



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

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December 2025

President's Report

It is almost inevitable at the end of the year that one reflects upon the activities of the previous twelve months and, in our context, the relations between Australia and China and the activities of our society. To make a very broad sweep, it has been a positive year for both our larger interest of Australia-China relations and, on the smaller and immediate scale, the Australia-China Friendship Society (Victoria branch).

It was helpful that the Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, engaged in a six-day visit to China in July, visiting Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu, securing the highest-level meetings and furthering trade relations. This would be followed by Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan making a trip ordering tunnel boring machines to help complete the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL), and along with establishing dedicated staff to assist the export of Victorian products to China.

Notably, all of this was in the wake of the imposition of tariffs by the United States on both China, Australia, and other countries. The Trump administration has since engaged in a series of backdowns as the economic damage, as predicted (see the April 2025 ACFS newsletter), has come into effect, most recently after high-level discussions at Seoul in late October.

Whilst trading relations between countries are important, it is even more important to recognise the need for relations between people that are built on trust, understanding, and the ability to express differences in a sincere manner. In this regard, bodies like the ACFS play a very important role. During the course of this year, our branch of the ACFS has met with numerous delegations, including the Sichuan Friendship Society (May), Guizhou Provincial Delegation (May), Shenzhen city delegation, Guangdong Province and Fujian Province delegation (September), the Chaoyang district of Beijing (October), the Jiangsu Provincial Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the JPAFFC (Nov), and the Quanzhou Trade Delegation (November). Members of the ACFS also attended the 70th anniversary Commemoration of the JSPAFFC (Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries) in Nanjing (Jun).

In addition, the society held multiple social events, including three dinners at local restaurants, a Yum-cha lunch with guest speaker, Dr. Fiona Price, and, of course, selling the generous donation of a collection of various Chinese artefacts from Ken Smith, former speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, with proceeds going to the society. In addition, the Society has established a new Life Membership category, which provides a significant discounted rate and eases the administrative burden on both the member and our organisation. This was also the year that our website finally saw the light of day, with newsletters dating back to 2011 currently available.

Much of this was reported at our recent Annual General Meeting which, I am pleased to say, was well-attended, witnessed new and younger members joining the committee, and was followed by a delightful social occasion. The opportunity is here to thank Lia Cross who has stepped down from a

committee role after almost forty years of involvement in ACFS, although we have been informed that she will continue to keep us updated with cultural events. The next issue of the newsletter will include a special report on Lia's contributions to the ACFS and her work in China where she lived for nine years.

As 2026 approaches the ACFS already has three major events on our agenda. The first includes our fundraising concert with the Lotus Wind Concert to be held at St John's Toorak on February 28, starting at 2pm. The second is our anti-racism survey, which is aimed at informing the state government of the "everyday" discrimination faced by people of Chinese heritage in this state. The third is the tour of Guizhou in March. All of these are described in more detail in this issue of newsletter.

The ACFS comes with a long and proud history of building a good relationship between Australia and China. Whilst our activities and role have changed somewhat, it is absolutely certain that an organisation like this continues to be relevant. The world is a much smaller place and the future of Australia and China is one that will have connections in the years that will come. Indeed, it can be no other way; Australia and China must build on the positive relations established so far, and strengthen those ties for an increasingly integrated future, and the ACFS is a body which can contribute significantly to this.

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

Sino-French Relationship in a Multi-Polar World

Len Hartnett

Since France's liberation in 1944, relations with China have oscillated between Gaullist independence and European coordination, but Emmanuel Macron's current visit marks a notable recalibration. Historically, France was the first major Western nation to recognise the People's Republic of China in 1964, reflecting de Gaulle's vision of strategic autonomy and a multipolar world. That instinct has periodically resurfaced, especially when France has sought to distinguish its global role from that of the United States or the broader Western bloc.

Macron's recent China trip represents a renewed return to that tradition. The decision to conduct the visit without the European Commission President, breaking recent precedent, underlines a deliberate shift from EU-level engagement toward a strictly bilateral relationship. French officials openly framed the trip in these terms, signalling Macron's desire to speak to Xi "on behalf of France" rather than as part of a European ensemble.

Part of this repositioning stems from the fallout of the Ukraine war. Europe remains divided over how confrontational or pragmatic its China policy should be, especially as Beijing maintains close ties with Moscow. Macron, while critical of Chinese trade practices and wary of Beijing's support for Russia, also sees diplomatic value in engaging Xi directly to influence Russia's calculus and explore pathways to peace.

At the same time, rising EU-China trade tensions - over critical minerals, industrial overcapacity and strategic dependencies - have pushed Paris to consider a France-centred approach within a European framework, rather than deferring entirely to Brussels.

Thus, Macron's visit reflects an old French reflex: asserting national agency, cultivating high-level personal diplomacy with Beijing, and gently edging the EU toward Paris's own strategic vision - but doing so first, and foremost, as France.

China made a major contribution this year towards global equality

By Joe Montero

As 2025 closes, it is a good time to review the standing relationship between Australia and China, the China's position in the world. Frankly, Australia, or should we say recent Australian governments, haven't been doing a great job of it. They have chosen conflict and division, in line with the wishes of Washington's agenda. This year it's been slightly better, but still far from good enough. The political and military alliance with the United States has taken priority over Australia's real interests, and arguably, over the American people and the world. Washington is firmly in the driver's seat, as far as Australian governmental response is concerned.

China is presented as a great threat. It is said that China wants to take over the world, and the sighting of a Chinese ship in international waters anywhere near Australia, draws up visions of an invasion threat. Until it suddenly became unfashionable this year, China was repeatedly accused of not abiding with the "global rules based order." Those who repeat this refrain forget to mention that this is not international law, but a counter established by Washington, after it moved out of international law and imposed its own conditions on the world, after the collapse of the Soviet Union left it as the dominant power.

Sometimes China is presented as another power seeking to dominate the world. There is a big problem with this characterisation. The United States and Western Europe have a history of colonialism, neocolonialism, and the exploitation of other nations. Furthermore, China does not. The economies of the United States and western Europe have been financialised. This means they have become dependent on imposing debt on others as the engine for growth. China contrasts this by not having the same history in relation to other nations, the economic driver is real growth and not debt, and in dealing with the world, depends on the development of infrastructure and trade. China's way has been to build positive relationships based on mutual respect and joint benefit as equal partners.

Financialization put the United States and Western Europe into a downward spiral, as China emerged as the global heart of manufacturing. This has now reached the point where, on a per capita basis,



China is now the world's biggest economy. It is this that has got the anti-China forces into a frenzy. This is the principal reason why Australia is roped into AUKUS, the Five Eyes, and creating tension over Taiwan and meddling in the South China Sea. This is the reason why Australia finds ourselves involved in the tariff war.

One does not have to be a genius to realise that Australia's interests lie in Asia, and this must include China, ours, and the region's biggest trading partner. This reality opens the gate to opportunities in this part of the world. It is madness to throw this away. Australia's interests lie in political cooperation and not in conflict and threatening war as the best future for all.

By acting independently and responsibly, China has won friends and global credibility. Both have risen this year and stand to rise even more in the near future. As the major force in the rising BRICKS alliance, China encourages others to speak out, apply solutions to economic and political problems.

The world is moving away from the post war Bretton Woods regime, where the United States had been supreme. The most important part of this is breaking away from the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) system, through which United States controlled international payments and transfers are made. Progress on this means the prospect of freedom from unequal economic relations, imposed debt, and the means for future prosperity and equality, in a multi polar world of greater choice between nations.

Australia must finally decide our own direction. Do we stick into the past or embrace the emerging future. An important part of this is to build friendship with China, leading to greater economic and political cooperation as equals.

THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Giovanna Tria



At an international financial forum conducted in June this year in Shanghai, Giovanni Tria, former Italian Minister of Economy and Finance and Dean of the Faculty of Economics at University of Rome “Tor Vergata,” delivered a keynote speech addressing the global trade order, financial system stability, and international monetary system reform. He argued that reforming the international monetary system is no longer an academic concept but has become a practical task crucial to global economic stability and financial security. He highlighted three major structural challenges facing the global economy: First, macroeconomic uncertainty has significantly increased, with tariff barriers dampening investment confidence and consumer vitality. Second, the fragility of the financial system has intensified, as exchange rate fluctuations disrupt capital flows and market stability. Third, the role of the U.S. dollar as the global reserve currency is being questioned, reflecting deep-seated structural imbalances in the American economy.

The current international financial system remains essentially a “Bretton Woods 2.0” framework, lacking effective multilateral support mechanisms. Against the backdrop of strained dollar credibility and expanding U.S. debt, this system is unsustainable. Countries are accelerating the “de-dollarization” process through local currency settlements, regional payment networks, and even digital currencies. Among these efforts, China has made significant progress in the internationalization of the renminbi, the development of the digital yuan, and the construction of the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS). He called on China, Europe, and other major global economies to jointly promote multilateral coordination mechanisms, explore the establishment of a multipolar reserve currency system, advance reforms to the Special Drawing Rights (SDR) mechanism, and strengthen the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) clearing functions and liquidity support capabilities in the digital era. This would help reshape a more resilient and sustainable global monetary governance framework.

Between Tradition and Modernity: an account of the photography and *thangka* exhibition from the “Roof of the World”

On 6 December, five members of the committee of the Australia China Friendship Society attended the opening ceremony of “Snowland Sixty – Tashi Delek”, a photography and *thangka* (A traditional Tibetan Buddhist scroll painting on silk or cotton), exhibition marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region.

The exhibition was organised by the Australia Reteng Charity Foundation, an organisation dedicated to promoting culture, environmental protection, intangible cultural heritage arts and Tibetan Buddhist studies. The foundation was established by the 15th Reteng Rinpoche, also known as the 15th Rathab Rinpoche or Reteng Jiangcai Pujun, from the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Upon arrival, we were welcomed with a *kata* – a traditional Tibetan greeting in which a long white silk scarf, woven with the Eight Auspicious Symbols of Buddhism, is offered and placed around the neck, accompanied by the greeting “Tashi Delek”, meaning “may all be auspicious”.

Among those in attendance were Fang Xinwen, Consul General of the People’s Republic of China in Melbourne; Sarah Witty MP, Federal Member for Melbourne; Cr. Rafael Camillo from the City of Melbourne; Christina Zhao, President of Melbourne’s Chinatown Business Association; as well as Chinese community leaders and representatives from various organisations.

We were ushered through the exhibition space which featured sixty large photographs of the majestic Tibetan plateau. The images presented sweeping landscapes and snow-capped peaks adorned with colourful prayer flags alongside scenes of modern infrastructure, including high-speed rail and high-rise housing. Together, they conveyed a narrative of change and development over the past six decades while also highlighting the endurance of Tibetan Buddhist traditions.



As Reteng Rinpoche noted, “each photograph serves as a pair of eyes, offering every destined viewer a glimpse into this world and inviting them to connect with the culture of the snow-capped region and engage in a dialogue among diverse cultures.”

The exhibition also included a number of thangkas depicting revered figures such as the thousand-armed Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of wisdom, and Green Tara, a widely revered Buddha of compassion and wisdom.

At the centre of the space was an intricate sand mandala, surrounded by Tibetan brass horns (dungchen) and a gong. Although the ceremonial dissolution of the mandala did not take place during our visit, parts of the finely detailed coloured sand were already beginning to disperse, reminding visitors of the impermanence and the transient nature of all things.

Following the formal speeches, guests were invited to share a meal featuring traditional Tibetan foods. These included Tibetan butter tea, a salty mixture of black tea and butter; roasted barley flour (tsampa), a central staple of the Tibetan diet, Tibetan yogurt (sho), and Tibetan dumplings (momo).

Representatives from the Rathab Monastery in Donvale, dressed in white Tibetan chubas, attentively replenished our teacups and packaged bags of tsampa for us to take home under the watchful guidance of a Tibetan woman from Lhasa, noted as the first student from Tibet to have received a scholarship to study in Australia.

To conclude an informative and thoughtfully curated event, guests received gift bags containing commemorative stamps and a bookmark depicting the Potala Palace in Lhasa, framed by vibrant prayer flags fluttering in the wind, a symbolic closing note sending out hope for dialogue, understanding and mutual respect across diverse traditions.

Suzana Dewa

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

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 treasures 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.

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

Date: Saturday 28 February 2026 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (UTC+10)

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



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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Family Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) Given Names
Address P/code.....
Phone Email

VICTORIAN MEMBERSHIP RATES

Family \$40.00 Single \$30.00 Concession \$15.00
Life Membership Single \$300 Life Membership Household \$400
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 secretary@acfs-vic.org
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