

Australia China Friendship Society ACT Branch Inc



澳中友好协会

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President's report for 2019

2019 saw the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and also saw the appearance of the corona virus and the subsequent devastating effect on Chinese citizens and subsequently the world's citizens.

We have had a good year in terms of activities for members and promoting Chinese culture to Canberrans however our membership continues to decline (it is now 78). It is very difficult to attract new members as social media rather than gatherings is the way people seem to interact these days.

We had a good range of functions during the year: 2 film evenings : 'The Road Home' at the Jamison Southern Cross Club and 'Forever Young' (which was not quite what was expected) at the Canberra Labor Club in Belconnen; only one talk this year By Minister-Counsellor Yang Zhi on China's Belt and Road Initiative from a cultural perspective; a most interesting tour to historic Braidwood organized by Alex and a curated tour of the Chinese Art Exhibition, which also featured the Harvest of Endurance Scroll, at the National Museum of Australia. Jeff Culnane, a former president of the Society and a life-member, and I were both invited to the official launch of the exhibition. We helped with arrangements for the ANU Chinese Classical Music Ensemble's concert 'Dreaming of Jingnan' which was held in the China in the World Centre. The Ensemble was joined by members of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Ensemble for an excellent afternoon which unfortunately was not as well attended as we'd hoped. We held dinners at Chinese New Year and Christmas and a June yum cha lunch.

We also conducted a very successful tour to Hebei Province and the International Horticultural Expo.

An important aspect of the Society's work is the promotion of Chinese culture in schools. The Panda competition was again held for primary and high schools with the topic this year being 'Ancient Chinese Inventions'. We had a record no. of entries (500) from 15 schools and awarded 87 prizes and certificates. Prizes and certificates were presented by Minister-Counsellor Yang and Counsellor Xu at a ceremony at the Chinese Embassy which was attended by Principals, teachers, students, parents and Society members who helped with the organisation of the day. It was a most rewarding and memorable day for all who attended.

Awards for the best and most improved students of mandarin were presented to students from 12 High Schools and Colleges, at a ceremony hosted by Minister Counsellor Yang Zhi at the Cultural Office attended by ~70 students, parents, teachers and members. Mandarin is also taught in a number of private schools and colleges so we will need to consider extending the awards.

We continue to support Project Hope students: 1 girl and 2 boys at Labagoumen primary schools, 1 girl at a Yanqing primary School, 3 girls at a Huairou middle school, 3 girls and 1 boy at a Miyun primary school and 1 boy at the Senior High school in Labagoumen. Funds to support these students came from a variety of sources: profits from lantern sales at the 2019 Lantern Festival; a portion of the profits from the ANNUCCME concert in October and \$1200 from the Horticultural tour. Trash and Treasure stalls at the Fyshwick Markets, which in the past have been very successful, are no longer viable as the Markets no longer make a charity stall available so we will have to come up with some new ideas.

We obtained a grant from the ACT Government for the Lantern Festival but owing to the corona virus and the anticipated weather we had to cancel this year's festival after deferring it from February. I would particularly like to thank Tanja for all her efforts co-ordinating performers as not only did we have to defer, which we did with a week's notice, but then had to cancel which necessitated many emails and phone calls. We did hold the lantern-making workshop but it was very poorly attended.

The newsletter, which continues to report on our activities and provide items of interest, plays an important role for the Society as for many members this is the only contact they have. Thanks go to Jean, who is the editor, to Neil who provides Fast Facts, to Teck who regularly sources items of interest and to Roger Arnold for his most interesting contributions on living in China.

Our website which helps us to maintain our profile is most capably managed by Siew-Gim McGregor and we have started using facebook to promote our events.

We have enjoyed close contact with and received considerable support from the Chinese Embassy and in particular the Cultural Office. We received literature, prizes and gifts for the Lantern Festival, Panda competition and School Awards; the Embassy hosted the Panda competition presentation; the Cultural Office hosted the school awards and their representatives attended all these events. We greatly value and appreciate the Embassy's support and extend our sincere thanks and look forward to continuing our very close relationship. Mr Yang's term as Cultural Counsellor has almost finished and I would particularly like to thank him for his very strong support for the Society. He was instrumental in arranging for the panda completion presentations to be held at the Embassy and also hosted the school awards presentations and a number of other events at the Cultural Office in O'Malley.

The Society places great reliance on the committee: Tanja Naeher – secretary and co-ordinator of performers for the Lantern Festival, Neil Birch - treasurer, Jean Norman - editor and lantern-workshop co-ordinator, Teck Lee - functions co-ordinator, Alex Olah – who has done a terrific job as publicity officer and John Wong PA co-ordinator. Our committee

worked together very harmoniously and I would like to thank all the members for their support and hard work. I would also like to thank the Society members who have helped at our events during the year. And as a final note it would be heartening to see more members attend and help out at our various events.

Carol Keil
President
20 March 2019