



June 2026

Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

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President's Report

Welcome to another issue of the ACFS Victoria newsletter. Our Society continues to grow and improve and the content in this issue is further evidence of our improvement in our activities. Of particular note, there are reports of the ACFS National Conference held in early in Brisbane, which was a coming together of state branches and was attended by the representative of Chinese ambassador to Australia and the consul general of Chinese Consulate-General of Brisbane.

In addition, the ACFS (Victoria) has arranged for a number of young Victorians to attend an international youth camp in Nanjing, which will be reported on in a future issue of the newsletter. Also, China News recently interviewed members of the ACFS (Victoria), the content available at the following URL (<http://www.chinanews.com.cn/gj/2026/05-29/10630737.shtml>). Our banner; “中澳人民友谊长存” (“Eternal Friendship Between the Chinese and Australian People”) particularly caught their attention, and so it should! It's not just a slogan, but something we put into practise.

In recent weeks, members of the ACFS also had the opportunity to attend “Sichuan Cuisine from China, Taste for the World” event, in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the sister province/state relationship between the Sichuan Province and the State of Victoria. Finally, the ACFS was also honoured to address the Inauguration Ceremony of the 19th Executive Council of Fujian Association of Victoria, a transcript is included with this newsletter.

In coming weeks, we have a small visit to Buxton Gallery near the National Gallery of Victoria planned and a meeting and dinner with John Lander who was deputy ambassador in Beijing 1974-76 and worked in the China section of the Department of Foreign Affairs in the lead-up to the recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1972. But perhaps most importantly, is the National event at Melbourne's Chinese Museum to celebrate 75 Years of the Australia-China Friendship Society - again, more details in this newsletter.

Finally, in ACFS Victoria matter, we're moving from our office! Whilst we will remain in Ross Hoss in a shared space, the reality that we simply do not use the office sufficiently to justify the expense incurred. Once upon a time we used to have a full-time volunteer working there, and that indeed did justify its use. Now it's become an (expensive) storage space. So we'll be having a big clean-up and working bee - and with many old items being sold on the spot, so come along and grab a bargain.

One final matter that, regrettably, must be mentioned. In recent months we have seen the revival of a particularly poisonous cane toad in Australian politics. I refer, of course, to an racist political organisation which has tapped into a number of genuine grievances, whilst at the same time receiving billionaire funding, and advocating policies that are explicitly contrary to good relations between Australians and Chinese. I refer to their leader's first speech in parliament: “I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate.”

For what it is worth, the Australia-China Friendship Society stands in complete opposition to these sentiments. We believe that all modern societies, including China and Australia, are strengthened by

their cultural diversity, by having different cultural origins, different cuisines, a diversity of religious insights, even different languages, and through trade and friendship we cooperatively build a better world. We, at the Australia-China Friendship Society will stand against attacks on our multicultural way of life, and we will stand with our Chinese friends against racism and discrimination.

中澳人民友谊长存

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

ACFS 2026 Conference Held in Brisbane

The Australia-China Friendship Society National conference held in Brisbane QLD between 5th and 7th June was without doubt, a great success. All ACFS branches involved with the national organisation were represented by delegates and the national board members. Plus, a delegation from China Friendship Association for Forgan Countries (CPAFFC). The Chinese Embassy was represented on behalf Ambassador Mr. Xiao Qian, Chinese Consul-General by the Vice Consul-General of Brisbane. Also, notable academics and the usual smattering of politicians.

The theme of the 3-days conference was “Building Bridges for a Shared Future”. Also, to look back on and celebrate ACFS’s 75 years of history. The common theme from all who spoke was working together to carry forward our fine tradition to foster better understanding and great friendship between peoples of Australia and China.

More detail to follow.



New National Board Members: Jan Everett, Shuqin LI, Back row: Ian Parker, Lily Zhong, Simon Wu, Ping Lu, Karka Orellana, Vivienne Deng, Tower Liu

Building Bridges Over Troubled Waters

Presentation by Michael Choi OAM

National Conference June 2026 and ACFS 75th Anniversary

Ian Parker

Yes, Michael's presentation is a nod to couple of 1970's American singers. Michael asks, "Why build bridges?" Answer, every bridge is built on one belief: the other side is worth reaching. We build bridges to create prosperity via commerce. He suggests four key facts; 45% of our GDP is linked to trade (though sources vary, the World Bank suggests 47% and <https://www.aph.gov.au/> suggests 42%); second, 1 in 4 jobs are linked to trade; 26% of our exports go to China and last, trade is around \$325B.

Michael goes on to suggest building bridges is about more than trade, it creates understanding via people. This includes:

Education – "young minds crossing bridges" we need to engage with new generations

Tourism – is a tried and true way humanising each other

Science – sharing human progress unites us all

Community – quietly build stability among nations

Business – trust between peoples extends beyond commercial contracts

Migration and family – these are bridges of the heart and are often the strongest links

Arts and Culture – here we can see the humanity in each other

Friendship – these are the strongest bridges of all (of course an example of which is the ACFS)

He also suggests bridges create a buffer against conflict that more often than not result in, miss reading intentions, miss understanding culture, misjudging responses and misinterpreting language. Above all the foundations of these bridges are built on respect giving rise to tolerance, learning acceptance and respect.

To end Michael provided three quotes:

1. 山川异域，风月同天 Shānchuān yìyù, fēngyuè tóng tiān

"Though separated by mountains and seas, we share the same sky and moon."

by Changwu of the Tang Dynasty

2. 为天地立心，为生民立命 Wéi tiāndì lì xīn, wéi shēng mǐn lì míng

"Set the heart for heaven and earth; secure the livelihood of the people."

by Hengqu " from the Northern Song Dynasty

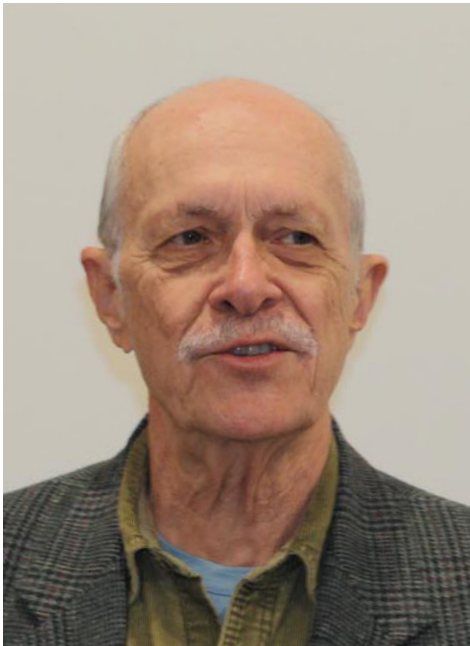
3. 人类命运共同体 Wéi tiāndì lì xīn, wéi shēng mǐn lì míng

"a community with a shared future for mankind."

Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee



Biennial Bill Morrow Lecture June 5, 2026



This year's Bill Morrow lecture at the national conference was delivered by **Ross Gwyther**, a longtime member of the ACFS. The lecture entitled 75 Years of Courageous Work "From the Peace Movement to Modern Bridge-Building" was enthralling to say the least.

Ross began with the Bill Morrow story. In 1924 a young Bill Morrow recently elected to the position of North Qld Secretary of the Railway Union. He heard of a French Company which operated a railway in China had asked for train drivers to visit China and teach the Chinese to drive locomotives. He subsequently learns this was not the case; in fact, it was for strike breaking. Of course, he and his colleagues didn't go, thus his first introduction to China.

Now to May 1938 and a small mining village called Rotherham in northern England. Grannie Sharp stands in the main street toting for donations for the China Campaign Committee to help Chinese people following the Japanese invasion of Nanking (Nanjing). Her young son Jemmie with his wife Hazel migrated to Australia and settled in Brisbane in 1962.

We are now in Melbourne in 1951 Maurice Leong, and his wife Eunice are meeting with their friend Jim Cairns. In his younger years Maurice was active in the resistance to the Japanese invasion, in fact he came to Australia to raise funds to support the resistance. At this time the Korean war was raging, together they decided that something must be done to give a public voice to a better understanding of China and its new revolutionary government. With others they met to establish a new Australia China Society and 75 years later here we are.

In Brisbane, January of the following year a young Chinese man Tom Loy and his friend Wayne Lee after travelling to a Sydney festival, returned and with thousands of others at an address from the Secretary General of Foreign Affairs of the Australian Federal Government where he called for Peace and Friendship with China. At this mass meeting, a proposal to establish a Queensland Australia China Friendship Group resulting in Jessie Ferguson being elected as its first President.

By the mid-sixties the Vietnam war was in full swing and involved many Southeastern Asian countries. The media were having a ball creating the so-called line "Chinese communism sweeping down the map to envelop Australia". As a young lad I remember the phrase "Beware the Yellow Hordes/Yellow Peril". As late as 2023 the media were running a concerted campaign to frighten Australians by talking up war with China, ensuring our government tied us even more closely to the American military build-up in the Asia-Pacific.

Born in Rockhampton in 1888 Bill had a long history with railway unions in Australia. He was also active in the Labour party and was elected to the Senate 1946. He advocated for the friendship and trade between Australia and China. During the following years Bill campaigned for a better understanding including campaigning for Australia to recognise the new Chinese government. Bill is a life member and was active up until he passed in 1980, thus our biennial lecture to honour his contribution.

Bill went on to detail numerous people and the involvement with us and efforts to build relations with China. The full text can be found on our website www.nationalacfs.com.au

Ian Parker

Speech to Inauguration Ceremony of the Executive Council of Fujian Association of Victoria



I am deeply honoured to received this invitation to address the Inauguration Ceremony of the 19th Executive Council of Fujian Association of Victoria Inc., and I would especially like to recognise Jian Yao (Jimmy) Li for extending this offer in my role as President of the Australia-China Friendship Society, Victorian branch.

I recognise that the land in which we meet was inhabited by the the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung people of the Kulin nations for tens of thousands of years, and I acknowledge any indigenous people present, and recognise elders, past, present, and emerging. I also recognise that the land is known among indigenous people as

“Monite”, and that sovereignty to this land was never ceded. I also know that there was a very inn near to where we meet called “No good damper”, the name coming from stories of colonial invaders poisoning the damper flour that was then given to indigenous locals.

This is a horrible example of the sort of thinking and behaviour that occurs when we do not accept difference and diversity within our community. There are some voices - foolish, small-minded, voices - that have received prominence recently that are preaching exclusion and do not accept the great strength in Australia comes from our multiculturalism.

Archaeologists say that people have lived in what is now Fujian province for almost ten thousand years, and people from Fujian province and with Fujian heritage have settled in many different places, including other provinces in China, in Vietnam and Laos, in Malaysia, and Singapore, in Taiwan, in Singapore, and, of course, Australia, where this worthy association has been existence since 1994.

A sister relationship exists between Fujian province and the state of Tasmania, whilst Victoria’s relationship is with neighbouring Jiangsu province. It doesn’t stop us from having very close ties, however. We know, for example, that over three thousand Fujian immigrants came to Australia between 1848 and 1853, and many of those to Victoria in particular. People from Fujian province and with Fujianese heritage have contributed enormously to Victoria’s rich culture and economy and continue to do so.

So, in closing, I want to take this opportunity to say that the Australia-China Friendship Society, which has been in existence since 1951 and has branches throughout the country, will always stand against racism, against discrimination, and will do everything in its power to support Chinese Australians and promote understanding, respect, and most importantly - as we have in our name - friendship. My congratulations to the 19th Executive Council of Fujian Association of Victoria. Yours is a great honour, a great responsibility, and I am certain you will do very well.

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

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