, peaceful, and encouraging a fair international cooperation at all levels. This is what I mean, when I say that friendship cannot be only smiling to each other: we bear a responsibility, and we need to bring practical results, on one side, and a conscious and open witness of our friendship, as a proof of our solidity.

I know that what my friends and I have tried to do in this direction is nothing, compared to the importance and strength of such an institution like the Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. Still, I am proud of our small but loyal contribution that we have given, I am proud because we never ceased our efforts, to bring friendship from words to practical results, and to bring good facts from silence to well known. Seventy years is a great anniversary; I am really proud to be a friend of you all. It is on this path that we will continue to operate, together, to make the world a better place to live in. I wish the best success to today's ceremony, and a long-lasting prosperous success to Jiangsu people's association for friendship with foreign countries.

Sichuan Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries visited Melbourne

On May 11, The Sichuan Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries visited Melbourne and hosted an event at Melbourne University Arts Precinct. The event aimed to showcase the economic and social development Luzhou City, and Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefectural of Sichuan Province as well as highlight our unique local products and intangible cultural heritage, thereby deepening Australians' understanding of Sichuan.

Ding ChanXiao a student at UOM provided one of the opening addresses and has given permission for this to be published in our newsletter, enjoy!

Ian Parker

Dear guests, ladies and gentlemen: Good afternoon!

I am Ding Chenxiao, a student of Master of International Journalism at the University of Melbourne. Today, I am very honored to be able to represent Chinese students studying in

Australia and gather with you here to participate in the “Friendly Sichuan Enters Australia” cultural exchange exhibition.

For me, Sichuan is not only an important province in southwest China, but also a region with a long history, rich culture and strong innovative vitality. From the ancient Shu civilization and the land of abundance to today's Sichuan, which is constantly developing in science and technology, education, economy and other fields, it has always been open and inclusive to the world. Australia, especially Melbourne, is also an international city known for its multiculturalism.

In the process of studying international journalism in Australia, I deeply realized the importance of cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding. The essence of news is to tell the truth and connect the world. And cultural exchange is the most beautiful part of the news story. Today's event allowed me to see that the connection between Sichuan and Australia is not only economic and industrial, but also the deep friendship between culture and people. As a young student, I often think: What can our generation do for China-Australia friendship? I think that the first step we can take is to understand each other's culture and tell each other's stories. In the future, whether I am in the news industry or on a broader social stage, I hope to be a small bridge for exchanges between China and Australia, and share more real, diverse and warm stories with the world.

Finally, I would like to thank the organizers for providing us with such a valuable exchange opportunity and thank every guest present for their efforts and contributions to China-Australia friendship. I hope that there will be more platforms like today in the future, so that we can work together to tell the Sichuan story, the Chinese story, and the China-Australia friendship story.

Thank you all!



Why Australia Should Oppose Taiwan's Accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Len Hartnett

Australia has long benefited from a fantastic economic relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC). China is Australia's largest trading partner, with two-way trade exceeding A\$300 billion in recent years. This relationship was cemented with the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) in 2015 and has massively underpinned Australia's prosperity across minerals, agriculture, education, and services. It is not difficult to imagine where our standard of living would be today without that relationship. Our prosperity and its potential would be severely diminished. Our standard of living would be significantly lower. This is unarguable.

In maintaining strong ties, Australia has consistently adhered to the "One China" policy since formal diplomatic recognition of the PRC on 21 December 1972. This position adopted by all Governments and political parties since then, affirms Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China, with Taiwan viewed as an inalienable part of Chinese territory. It is abundantly clear that any departure from this stance risks severely straining bilateral ties and undermining decades of cooperation.

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a high-standard regional trade pact, now finds itself a potential flashpoint. Taiwan formally applied to join the CPTPP on 22 September 2021, mere days after China submitted its own application on 16 September 2021. The sequencing was no accident; Taipei sought to test the geopolitical resolve of member nations, particularly those like Australia. We need to be clear in our response. It must be an unequivocal "NO" to Taiwan.

Supporting Taiwan's accession would be a direct affront to the One China principle. The CPTPP is not merely a trade bloc—it is a mechanism of regional integration. While the CPTPP is smaller and less influential than originally intended as a result of Trump's withdrawal from the TPP, as it was then known, it still has highly significant relevance to our region.

Endorsing Taiwanese membership would treat Taiwan as a sovereign state, something Australia has expressly not done for over 50 years, something that Australia has expressly stated that it will not do for over 50 years. It could not be clearer!

The consequences would surely be swift. In the wake of Lithuania's 2021 move to allow a "Taiwan Representative Office," China imposed punitive trade measures, demonstrating how quickly political missteps translate into economic fallout. Australia, with far greater trade exposure, can ill afford such a rupture. It would be a disaster.

China's recent reengagement with Australia—evident in the lifting of tariffs on Australian barley and wine in 2023 and Premier Li Qiang's visit in mid-2025—signals a welcome reset in relations. It would be diplomatic madness to jeopardise this progress by entertaining Taiwan's CPTPP bid.

For the sake of regional stability, consistency in foreign policy, and economic pragmatism, Australia should unequivocally oppose Taiwan's accession to the CPTPP. To do otherwise would threaten the very foundations of its most significant economic partnership.

CULTURAL NOTES

- By Lia Cross- Cultural scout

Hello everyone,

Hope you have been able to obtain tickets for some these items below. Some are ongoing, some are still to come, and one is on this evening at Hamer Hall!

1. Pianist LANG LANG is performing at Hamer Hall this evening. Last Newsletter I let you know to obtain your tickets or you might miss out! If you don't already have tickets, you can try, but it is most likely sold out. Good luck!

2. The Chinese Film Festival will be on exclusively at NOVA Cinema in Carlton from July 1st to 4th. Tickets available on NOVA cinema website or at the Cinema NOVA itself.

3. Also at NOVA, still showing but which will end soon, is the film titled "An Unfinished Film". It tells the story of a film director and his crew, who were quarantined in a Wuhan Hotel at the outbreak of the COVID epidemic, hence their film remained "unfinished"!

It depicts their struggles trying to keep in touch with each other from their hotel rooms and also trying to let their families know what's happening to them. Their struggles were thus filmed on their mobile phones entirely and pieced together afterwards when they were able to leave Wuhan. It is therefore, a documentary film.

4. Coming to the ARTS CENTRE Theatres on July 30th and August 1st, 2nd and 3rd, is the play "YONG", set in the 19th century and tells the story of a young gold miner. Tickets are limited as the play will be performed in their smallest theatre in the basement of the ARTS Centre. For tickets call 1300 182 183 or visit the Arts Centre website for tickets.

5. Still showing, but not for much longer, at the Chinese Museum in Chinatown, is a display of Chinese Costumes. You'll have to pay for admission unless you are a Museum Member.

Enjoy these cultural events everyone, and as usual act promptly or you will miss out!

Folk Reimagined East in Symphony

Experience the power of Chinese folk tradition mixed with the grandeur of Western symphony, The Guizhou Chinese Orchestra and The Australia Orchestra will present a spectacular one-night-only concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre on 9 July 2025 as part of its Australian tour. Over 55 musicians make up this exceptional orchestra under the baton of the Guizhou Chinese Orchestra Chief Conductor Long Guohong and the guest conductor Luke Spicer. The concert also features pianist Tamara-Anna Cislowska, ARIA award-winning pianists.

For the Orchestra's Australian tour 2025, the Guizhou Chinese Orchestra and The Australia Orchestra will perform a selection of masterpieces including the Piano Concerto The Yellow River composed by Xian Xinghai, Jinghu Concerto Deep in the Night, Suona Concerto Hundred birds paying homage to the Phoenix, the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Guizhou Kam Grand Choir, and other masterpieces from Chinese traditions.

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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

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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

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