

The developing role of the Australia China Friendship Society of Western Australia reflects what was occurring both nationally and internationally. As a people we are affected by the times in which we live, so it is worthwhile reviewing significant historical incidents that have affected the Society's life.

In 1946, China, under the leadership of Chiang Kai Shek, was an original member of the United Nations and joined the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain and France on the powerful United Nations Security Council. When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949, Chiang Kai Shek and the remnant of his National Party formed a government in exile in Taiwan, then known as Formosa.

To coincide with Mao Zedong's proclamation of the People's Republic of China in October 1949, Charles Patrick Fitzgerald, accepted an invitation from the Australian National University (ANU) to give a series of lectures on the modern Republic. Fitzgerald was born in 1901 and lived in China between 1923 and 1949. He was fluent in Mandarin and although lacking a university qualification, became a recognised authority on revolutionary China. Fitzgerald's early lectures endeavoured to show that while Soviet Communism followed a Marxist urban model, Chinese revolutions gained strength from the peasantry and in this respect China and the Soviet Union were quite different. The Australian National University recognised that a Ph.D. was not always a measure of expertise and offered Fitzgerald a professorship that he retained until December 1967. During those years he was acknowledged as Australia's leading authority on modern China and his lectures were popular. His growing prestige and Canberra location brought him close to Members of the Federal Parliament who favoured diplomatic links with the People's Republic of China. One was the Queensland born Tasmanian Senator, Bill Morrow who had addressed the Australian Senate in October 1949 on the importance of cultivating trade and friendship links with the new China.



Professor C.P Fitzgerald

Formation of National ACFS

Against this background of politics and ideology in 1951 the Rev. H. Aiken convened and chaired a meeting of Melbourne citizens to form the Australia China Society (ASC) with Mr (later Professor) C.P. Fitzgerald as the founding president. In 1983 the National committee and all branches changed the name to 'Australia China Friendship Society' (ACFS).

In 1952, the Rev. H. Aiken and C.P. Fitzgerald convinced Sydney of the importance of a New South Wales branch of the Australia China Society and Doug Lindsay was nominated as the first President. Victoria followed soon afterwards. Bill Morrow was a foundation member of the New South Wales Australia China Society (ACSNSW) and later the Queensland ACS president. The pioneer branches endorsed the principles of cultural understanding, trade relationships and peaceful relations between Australia and the People's Republic of China.

Also in 1952, a five person ACS delegation attended a Peace Conference in Beijing and their report, *We Talked Peace with Asia*, sold 20,000 copies. The following year, Bill Morrow visited Beijing and was, on a later visit, a guest of Premier Zhou Enlai. This indicated a growing Australian interest in the events occurring behind the 'Bamboo Curtain'. In Western Australia, the only outlet for New China publications was the Communist Party Pioneer Bookshop on the corner of Bulwer and Stirling Streets with the windows protected against vandals and anti-China protests.

A major change in the relationship, occurred three weeks after the election of Gough Whitlam on 5 December 1972 as the Prime Minister of Australia, when the Chinese and Australian Ambassadors to France, Huang Zhen and Alan Renouf, met in Paris to sign a joint communiqué to establish diplomatic relations between our two Nations. On 4 May 1973, Chinese Ambassador Wang Guoquan arrived at Canberra and presented his credentials to the Governor General, Sir Paul Hasluck. In that year the National ACS Council extended friendly greetings to the Chinese People's Friendship Association.



1972 Signing of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and Australia.

Friendship with Chinese Consulate in Perth

The first Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Perth was established in October 1994. ACFSWA president, Les Greive assisted the Chinese Consulate staff while they were in temporary premises, to find a suitable site in East Perth for the permanent Consulate building. Architects utilised the beautiful riverside location. The Consulate's spacious premises make it one of the more attractive consulates in Australia and certainly the best located of the Perth foreign consulates.

Perth and the ACFS have provided warm welcomes to successive Consul Generals: Cai Chuan (1994-1998), Tian Junting (1998-2001), Zhang Lianyun (2001-2003), Zhong Ziqi (2003-2006), Li Shugang (2006-2011), Madame Wang Yiner (2011-2013), Huang Qinguo (2014 - 2016) and Lei Kezhong (commenced his term in 2016).

The sincere welcome provided to the consular staff allowed them to make many friends. Li Shugang's subsequent appointment as Consul General in 2006 was warmly welcomed by the many friends he had made during a previous Term of Office in Perth some years earlier.



First Consul General to Perth in 1994, Consul General Cai Chuan (seated, middle) with ACFS WA members, Dr Wolfgang (Wally) Frick and Les Greive. Standing: Dr Simon Lee AO and Dr Eric Tan AM.

The Society has maintained a close relationship with the staff of the Consulate, hosting many formal and informal occasions, and this has extended to visiting Chinese dignitaries.



William Chi and Consul General Madam WANG Yiner at Consulate Reception to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between China and Australia in 2012. Madam Wang appreciated the 40th Anniversary commemorative coin gifted to her by ACFSWA.

Promoting Culture and Exchange - Partnerships between China and Western Australia

Western Australia and Zhejiang Province established a sister state relationship in 1987. Zhejiang has one of the highest per capita GDP. Hangzhou, the provincial capital, and Ningbo are among the top ten cities in China for business according to Fortune magazine. This generated a number of visits by ACFSWA members to Zhejiang Province. The Society has given some support to a number of charitable institutions there.

2017 marks the 30th anniversary of the sister-state relationship, and was marked by the Governor of Zhejiang Province bringing a large delegation to WA to promote trade, tourism, as well as cultural and other exchanges. Actually, the relationship between Western Australia and the Zhejiang Province has been longer, with the first Zhejiang business office set up in Perth in 1983.

Reflections on 25th Anniversary of WA – Zhejiang relationships in 2012 – Dr Yow Yit Seng

Though Western Australia and Zhejiang Province in China have enjoyed 25 years of relations with no significant bilateral problem, people-to-people relationship and understanding needs to be nurtured. In Western Australia the “psychological distance” of Zhejiang is further than California, though Zhejiang is geographically closer. Few Western Australians understand the political system or socio-cultural features in China; we tend to be pathetically poorly informed about the impact of changes to political leadership

This high level Government to Government relationship provides a platform on which other relationships; such as trade, business and cultural, have been and continue to be built.

Many of Western Australian cities and towns have realised the importance of establishing business and cultural relationships with similar cities in China. Perth and Nanjing established a sister city relationship in 1998. Situated in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, Nanjing is the capital of Jiangsu Province and is an important communication and transportation centre with an extensive industrial base. It is also one of China's four major scientific research and educational centres and an important regional cultural centre.

The regional centre Bunbury is a sister city of Jiaxing (Zhejiang Province), Joondalup is a sister city of Jinan (the provincial capital of Shandong Province), Cockburn has a link with Yueyang (Hunan Province), while the City of Vincent has links with Huairou County (Beijing).

The Joondalup-Jinan Sister City partnership has led the West Coast Institute of Training to establish a cooperative agreement with Jinan Vocational College. This has helped them enhance the quality of training they deliver in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

A number of Western Australian schools and colleges have developed sister school relationships with like institutions in China. These relationships have led to exchanges of personnel and students, promoting the understanding of the different cultures in our two countries.

Professional and Cultural Development

The Confucius Institute (CI) at the University of Western Australia (UWA) was officially unveiled on 20 May 2005. The CI is a nonprofit joint venture between the Office of the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban, China) and UWA. Zhejiang University (Hangzhou), one of China's premier tertiary institutions, is the officially designated partner university. CI has now largely taken over the responsibility for welcoming the professional delegations and leading experts from China and organising public lectures in their areas of expertise. Among the many accolades received is the prestigious 2007 award for 'Advanced Confucius Institute', which was presented in a special ceremony in the Great Hall of the People, Beijing.