

# Australia China Friendship Society

ACT Branch Inc

澳中友好协会



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## President's report for 2023

2022 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Australia and China. In 2023 the Chinese Embassy issued a book of stories by 50 contributors to Australia-China friendship which included an interview with Carol about the Society's 23 year involvement with Project Hope and our support for students at Labagoumen Primary and other towns/villages in the region.

For the Society our year starts with celebrations for Chinese New Year. The first event was Lunar New Year in Dickson where we had a very successful stall selling lanterns and Chinese decorations. This was followed by a CNY lunch at the China Tea Club and the following weekend saw us hold the Lantern-making workshop at the Cook Hub and the culmination of the celebrations was the Lantern Festival. The day was very cold, with an apparent temperature of only 10 degrees, and also exceedingly windy. However ~500 people attended, aided by the excellent publicity we received – 6 interviews including ABC TV, print and social media; the performances all went well and our sales of lanterns were excellent.

Our functions during the year included: talks by Xue Song Liu on Holistic Chinese Medicine, and Jocelyn Chey on Chinese Humour; two films at the Jamison Southern Cross Club: 'Song of the Phoenix' which we borrowed from the China Cultural Centre in Sydney, and 'American Dreams' based on the New Oriental Education service. Our dinners for Chinese New Year and Christmas, and the June yum cha lunch were all well attended.

The several times deferred event, The First Chinese – a Heritage Walk in Queanbeyan, led by a very knowledgeable guide from the National trust, finally occurred in May and was very well attended.

The annual concert 'Travelling with Clouds' by the ANU Chinese Classical Music Ensemble was held in the Cook Community Hub (a new venue for the concert) - with the Society

selling tickets, providing afternoon tea and helping with publicity. We share the profits with the Ensemble and they are used to help fund our Project Hope students.

We had success with 2 grant applications. We were able to obtain a variation to the Technology Upgrade Grant to hold over funds from 2022 and purchased a new PA which was very successfully used at the Lantern Festival. We succeeded in obtaining a grant from the Canberra Southern Cross Club for the Panda competition to fund the purchase of prizes and printing of certificates.

The Panda competition is a very successful means of promoting Chinese culture to students and their families. The Chinese language teachers are strong supporters and the topic this year was 'The Dragon Boat Festival'. Eight schools provided hundreds of entries and we awarded 63 prizes at a presentation ceremony at the Chinese Embassy with Ambassador Xiao attending and presenting prizes. It is always a most heart-warming event and the parents, principals, teachers and students were all impressed and happy.

This year, for the first time the venue for the ceremony for winners of Awards for the best and most improved students of mandarin was at the Cook Community Hub as the China in the World Centre was unavailable. The ceremony was preceded by a short lion dance performance and Minister Song presented the awards to students from 12 of Canberra's high schools and Colleges. An afternoon tea to follow provided an opportunity to meet parents, teachers and students.

We continue to support 10 Project Hope students: 8 girls and 2 boys with 4 girls and 1 boy at Labagoumen primary school and 5 students at other primary and high schools. The majority of funds to support these students came from very generous donations from members and their families, sales of lanterns and decorations at the Lunar new year stall, and sales of lanterns at the Lantern Festival.

We have a very small but steady stream of donations to the Society via recycling bottles and cans at RETURN-IT depots. Instructions are on the website and I hope more members will take advantage of the opportunity.

Our friendship tree in the Beijing Garden continues to flourish.

We have enjoyed close contact with and received considerable support from the Chinese Embassy and in particular the Cultural Office. We greatly appreciated the prizes for the

panda competition, gifts for the mandarin awards students and free literature for the lantern Festival. We value and appreciate the Embassy's support and extend our sincere thanks and look forward to continuing our very close relationship.

For the first time we also received assistance from the China Cultural Centre in Sydney in terms of the loan of a film and items to be used as gifts at the Lantern Festival and other items we will use as prizes in the Panda Competition. We greatly appreciate this help.

The newsletter continues to be an important means of communication with our members. Thanks go to Jean, who is the editor, to Neil who provides Fast Facts and to Roger Arnold for his most interesting contributions on living in China.

The Society could not function without its committee each of whom has a role to play. We all worked together very harmoniously and I would like to thank all the members for their support and hard work. In particular I would like to thank Alex for looking after publicity, Amanda for liaising with schools and helping with the Panda competition and School Awards, Neil as treasurer, Tanja as secretary and manager of performers at the Lantern Festival, Jean for managing the lantern-making workshop as well as the newsletter and printing the Panda comp certificates, Corinne for managing the website and facebook and John for looking after the PA. I would also like to thank all the Society members who have helped at our events during the year.

For a small association I think our aims of promoting friendship between our two countries were well fulfilled.

Carol Keil

President

27 March 2024