

Australia China Friendship Society ACT Branch Inc



澳中友好协会

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President's report for 2020

2020 was a year like no other which saw the appearance of the corona virus and the deadly effects which have been experienced across the world. Fortunately we have been spared the worst here in Canberra but our activities were certainly restricted for quite some time.

We did not have any functions until September when we had a showing of the film China's 3 dreams and in October there was a presentation of the Society's tour to the horticultural Expo in 2019. In November Carol and Ambassador Cheng JIngye finally planted a friendship tree in the Canberra Beijing Garden. It was a replacement for the tree that had been planted at the Embassy in 1992. It was a very positive event at a time when relations between China and Australia were at a very low ebb. It had been a long time in the planning and was well-attended but the report in the Canberra Times misrepresented the purpose. They did however print my clarifying letter to the editor. Our Christmas dinner and Chinese New Year were both very successful.

Our membership continues to decline (it is now 75). We have had several new members join but some of our older members resigned as a result of COVID. It is very difficult to attract new members as social media rather than gatherings is the way people seem to interact these days.

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 'Chinese Mythical Creatures'. We had entries from 10 schools and awarded 62 prizes. We were not able to hold our usual presentation ceremony due to COVID restrictions and instead hand-delivered prizes to each school for the school to present.

COVID restrictions also prevented a ceremony for winners of Awards for the best and most improved students of mandarin. As with the Panda competition

the awards were hand-delivered to 11 High Schools and Colleges and I presented the awards to the students at Melba-Copland College..

We continue to support 10 Project Hope students: 4 girls at Labagoumen primary school, 5 students at other primary and high schools. As there was no fund-raising possible during the year funds to support these students came from donations from members and their families, proceeds from a lunch arranged in Adelaide by Siew-Gim's sister and friends in 2019 and a draw-down of Society funds.

We obtained a grant from the ACT Government for the Lantern Festival in 2020 which was cancelled at very short notice due to COVID and were able to carryover the funds for the 2021 festival which was a great success. We had 3 new performance groups, perfect weather, used our own PA system for the first time and sold a good number of paper lanterns.

We applied for a Small Volunteer Grant to replace our data projector but were unsuccessful.

Two of our long-term members sadly passed away. Jeff Culnane was vice-president from 1982-84, president from 1985-1988 and was made a life-member in 1988. Jeff was instrumental in organising the painting of the Harvest of Endurance Scroll. He was also National Secretary for 2 years. Brian O'Keeffe was treasurer in 1984.

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 managed by Siew-Gim McGregor and we also use face-book 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. Mr Yang's term as Cultural Counsellor has 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 competition 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 Office is now located near the Embassy. Mr Song Yanqun, the new Cultural Counsellor, has just recently arrived. We greatly value and appreciate the Embassy's support and extend our sincere thanks and look forward to continuing our very close relationship.

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, Teck Lee - functions co-ordinator, Amanda Andrews – schools, Alex Olah –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
22 March 2021