



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc). ABN 39 746 574 225

Newsletter

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November 2023



President's Report

Hi to you all and I trust this finds you well.

It was extremely pleasing to see so many participants and so many engaged people at the Language and Culture Awards, held at the Chinese Consulate on 27 October. There were 14 prize winners, and I am delighted that after consultation with the Chinese Teachers' Association, the gender balance was perfect. Congratulations to all the wonderful winners this year, and I am pleased to learn some are keen to participate in ACFS activities (and perhaps to even join the Committee!).

I would like to go further and include Indigenous students in future. China has long asked to include Australian indigenous people as friends and promote cultural exchanges to learn from each other.

Due to advice from Victoria Police, we unfortunately had to postpone our AGM this past weekend. You will be informed in due course when the AGM is rescheduled, but given the proximity to Christmas, I suspect we will meet in January 2024. In the meantime, the Committee remains as-is, but I sincerely urge you all to consider joining, to bring new ideas to our organisation.

As some of you may know, this is my final year as President. I have followed in the path of so many pioneers and courageous people who have worked tirelessly to further and foster better relations, respect, and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China. To carry on that work, and to blaze a trail in new directions for the ACFS has been a great challenge. In the past 10 years, we have endured crippling political discrimination, internal disruptions, COVID 19, uncalled-for anti-China bias in civil and government areas, and dashed hope of a warmer political reception from the new Labor Federal government. Were it not for the support, advice, and friendship of

Committee Members and also the Chinese Consulate-General, I would surely have despaired! I convey my profound thanks to everyone whose kindness has strengthened my spirit and urged me to continue. I sincerely hope I have been worthy of their and your trust.

On behalf of the Executive and Committee, I wish you all a very safe and happy Christmas or festive season. While I regret we were unable to meet at the end of this year, I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year, hopefully rested and refreshed.

My very best wishes to you and yours.

*President, Victorian Branch,
Anthony M Leong, 27 November 2023*



Sister Cities Conference

On 12 October 23, Branch Vice President Tower Liu and Secretary Robin Matthews attended the Sister Cities Australia National Conference at Wyndham City Council. The theme of the conference was “Linking the World Together”.

The agenda consisted of addresses from local MPs, Consulate Generals from the US, Japan and Italy, DFAT, and other speakers discussing their experiences linking the world. Special guest speaker was Hon John Brumby who highlighted the importance of Sister City relationships and the benefits these arrangements have made to Victorian life including the many links with provinces and municipalities in China.

The ACFS is keen to support and encourage more Sister City relationships especially with China as they enhance greater understanding of our peoples of other countries and bring economic and social benefits to all.

2023 Language and Culture Awards

The Acting Consul General of the People's Republic of China Mr ZENG Jianjua generously hosted the ACFS Language and Cultural Awards on Friday 27 October 2023.



Acting Consul General Mr ZENG Jianjua

These awards acknowledge outstanding tertiary students from various Victorian universities who have attained Chinese language proficiency and knowledge of Chinese culture. Fourteen students received awards which consisted of a certificate, plaque and computer tablet or mobile telephone.

The winners were selected by the University Chinese Teachers Association and ACFS Vic Branch President Anthony Leong presented the awards along with Acting Consul General Zeng.

The Award recipients were able to meet one another and ACFS Committee members during the reception where everyone enjoyed a sumptuous meal at the conclusion of the award ceremony. Classical



Chinese calligraphy and costumes were on display for attendees to try and or view.

The Committee looks forward to many of the recipients joining future ACFS activities to practice their language skills and share their knowledge and experiences of friendship.



HAPPY AWARD RECIPIENTS



The 2023 International Conference on Green and Innovation-Driven Urban Development

Following the successful first conference last year, this year's 2023 International Conference on Green and Innovation-driven Development in Cities and Towns was hosted in Suzhou with proceedings held at the recently opened Suzhou International Conference Hotel. The lead host of the conference was the Foreign Affairs Office of the Jiangsu Provincial People's Government, and the main organiser was the Xiangcheng District People's Government of Suzhou City. Suzhou is a major city in east China, founded in 514 BCE and is now the most populous city in Jiangsu Province, with a population of roughly 7.5 million in the city and 14 million in the administrative area.



The conference theme was “Jointly creating a new platform for a new ecology for shared new benefits” which develops on President Xi Jinping’s statements on eco-civilization as embodied in the Chinese Constitution: “The construction of ecological civilization is a millennial plan for the sustainable development of the Chinese nation” of which the “two mountains theory”, i.e., “Green waters and green mountains are [as valuable as] mountains of gold and silver” (Lǜ shuǐ qīngshān jiùshì jīnshān yín shān) also applies. With the world facing

ever-increasing human-caused global warming that causes more extreme weather such an approach is necessary for both raising the income and wealth of people, as well as protecting and enhancing the welfare of all life on our shared planet.

Over 350 attendees were at the conference including Local and international dignitaries, academics, engineers, and scientists. International guests were from Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Portugal, Italy, New Zealand, Australia. Following a welcoming banquet by Xiangcheng's District People's Government, the formal proceedings included the opening ceremony followed by parallel sessions on towns with distinctive features, integrated development on urban and rural areas, and heritage protection with sustainable development. My own attendance was to the latter, which included a number of international and local speakers and case studies with examples from Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Suzhou itself. There was, of course, an extensive comparison between Suzhou and Venice as two cities with extensive historical canals and other waterways.

The majority of the conference proceeding however was spent on visits to Suzhou, combining the two vectors of heritage conservation and environmental technologies. From the former, this included visits to the Imperial Kiln Bricks Museum, the Silk Museum, Embroidery Art Museum, the especially beautiful Taihu Lake Wetland Park, and the UNESCO World Heritage site, the Humble Administrator's Garden. For the latter, this included the Suzhou City Industrial Park Exhibition Centre, the Higer Bus Company, the High-Tech Zone Exhibition Hall, the Urban Planning Exhibition Hall (with its strong connections to Singapore), the High-Tech Rail Tram Limited, and the new local campus of Nanjing University, China's most famous university.

The two vectors give credence to both the "two mountains theory" but also illustrate the genuine and successful attempt of Suzhou city and the region to integrate both heritage conservation, environmental protection, and technological development. It is difficult enough to achieve the former two, but when coupled with the latter great care and intelligence is required. The development shown by Suzhou city illustrates the superficial contradiction between the "two mountains" can be resolved. One cannot help but be impressed by the dedication shown in the development of ICVs (Intelligent Connected Vehicles) and electric vehicles. The sheer quantity of electric cars on the road is already apparent, and the numbers indicate that soon electric vehicles will make up the majority of new car sales in China, and the rest of the world will follow.

For international guests it must be mentioned with great appreciation that the hospitality shown by Foreign Affairs Office of the Jiangsu Provincial People's Government was absolutely second to none. We were given a vision of a city that is prosperous, populous, harmonious, green, high-tech, planned, and showed a great sensitivity and appreciation of its history and culture. There is sensitivity to the fact that this was a relatively well-off city within China, and the city was very keen to promote itself on a local level in preference to discussing more regional, national, or even global environmental challenges. A desire was expressed by many to have greater detail and even an extra day in the proceedings that would discuss at a lower level various environmental and technological challenges. This is, of course, less of a criticism and more of a desire that attendees wanted the conference to be even longer and deeper.

If I may be so bold to finish on a personal note, often in the afternoons and evenings after the day's proceedings I would take a walk around the lake and its environs that the hotel faced. Whilst there was the vista of the city with its gleaming towers of steel and glass, I would find myself among the foliage and fauna of the lakeside in a peaceful and contemplative setting. It was in this place that I could not help but be absolutely charmed by a solar-powered intelligent robot boat that would make its way over the lake, cleaning whatever rubbish it could find of which, of course, there was very little. What a different and beautiful world it would be, I thought to myself, it would be if such robots were everywhere. This is the vision of the future that is offered to us: "green and innovation-driven development in cities and towns". It would do us all well, to look at this example.

Lev Lafayette



The robot lake cleaning solar powered boat

The Difference Between Chinese and Western /Christian Festivals

Christmas is almost here and to us Aussies (and the western world) it is probably the most important festival of the year. So, it is appropriate that this month we look at the difference between Chinese and Western festivals. Most countries around the world have their own unique celebrations, many based on tradition and religion.

Let's start with some of the most important Chinese festivals:

The Chinese New Year (新年) is a 15-day celebration that marks the beginning of the lunar calendar year. Of course, the first day of the first lunar month and in 2024 it will be the eighth day of the second solar calendar month 8/2/2024. The Mid-Autumn Festival also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival, is also a traditional Chinese festival. The Lantern Festival marks the end of Chinese New Year celebrations, on the fifteenth day of the new lunar year. Chinese Valentine's Day – falls on the 7th day of the 7th month of China's lunar calendar (around mid-August for Australia); that's why it is called Double Seventh Day. This has turned into a massive shopping extravaganza. Chinese national day is celebrated on 1st October compared to Australia Day 26th January.

Then, on to western festivals, specifically Australian:

Christmas is celebrated in December and marks the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas is all about family, similar to 新年. Because December is a very hot month in Australia, we tend to celebrate outdoors unlike our northern hemisphere cousins who stay indoors out of the cold. Easter, also called Pascha, or Resurrection Sunday and is a Christian festival and cultural holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. There are 2 important days: Good Friday when Jesus was crucified, Easter Sunday when Jesus rose from the dead. For

children it is all about Easter Eggs (Chocolate). New Year's Day, the 1st day of the first solar calendar month, celebrates the beginning of the new calendar year. Like Chinese New Year, it is a VERY, VERY BIG DAY for people (比较新年一样). It is a national holiday for BBQ's and sport. Tradition dictates that we must eat Lamb cooked on the BBQ. New year's is also a cause for celebration during which we often stay awake until midnight to see in the new year.

As time marches on more and more Chinese festivals are celebrated here in Australia by both Chinese and Australians. I encourage you to mark each other's festivals in your diary and join in the celebrations. Until next time, 祝大家圣诞节快乐 Wishing You Merry Christmas.

Ian Parker

Postponement of AGM

It is disappointing that once again we have needed to defer our AGM. The meeting was postponed because the proposed demonstration for the following day would disrupt transport services including blocked road, tram access and access to car parks.

The 2023 AGM will be rescheduled for early 2024 and notification will be sent out as soon as we have a suitable date. Committee nominations that were submitted in November will still apply, however there are still a couple of vacancies on the Committee and new applications are welcome from financial members.

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: Tower Liu TREASURER: Ian Parker

COMMITTEE: Lia Cross, Joe Montero, James Doery.

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