



Chinese Studies Association of Australia

Shaping the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.

The Chinese Studies Association of Australia (CSAA) is pleased to be able to contribute to the shaping the National Foundation for Australia China-Relations. CSAA members appreciate the excellent work of the Australia-China Council that advanced the Australia-China bilateral relationship over many decades. We are pleased to see the increased funding and expansion of the ACC's remit through the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations.

The CSAA is the leading professional association for China academics and teachers in Australia. Formed in 1986, the CSAA draws upon interdisciplinary expertise of its members from across the humanities and social sciences to liaise with government, public agencies, business and community groups to enhance knowledge of China in the broader community. We focus particular attention on the promotion of quality education and research on China and Chinese language in Australian universities and schools. We also support the development of China-related materials collections in public libraries and community research organisations.

The CSAA hopes that the ACC's successor, the National Foundation for Australia-China relations, will continue to value the role that culture, arts, history, philosophy and literature play in building a mature bilateral relationship—one in which Australia is able to showcase its intellectual and cultural resources alongside its natural resources and mineral wealth. Building awareness in China of Australia's intellectual and cultural talents is crucial to sustaining and expanding our significant international education export industry.

Drawing on our members' expertise in teaching, learning and researching about China, the CSAA has the following recommendations for consideration.

1. Provide a regular **forum showcasing the rich collaboration between Australian and Chinese researchers in the humanities**. Chinese partners across all sectors value foreign nations' appreciation of China's considerable, centuries-old contributions to world culture. Australian government funding that celebrates and advances internationally-impactful Australian scholarship on Chinese culture and heritage would be an important forum for demonstrating respect and building friendship within the bilateral Australia-China relationship. Australian universities house a wide range of experts whose programs, policies and publications have been shaped by knowledge learnt from working, studying and researching in China and who have received international awards for their contributions.
2. Enhance the breadth and scope of Chinese language capacity in Australia through funding for **Language Immersion Programs in Mandarin** in Australia targeting

school-aged students. Such foreign language immersion programs are common in the US and Canada through school-holiday residentials or summer camps that build youth capacity. Sports and music camps are common around Australia, but foreign language immersion camps are significantly missing.

3. Provide financial support for **intensive inter-semester university-level courses** in Chinese languages other than Mandarin—such as **Cantonese, Hokkein and Shanghainese**. Enrolments in these programs are likely to be low, but stand-alone publicly oriented courses, located in major population centres during inter-semester breaks, could gather sufficient interest to promote knowledge and capacity of these significant world languages among Australians. The aging of Australia’s population means that knowledge of these non-Mandarin languages will become more important in the aged care, medical and social service sectors as the elderly often revert back to first language.

In response to the submission’s specific questions, the CSAA has the following contributions:

What events would you propose that would enhance leadership exchange?

- Building programs within Australian business, universities, enterprises and government to help **‘crack the bamboo ceiling’** that has inhibited people of Chinese backgrounds from advancing to the top levels of their institutions. The appearance of Chinese-Australian’s in top levels of public and private institutions will mitigate the somewhat-outdated perception that Australia’s ‘white Australia’ policy continues to harm prospects for non-Anglo peoples.
- Host **regular dialogue programs** that bring business, government, NGOs and Chinese Studies academics together to improve the quality of the Australian leaders’ knowledge of Chinese culture. China’s social political and economic leaders place high value on engaging with equivalents who are versed in key aspects of China’s history and culture since it mitigates the negative impression that purely ‘transactional’ relationships are valued by Australian leaders.
- Developing a program that produces **social media content** with Australian-perspectives in Chinese to improve our public diplomacy into China and to Chinese-speakers in Australia.

What activities could help to showcase the best of Australia?

- It is crucial to showcase Australia’s intellectual and cultural resources in the humanities and arts to prevent a hardening of the disdainful view that Australia, while blessed with natural mineral resources, is a cultural desert with little to contribute to the stock of world culture. An **expansion of the ACC’s cultural program** is vital to ameliorate the negative impacts of this misperception. Facilitating the access of Australian artists, composers, filmmakers, photographers, writers and ethnographers to collaborators in China continues to be important.
- Providing **travel and residential fellowships for GLAM sector** that bring Chinese scholars and researchers to Australia to benefit from the impressive institutions that house our national collections of documents and artefacts. The National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia, the National Film & Sound Archives, National Museum of Australia and the National Galleries (and their various State

counterparts) are institutions of considerable import that showcase Australia's commitment to promoting public access to a world-class document/artefact collections and promote knowledge of Australia's contribution to global culture.

- Providing a **translation scholarship** that supports Australians to undertake translations of significant Chinese literature and essays into English. Sponsored translations showcase both Australian expertise in Chinese language, translation skills and enables English-only readers to access more of the high-quality intellectual output in Chinese language. Australia's Mabel Lee, translated Nobel Prize-winning writer, Gao Xingjian—a success that has garnered Australia much international respect for our contribution to global intellectual life.

How might the Foundation best engage the Chinese-Australian community?

- An important feature of 'the' Chinese-Australian community is its diversity. By routinely referring to Chinese-Australians as a single group, Australian leaders have failed to **recognise the political, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences** among the people who 'look Chinese'. Chinese-Australians from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Beijing not only speak different languages, but they eat different foods, worship different gods (or none at all) and have vastly different educations and life aspirations. Treating Chinese-Australians as one group is as ineffectual as regarding all European-Australians as one group. Recognition of the diversity inherent in people of Chinese heritage should be embedded as a core principle of all engagement efforts to achieve best outcomes.
- See also, comment in (3) above regarding funding programs that build competence in major non-Mandarin Chinese languages spoken in Australia.

What additional activities would aid in promoting practical cooperation with China?

- Build a series of **postdoctoral fellowships** across all research areas (HASS and STEM) to encourage knowledge exchange from China to Australian universities and research institutions. New researchers are at their most mobile immediately after completing their PhDs and are active in seeking international experience. Australian research institutions would benefit from having access to this "fresh" knowledge and energy from China.
- Support major transport and tourism organisations across the nation to develop their **Chinese language signage and information**. Currently there is very little support for Chinese tourists and students arriving in the country.

Submission prepared on behalf of the members of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia, 27 June 2019.