

Australia China Friendship Society

ACT Branch Inc

澳中友好协会

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Bulletin

2024/5 June 2024

Coming events

Talk on China/US comparisons

3 July

Film screening

15 August

Mandarin awards presentation ceremony

8 September



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Promoting friendship and understanding between the Australian and Chinese people

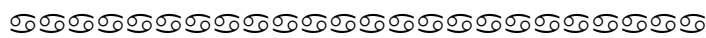
Talk on China-US comparisons

The function for July will be a talk by member Alex Olah on statistical comparisons between China and the US, at 7.30pm on Wednesday 3 July 2024 in the Catchpoles Room of the Southern Cross Club, Jamison. Members and Visitors welcome; \$2 donation at the door.

The presentation will provide key geographical, societal, and economic indicators to show how the two Super Powers compare today.

Alex had a 30 year career as a Trade Commissioner, and in retirement spent six years as an English Teacher at the China University of Petroleum, Shandong Province.

As usual, members are welcome to gather in the bistro before the talk for dinner, from 6.00pm. The talk will begin at 7.30. Please book with acfsevent@gmail.com by 28 June if coming to the dinner.



Film night



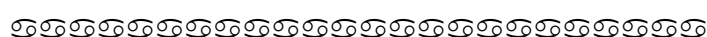
In August we will hold a screening of the 2021 film *Sister*.

The screening will be at 7.30 in the Catchpoles Room of the Southern Cross Club, Jamison, on Thursday 15 August.

Directed by Yin Ruoxin and starring Zhang Zifeng, Xiao Yang, Zhu Yuanyuan, Duan Bowen and Liang Jingkan, the story revolves around the sister An Ran (acted by Zhang Zifeng) whose parents prioritize sons over daughters, leading her to endure unfair treatment as she grows up. An Ran was going to start her independent life in Beijing for a master study, nevertheless her parents were unfortunately dead in a car accident and thus leaving her with a 6-year-old brother. She faces the difficult decision of whether to pursue her personal ambitions or to raise her estranged brother.

The film was shortlisted for Best Feature Film at the 34th Golden Rooster Awards, Best Actress (Zhang Zifeng) at the 36th Hundred Flowers Awards, and won the 19th China Huabiao Film Awards for Outstanding Actress (Zhang Zifeng).

Members are welcome to gather in the bistro before the screening for dinner, from 6.00pm. Please book with acfsevent@gmail.com by 7 August if coming to the dinner.



Fast facts from the *Beijing Review*, June 2024

- Shanghai has added 12 assisted reproductive medical services to its health insurance coverage to encourage fertility. This is expected to alleviate economic as well as psychological pressures on patients and their families.
- In April there were 55.95 million air passage trips in China, up 10.6% in a year. The civil aviation sector's total turnover was 11.38 billion ton-kilometres in April up 21.6% in a year and up 8.3% compared to the pre-pandemic April 2019 level.
- China exported 504,000 automobiles in April up 34% from April 2023, including 429,000 passenger vehicles. China exported 4.91 million vehicles in 2023 and is expected to emerge as the world's largest auto exporter.
- In the first 4 months of this year 55% of China's exports were by Chinese private enterprises, 16% from state-owned enterprises and 29% from foreign-invested enterprises.
- There are over 300 million electric bicycles in China over 42 million were made last year. A set of compulsory safety standards for lithium-ion batteries used in bicycles will become effective nationwide in November.

Thanks to Neil Birch for compiling these.

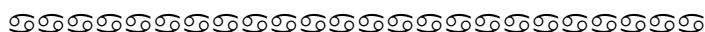
Vale Bill Wood 4.11.1935 – 19.05.2024

Bill and Bev Wood have been members of the Society since 2006. Bill was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1989 and served for 15 years. He had an abiding interest in the arts and was integral to the establishment of CMAG amongst many other projects.

I represented the Society at the State Funeral that was held for Bill in St Paul's Anglican Church, Manuka where both Katy Gallagher and Bill's niece gave very moving eulogies.

Our sincere condolences go to Bev and the family.

Carol Keil

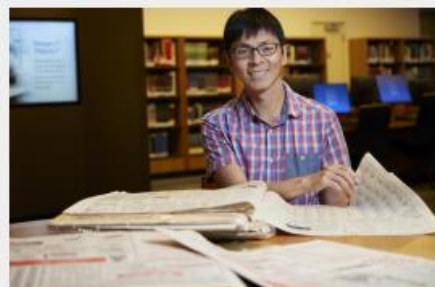


National Library of Australia Scholarship in Asian Studies

Applications are now open for the 2025 Asia Study Grants and PhD Scholarships offered by the National Library of Australia.



2023 NLA Scholar Ms Kate Kirby



2023 Asia Study Grant researcher, Dr Yao-Tai Li

**Applications close
24 June 2024.**

National Library of Australia Scholarships

- For Australian PhD candidates
- 9 x \$6,000 Scholarships
- 6-week residency at the National Library in Canberra
- Two scholarships specifically for Australian First Nations scholars

Specialty scholarships available in the fields of:

- Asian studies
- Maps
- Biography
- Australia and the Pacific in the 18th to 20th centuries

Asia Study Grants

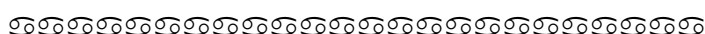
- For academics and PhD candidates residing in Australia
- 5 x \$5,000 Grants
- 4-week residency at the National Library in Canberra
- For research in the National Library of Australia's Asian language and Asia-related collections.

For more information visit
www.nla.gov.au



Researchers wishing to work with the National Library's Asian Collections may be interested in applying for our new NLA Scholarship in Asian Studies or one of the five Asia Study Grants.

Find that missing piece: Apply now for a 2025 Fellowship or Scholarship and see your research come together



Committee News – 8 May 2024 meeting

Your committee met at the 'China Tea Club' restaurant in North Lyneham for its May meeting.

The April film shown about Rupert Lockwood, who had worked as a journalist and documented the Dalfram dispute in 1938 and Pig Iron Bob was very well attended and received by those there. We thanked Rupert's daughter and member of the society, Penny, for sharing this story with the society.

July's function will be a talk by our unfortunately soon to be departing to a warmer Queensland committee member, Alex Olah. Alex will be taking us on a comparison journey between the US and China in terms of economics.

The committee decided on a film 'Sister', to be borrowed from the China Cultural Centre in Sydney, as the August event and discussed venue options for a Spring afternoon tea to say thanks to our members.

We discussed the need for a volunteer to take over the organising of the Lantern Making workshop and storage of the workshop paraphernalia, as Jean is providing others with this opportunity – we thank Jean for the years of undertaking this component of the Lantern Festival celebrations!

For the first time in many years we were unsuccessful in our application for a grant for the Lantern Festival. We are in the process of seeking clarification for the reason why we were unsuccessful. We did not follow through with the application for the ACT Government's Technology grant as our purchases were not in line with the grant's criteria.

We will keep you updated with plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ACT Branch of the ACFS and the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Gardens. Currently we are exploring the printing of a logo on polo shirts for members.

Our meeting ended with a delicious meal – steamed fish with ginger and snow peas hit the mark this time for me.

Stay warm and cosy, with the last of the Autumn leaves and already minuses overnight.

Your Secretary, Tanja

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## School awards

The presentation of school awards for students of Mandarin will take place on Sunday 8 September at the ANU China in the World Centre at 3.00pm. Members and friends are invited to witness the ceremony which is a joyous event for the students and their families. Please book by emailing [acfsevent@gmail.com](mailto:acfsevent@gmail.com) by 1 September.

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Panda competition

Members' children and grandchildren may like to enter this year's Panda Competition. The topic for this year's competition is:

The Chinese and the Australian Gold-rushes



About the year 1854 it became known in China that only a few weeks' sailing away existed a continent as large as China, fertile and rich in gold and other metals. Many Chinese decided to try their luck in Australia. By the late 1850s there were 25 000 Chinese in Victoria and 13 000 in New South Wales.

These Chinese immigrants had come to participate in the Australian gold-rushes. Quite a few Chinese, unsuccessful at mining, turned to market gardening, cabinet making and other trades.

Students are asked to creatively focus on an aspect of this topic. This can be through a drawing, painting, creative works such as collage, 3-dimensional construction, essay, poetry, or other creative individual effort, appropriate to the student's age and school grade.

The entry should be the work of a single student. If a joint entry for more than 1 student is submitted only a single prize will be given.

Preschool, Kindergarten, Year 1 and 2 students can enter a colouring-in piece.

If the entry is in Mandarin an English translation must be provided.

Conditions of entry are:

- *All entries must be presented for judging and be available for the presentation ceremony.*
- *Only original entries will be accepted: photocopies, scanned copies or USBs will not be considered.*
- *Drawings and combination drawing/words should be **no larger than an A3 sheet.***
- *Sculptures or collages must have a footprint **no larger than an A3 sheet***
- *Essays are to be no more than one A4 page.*
- *One entry per student. (Entry must preferably be the work of only that student.)*

All entries must have the following information provided on a label, that is easily read and securely attached to the entry, or they will be ineligible.

If the entry has multiple pieces, a label must be attached to each piece.

Panda Competition 2024	
School name:	
Teacher's name	
Student Name (First name plus Surname)	
Gender	
Age of student	
School Year	

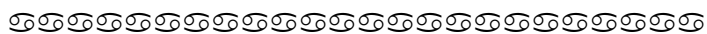
Entries must be received by 5pm Sunday 29 September 2024

Judging of the entries will take place early in Term 3 school holidays and the presentation of prizes will be on a date to be advised in Term 4.

Entries should be sent to: The Secretary (Panda Competition)
 Australia China Friendship Society, ACT Branch
 PO Box 296, Belconnen, ACT 2606

When sending in an entry, **please include a phone number and email contact address**, so that we can contact you with the names of the winners and details of the presentation ceremony. If you are posting your entry/entries please email acfsact@gmail.com , so that we can ensure it has arrived. If you would like to deliver your entry, please email acfsact@gmail.com

For further information about the competition please contact Amanda Andrews at andrews79@iinet.net.au or mobile 0452 323 520.



Australia's crucial knowledge gaps in China expertise: Strategies for the future

By Anne E. McLaren

Source: [Australia's crucial knowledge gaps in China expertise: Strategies for the future - Pearls and Irritations \(johnmenadue.com\)](#) May 15, 2024

Australia's most severe China knowledge gap is the virtual collapse of University-level advanced Chinese language study, together with the study of Chinese society, politics and culture. This is the major finding of a report, [Australia's China Knowledge Capability](#), published in 2023 by the Australian Academy of the Humanities.



The main program that provided this expertise in the past, Chinese Honours, has largely fallen away in the marketised context of Australian higher education. Australian universities are not incentivised to offer boutique Honours programs with single digit enrolments and a modest reimbursement from the Commonwealth. In the past, Honours programs in Chinese provided Australia with a small but sustainable cohort of graduates with China skills who could go on to complete research higher degrees in Chinese studies, or find employment in Foreign Affairs, the Commonwealth Public Service, the business sector, think tanks, policy areas, education, cultural exchange and the fine arts. The AAH report found that in the five-year period from 2017 to 2021, the nation graduated a total of 17 students in Chinese Honours. In 2021, only one student graduated in Chinese Honours in the entire country (*Australia's China Knowledge Capability*, p.35).

One type of program that is burgeoning in Australian universities is the full-fee paying Masters by Coursework. The AAH report found that in the period examined not a single university offered a Masters by Coursework in China studies. In any case, the Masters by Coursework are not designed to provide truly advanced study. They are open to students with any bachelor degree and do not presume completion of a major in an area of relevance to the MA program.

It was not always thus. I was fortunate to have studied Chinese at the Australian National University in the 1970s. There I found excellent teachers such as Colin Mackerras, who is now celebrating sixty years of engagement with China. Colin brought to the classroom his vast enthusiasm and his experience of living and working in China. He was particularly noted for his ability to sing an aria from a Chinese opera and his willingness to teach us "communist bandit characters", that is, the type of Chinese character script used in mainland China as opposed to beyond China. Over the decades I was to meet other Australians, such as Jocelyn Chey, who had benefited from specialised Chinese language and studies at the University of Sydney, and then gone on to senior positions in trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. Those Australians (few in number) who teach on China Studies in our higher education systems today owe a debt of gratitude to the visionary pioneers of the past. However, this legacy is now in danger of being eroded.

Australia's crucial knowledge gap in China expertise is occurring just at the time when the international environment is becoming more tightly contested. A multipolar world is emerging with China as one of the key players. Security concerns are now an important consideration in trade, defence, research collaboration and educational exchange. At the same time, Australia is seeking to build national resilience and strengthen collaboration in critical areas such as climate change, pandemic control and defence. As Frances Adamson (former Australian Ambassador to China) declares in the Foreword to the AAH Report: "Put simply, Australia's China Capacity is central to the national interest." We need people with at least foundational knowledge of China in the widest possible range of areas: across the Houses of Parliament, within the Commonwealth and state public service, in business circles, and in our education systems. We also need a pipeline of graduates with more advanced and specialised China expertise to advise governments and business. The AAH Report argues the case that Australia should ensure it has "a sovereign Chinese knowledge capability". In other words, the nation needs its own source of objective independent expertise on China.

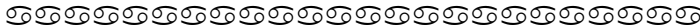
Australia has long relied on the employment of foreign nationals to help bolster its China knowledge capability. Arguably, this strategy has worked well in the past and brought many fine China scholars to our shores. However, it may work less well in the future. One indicator is the 21% decline in enrolments in Chinese in US universities between 2016 and 2020. Another indicator is the number of US students studying in China. Numbers fell from 15,000 in 2011 to 11,639 in 2019. Only 211 US students studied in China in 2021. The Fulbright research fellowship scheme terminated its China exchanges in 2020. Some US colleges have slashed programs in Chinese in

favour of Western or American Studies, as [Jordyn Haime](#) noted recently in *China File*. A [recent report](#) in *The Economist* noted the marked decline in the learning of Chinese in the UK, US and Europe. In future, it could become increasingly difficult to fill knowledge gaps from our traditional source countries. Bilingual Australian citizens can help meet linguistic needs, however, students from Mandarin-speaking families need formal education to gain high-level literacy in Chinese script and knowledge of Chinese culture and society. One can also argue that China knowledge is too important and the needs too diverse to remain the provenance of just one ethnic group within the community.

It is not difficult to set up initiatives that could improve the situation. Scholarships for students majoring in Chinese language to study in-country would be a good start. Tagging a number of New Colombo Plan Scholarships for students who have completed a major in Chinese to spend at least one semester in a Chinese-speaking community would provide encouragement to students to take up advanced China Studies. Offering fee help and a living allowance to students wishing to undertake Chinese Honours might encourage some universities to revive languishing Honours programs.

What governments tell the public is also important. If governments fund language programs at school level, then the entire educational sector takes note. Policy messages sent by governments influence what schools teach and what career advisors say to parents and students. Governments can choose to open up career paths for students with knowledge of China and this could have a ripple effect on business and private sectors. Above all, the government needs to send signals that our future does indeed lie in navigating our path within the Asian region and that knowledge of China, its languages, culture and society, remains of fundamental importance for the future of the nation.

Thanks to member Len Waugh for the link to this item.

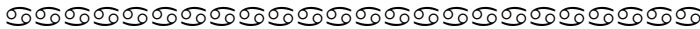


Sixty years of teaching in China

Source: *Beijing Review* 30 May 2024

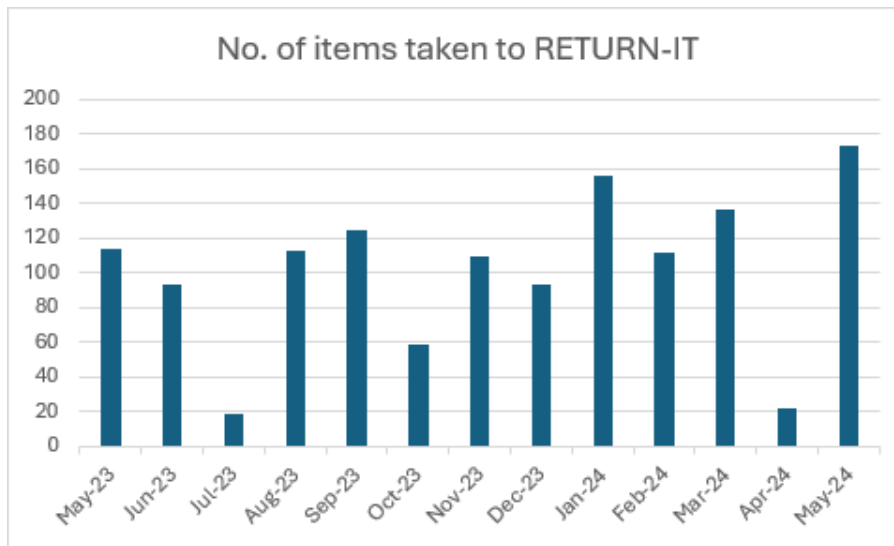
Colin Mackerras, an Australian Sinologist, celebrated his 60th anniversary of teaching in China with a commemorative seminar held in Brisbane, capital of Australia's northeastern state of Queensland, on May 16. Mackerras, an emeritus professor at Griffith University, first visited China in 1964 and taught at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, now known as the Beijing Foreign Studies University, until 1966. Over the past 60 years, he has been engaged in Sinology research, promoting exchanges and cooperation between universities and cultural institutions in China and Australia, and contributing to the study of China and the promotion of Chinese culture. In September 2014, Mackerras was awarded the Friendship Award by the Chinese Government, the country's highest award for professionals from overseas who have made significant contributions to the country's development.

Thanks to Neil Birch for this item.

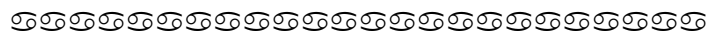


Recycling of cans and bottles

Many thanks to those members who have taken their cans and bottles to the RETURN-IT recycling centres and chosen to donate the refund to ACFS.



Instructions on how to credit deposits to our account are now on our website www.acfs.org.au under the tab 'Contribute to the Society'.



Letter from Zhanjiang – Roger Arnold

Banyans

Back at Chinese New Year I got talking to one of my Zhanjiang friends about the city's urban trees. Soon, our conversation meandered onto the subject our favourite trees. For me, one of my undoubted favourites is lemon scented gum (*Eucalyptus citriodora*) with its wonderful clear, cream to white bole and superb lemon scent imparting it the ability to deter pesky mosquitos. And this species has a history of introduction into China dating back over 100 years; there are now many fine specimens of this gum to be found across more coastal regions of southern China, growing in parks and besides rural roads and around some villages.



For my friend, very much a Zhanjiang native, his clear favourite is the wonderful banyan tree. He also suggested that his affection is shared by many inhabitants of southern China. Indeed, it's highly likely that the banyan would be an odds-on favourite contender for southern China's most favourite tree. These trees have long been common sights along roadsides and in other contexts in many southern Chinese towns and cities as well as in many rural villages; they're especially appreciated during the summer's humid and sometimes stiflingly hot weather for the thick, expansive, spreading shade they cast.

It is for such reasons, along with the wonderful aesthetic appeal of their sculptural, broad trunks that banyan trees are held in special regard here in China. Indeed, in

Guangzhou there is even a temple dedicated to banyan trees, whilst a few hundred kilometres to the northeast, the city of Fuzhou – the capital of Fujian province – is home to so many banyans that its nickname is 'Rongcheng', which translates literally as "The City of the Banyan Tree."



The banyan tree that is so popular in China, *Ficus microcarpa*, is a tropical to sub-tropical species with a wide native range that extends from China through tropical Asia, including Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, the Malay Archipelago and New Guinea, to northern Australia and even to New Caledonia. Interestingly, in India the vernacular name for this tree is Indian Laurel, as there its close relative, *Ficus benghalensis*, is known as Indian banyan, which is India's national tree.

Older banyans in China (and most places they grow) often develop aerial prop roots which can develop into thick, woody trunks that allow tree crowns to spread outwards almost indefinitely. Not surprisingly, their expansive spreading, thick crowns which afford solid shade and sometimes shelter from rain, enable them to provide sheltered spaces beneath for locals to gather. In many southern Chinese villages, on hot summer days local people can often be found gathered under the shade of banyan trees chatting, playing cards or board games, or just relaxing out of the heat.

As banyans are also extremely hardy and have strong root systems, they have also proved very adaptable to urban environments, even where the ground is predominantly paved. Great examples of their urban adaptation can be seen where they line streets in many some of older parts of Guangzhou and various other Chinese towns and cities.

Also to be found in Guangzhou is the wonderful 'Temple of the Six Banyan Trees' (六榕寺 Liù róng sì), located in heart of the city's Yuexiu district. It's a significant and historic Buddhist Temple that dates all the way back to AD 537. Legend has it that its original name of "Baoyan Temple" was changed following a visit from a famous Chinese poet Sushi (苏轼) in AD 1100. During his visit, Sushi was so impressed by 6 impressive, strong, old banyan trees growing there that he was inspired to compose a poem "Six Banyans" (Liù Róng) in honour of his visit. From then on, the temple became known by this name. Today, although the temple's original banyan trees no

longer





survive, it's still home to some wonderful specimens of these trees, with the current ones supposedly being over 170 years old. And, within the Temple complex there is a "Pavilion of Replanting Banyan Trees (补榕亭)" built in 1919 – what a marvellous homage to banyans!

Around about the same time as poet Sushi's temple visit in Guangzhou, the then governor of Fuzhou, Zhang Boyu, proclaimed that his city, which frequently suffered from flooding and summer heat, "should be green and no parasols should be needed in summer." He then made

policies encouraging locals to plant banyan trees in their city, and from then on Fuzhou became known colloquially as "The City of the Banyan Tree."

Today, it is thought that Fuzhou's largest Banyan was one of those planted during Zhang Boyu's rule, and hence it's reputedly around 900 years old. This wonderful banyan is found in what is now 'Fuzhou National Park', and though it has only a modest height of around 20 metres, the ground projection of its canopy is more than 1,330 square meters (>0.13 hectares). Not surprisingly, Fuzhou locals refer to it the "King of Banyan Trees"!

But it is not just in Fuzhou and at the Guangzhou's 'Temple of 6 Banyans' that these trees are respected and revered. All across southern China these trees hold a special place in the hearts and minds of locals. In my adopted home city of Zhanjiang, every significant banyan is adorned by a discrete, city government registration tag giving the tree's ID number and estimated age, as part of efforts to monitor and preserve these special urban biological assets. Closer to the city of Fuzhou, in the small city of Zhangzhou where I lived for 3 years back when I first moved to China in the early 2000s, the esteem that banyans are held in is on clear display right in the heart of downtown. In several places there some of the city's newly widened roads had rather acute kinks in them, and others short, oddly narrow sections, so as to preserve stately old banyan trees that stand resolute and immovable mid-carriageway like centurions watching over traffic that must, without question, part and flow around them.

Another wonderful example of the great length governments and developers in southern China often go in order to conserve banyans can be seen right in the heart of Hong Kong. For redevelopment of the territory's former Marine Police Headquarters into what is now known as 1881 Heritage, a cultural and shopping landmark in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon, invested large amounts were invested for several old banyan trees growing on the site. The design for this precinct's redevelopment was formulated around these revered trees which now stand as significant, leafy and stately centurions within the development. Their preservation involved substantial structural works in order to maintain the trees *in situ* in their original locations and elevations, with specialised structures constructed around and even underneath them. A visit to this precinct, even if just to see these venerable, prized banyans, never fails to delight me.



I sometimes wonder if various levels of governments in Australia couldn't learn something from the high regard and protection afforded to banyan trees in China. Here, the protection and care of such trees seems to be an absolute given – problems rarely arise as any changes or developments always start from the position of working around and accommodating such venerable trees as one of the highest priorities. This is a stark contrast to what can happen with culturally significant trees in Australia – a prime example that springs to mind is a project a few years back aimed at widening the Western Highway between Ballarat and Stawell in Victoria. The works there were to involve removal of hundreds of older, native eucalypts holding special cultural significance to local First Nations People. One wonders how in the initial design process that anyone thought it could possibly be a good or even part way acceptable idea to sacrifice such trees.

Perhaps venerable old Chinese banyans (and remember they're also native to Australia) and the respect they're afforded could provide instructive examples to people the world over in how we should all respect significant trees.

Australia China Friendship Society ACT Branch — membership application form

Annual subscriptions are due on 1 January and are current until 31 December of the same year. The monthly Bulletin is included in the subscription and is distributed by email.

Subscription rates are

Single \$20 Family \$35 Centrelink Concession Holder: Individual \$15 and Family \$25

Send to: the ACFS Treasurer, PO Box 296 Belconnen ACT 2615

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ACT Branch Bulletin