

**AUSTRALIA-CHINA**  
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Bulletin No.492 July 2025

**Join us for an excursion to the  
Lisgar International Camellia Garden of  
Excellence**

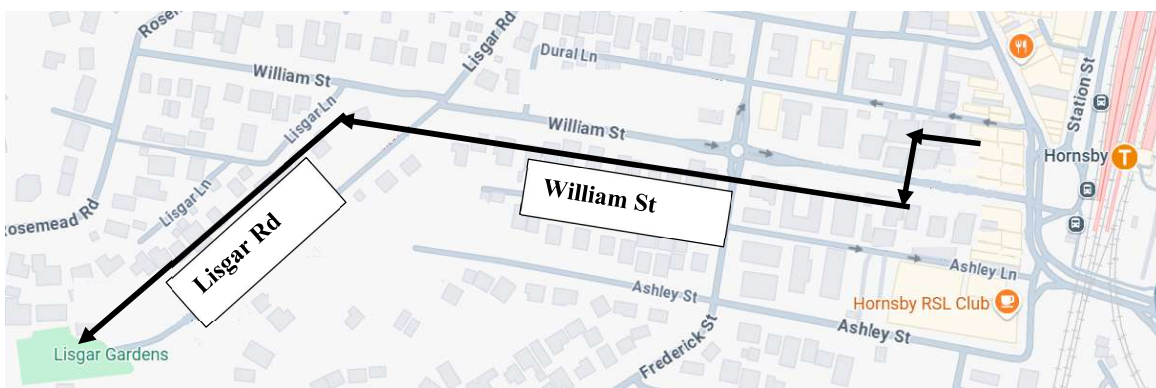
Lisgar Road, Hornsby

**11 am, Wednesday 16th July**



Join the ACFS on our next outing to the beautiful Lisgar Gardens on Wednesday 16th July at 11 am. Please dress warmly and bring lunch and a thermos, as there are picnic benches in the grounds of the garden. (If the weather is inclement, we will catch a bite to eat in one of the eateries in Hornsby on our return from the gardens.)

The garden is situated on a secluded hillside a twenty-minute walk from Hornsby Railway Station. The gardens cover an area of 2.6 hectares and boast over two hundred varieties of camellias and also plantings of annuals in the formal gardens, a shade house containing koi fish ponds, three waterfalls and a rainforest walk. We will meet at the Garden entry on Lisgar Road. Contact Laurel on 04488-055-016 if you need assistance.



**PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**  
**Renewal Form on back page! Donations Welcome!**

## ***President's Report***

On Monday May 12, many of us found ourselves again at the China Cultural Centre Sydney, this time to enjoy a tourism launch for Guizhou, an inland province in Southwestern China. It boasts extensive karst landscapes, unbelievable modern infrastructure and ancient cultural roots. A cultural performance was followed by presentations including from Consul-General Wang Yu. The evening wound up with food and drink including Maotai, a famous style of baijiu from the eponymous town in Guizhou.

As luck would have it, our talk by film-maker, Tsu Shan Chambers, fell on the day of Sydney's train chaos and in the middle of a very wet week. However, a very few diehards made it and we had a very enjoyable hour and a half talking films and film making followed by lunch at a local Chinese eatery in Surry Hills. A few members made the preview showing in Chatswood on July 11 followed by a Q&A with Tsu Shan and others after the film.

Despite the cold winter weather that struck Sydney in the first week of June there was a big turnout for 2 events held at the China Cultural Centre. First was a delightful concert of chamber music by 5 virtuoso Chinese musicians. Piano, flute, clarinet, viola and violin took our imaginations on flights of fancy, joy and at times pure ecstasy. 4 Chinese compositions were interspersed with 4 pieces from the "western" canon followed by a flute encore featuring Vivaldi. Exquisite.

This was followed 2 days later by a launch of the Cultural and Tourism Promotion Day for the province of Jiangxi. Again, Consul-General Wang Yu was in attendance. These presentations really show what marvellous scenic beauty can be found in so many parts of China. Jiangxi province includes the famous Jingdezhen where ceramic art has flourished for over a millennium.

Associated with the presentation was a fine display of ceramics which was on show at the centre until June 20. There was also a photographic exhibition

featuring Jiangxi and a display of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

I hope to see you at the Lisgar Camellia Gardens in a few days' time.

***Peter Weitzel, ACFS NSW President. July 2025***

## **CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS : 2025 Annual Chatswood Street Fair Parade**

The annual Chatswood StreetFair will be held on Saturday 6 September 2025 from 10am to 6pm in the heart of Chatswood.

The StreetFair is a showcase event which attracts tens of thousands of people from across Sydney.

Sydney ACFS has been accepted to be part of the Parade.

We plan to participate in the parade with our Banner much as we did earlier this year for Chinese New Year.

The parade assembles in Chatswood from 1 PM near Chatswood Chase in Bertram Street, giving groups opportunity to take photos with each other and get in position. It starts at 2PM sharp and continues all the way up to Westfield Chatswood on Anderson Street.

Any members wishing to take part in the parade, please email [peterweitzel@hotmail.com](mailto:peterweitzel@hotmail.com) with your details by July 22, 2025.

Details required so that we can be provided with public liability insurance include:

**Full Name**

**Address**

**Email**

**Contact phone number**

Looking forward to seeing the society well represented.

## ***ACFS Joins ACETCA in Celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement***

By Secretary Dr Laurel Evelyn Dyson

ACFS accepted a gracious invitation from the Australia China Economics, Trade & Culture Association (ACETCA) to the Grand Ballroom of the Four Seasons Hotel, Sydney, on the evening of 27 June 2025 to commemorate and celebrate the signing of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) ten years ago. Our very own Dr Zoe White, the Executive President of ACETCA, had organized our participation. Thank you, Zoe!

Under the theme of 'Together in Co-operation, Towards a Shared Future' we viewed an exhibition of photographs recording milestones in Australia-China relations while enjoying drinks. We then listened to a number of speakers. The Hon. Tony Abbott, the 28th Prime Minister of Australia, reflected in his keynote speech on the negotiation and signing of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. He described the agreement as an 'historic breakthrough' in the history of Australia-China relations, highlighting the profound political mutual trust and economic complementarity between the two countries.

Chinese Consul-General His Excellency Mr Yu Wang also spoke, noting that over 800 Chinese companies are now established in Australia, employing over 25,000 local staff. Mutual respect, he said, is the basis of the relationship between China and Australia, with complementary trade, and a growing middle class in China who appreciate our foods, wines and other exports.

Following the speeches, the 300 or so participants enjoyed a truly gala banquet: seared scallops in lemongrass-coconut purée, grilled lobster halves in a delicious citrus sauce with egg noodles, melt-in-the-mouth salmon or Wagyu fillet, followed by mini-desserts, and plates of gourmet chocolates. A real feast for a special occasion!



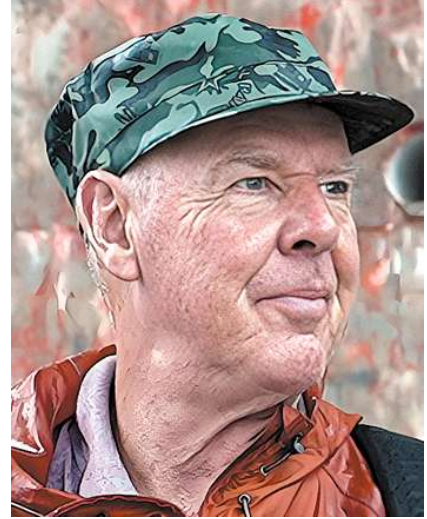
# Australian teacher, 69, treks Long March route

By ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang | China Daily | Updated: 2025-05-09 09:11

A 69-year-old Australian, Michael Sagan, recently completed his first 42-kilometer hike retracing part of the Red Army's historic Long March (1934-36) in East China's Jiangxi province.

On April 19, Sagan joined more than 100 teachers and students from Hejun Vocational College, starting their journey at the former site of the Central Political Department in Zikeng village, Bai'e township, Huichang county. The group crossed Gongjiang Bridge, passed Shanfengba Ferry and reached the Monument to the Departure of the Central Red Army on the Long March in Yudu county — the starting point of the Long March.

"After walking for 10 hours to reach the memorial at Yudu, we were wet and exhausted, but incredibly proud of our achievement," Sagan said. "The trek gave me the opportunity to walk Jiangxi's red soil, through its mountains, rivers and vibrant villages, while imagining its revolutionary past."



A retired English teacher, Sagan has held a decades-long fascination with China's modern history. "My interest began when I read extensively about Asia's modern history," he said. "I became particularly curious about China's story, and that curiosity only grew stronger over time."

That passion led him to apply for an English teaching position at Hejun Vocational College after retirement. Though he was deemed too old for the role, the college invited him to visit. He arrived in Huichang in April.

"I was thrilled to be in Yudu — standing at the very starting point of the Long March," he said. During his visit, he explored the Martyrs Memorial, the historic Gongjiang River crossing site and the Long March Museum. "Seeing these places renewed my understanding of the Red Army's struggles and sacrifices in 1934," Sagan said. "So when the college offered me the chance to join them to retrace part of the Long March route, I immediately accepted the challenge."

The journey wasn't without setbacks. Sagan fell and injured his elbow along the way. "They suggested I complete the march by car, but I refused. My minor injury was nothing compared to what the 86,000 soldiers endured at that time," he said.

Unlike major metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai, which international tourists frequently visit, the area where Hejun Vocational College is located sees few foreigners. Far from the bustle of urban life, Sagan said he felt he was seeing a different, uniquely charming side of China. "There's not much traffic, people here are nice and hospitable, and you can see a very different China here," he said. "It's lovely. And I am surrounded by history."

Sagan emphasized the educational value of such experiences.

"It's vital, especially for students, to see and feel this history firsthand — to walk these paths and visit museums where the Long March stories come alive," he said. "This historic journey represents the first footsteps toward China's prosperity."



## Aboriginal-Chinese roots of reconciliation: China's first cultural envoys in Australia

June 22, 2025 \_ \_ \_ \_

By Marina Yue Zhang

As Australia marked Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June), a landmark exhibition at the National Museum of Australia reminds us that Indigenous–Chinese bonds helped forge the links between the two peoples long before Canberra and Beijing formalised diplomacy in 1972.

[Our Story: Aboriginal–Chinese People in Australia](#), a five-year research project led and curated by Chinese-Australian artist [Zhou Xiaoping](#), uncovers a legacy of resilience and cultural fusion. Mixed-heritage communities — unwitting pioneers of people-to-people diplomacy — wove ties of survival and solidarity on 19th-century goldfields and in pearling camps. Drawing on historical records and oral histories, their stories — *Our Story*, the untold narratives of the nation — challenge monolithic accounts of Australian history and reveal a pre-modern form of “[soft power](#)”.

Through videos, installations, and embedded texts in family trees and photographs, the exhibition invites contemporary Aboriginal artists to interpret these “our stories”. Together, they illuminate the accidental diplomacy of Chinese men and Aboriginal women who built communities against the odds.

### One identity, two cultures

During the gold rushes and in industries such as pearling, railways, and agriculture (1850s–1900), Chinese labourers settled across northern Australia — from Darwin to Broome and Thursday Island. With few European women present, many young Chinese men formed unions with Aboriginal women despite the White Australia Policy and state protection acts.

These families blended Chinese traditions — language, cuisine, festivals — with Aboriginal kinship and cultural practices. Market gardens, modelled on China's ancient farmers' markets, supplied local communities, while Aboriginal art adopted Chinese motifs. “I'm Aboriginal, but I'm also proud of my Chinese heritage,” says [Peter Yu](#), whose family photographs in the exhibition tell the story of how his Hakka father and Yawuru mother raised nine children under restrictive cohabitation laws.



Survival demanded ingenuity. In the 1930s, Wen Liquan registered her Larrakia stepson — her Chinese husband's son with a Larrakia woman — as “Chinese” to shield him from the Stolen Generations. Family portraits reveal persistent “Chinese attributes” — features some descendants once masked with make-up to avoid discrimination. Photographs annotated with text and family trees strung across seed-packet bunting testify to the resilience of one identity under two cultures.

### Materials as art

The exhibition's artefacts reveal a pragmatic syncretism born of shared labour and creativity. Delicate glass sculptures of *bok choy* leaves recall market-garden exchanges, where Aboriginal land-care wisdom met Guangdong cultivation techniques. Pearl-shell artworks from Broome bear both Song-Dynasty motifs and Indigenous totems — a testament to the pearling boom that once tied remote Australia to global markets.

[Jenna Lee](#), a descendant of mixed Asian heritage, weaves Chinese calligraphy paper into dilly bags that double as lanterns. “It's about reclaiming the ordinary as extraordinary,” she explains at the opening of the exhibition. “Everyday objects become divine.”

“These pieces are quiet rebels,” Zhou observes. “They prove that culture is negotiated daily in kitchens, gardens and kinship networks.” As First Nations artist of Chinese descent [Gordon Hookey](#) notes of his “Dragon Serpent” painting at the opening of the exhibition, “Viewers are transported into that moment

with those two ancestral spirits – a generous invitation indeed.”

### Truth-Telling in an era of geopolitical tension

Fast-forward to today, and Canberra’s soft power looks very different. The dilly bags and pearl shells of 19th-century market gardens have given way to corridors exporting iron ore, lithium, and rare earths to China: Australian critical minerals now fuel Chinese infrastructure and the green-energy transition; Chinese battery-powered heavy mining machines and trucks used in extraction and transport, along with value-added technologies for mineral processing, create jobs and generate revenue for locals. Yet these economic ties co-exist with strategic anxieties over submarine-cable security, supply-chain chokepoints, national security concerns about the Port of Darwin, technology leakage, and foreign-interference risks. In an era when China’s rise — especially its challenge to American technological supremacy — has stirred deglobalisation and rising nationalism, such anxieties have only intensified.

Despite evolved mechanisms — trade agreements and tech-transfer pacts rather than dilly bags and pearl buttons — the underlying imperative remains: trust, built through sustained people-to-people connections. Nineteenth-century families negotiated survival and community cohesion on society’s margins; today’s executives negotiate multi-billion-dollar energy-transition deals under government scrutiny and media watch, balancing economic diversification with security hedges. In that sense, the market-garden plots of Broome and the boardrooms of Perth share a common DNA.

The exhibition’s four themes — Connection, Identity, Family and Prosperity — mirror modern diplomacy’s pillars. “This isn’t just about politics; it’s about people,” argues Professor Peter Yu. “Long before ambassadors, there were Aboriginal mothers teaching their children to cook *bok choy* and bush tomatoes.”

### The question Australia must confront

What, then, can policymakers learn from these pioneer envoys? First, genuine engagement often thrives in informal spaces: academic exchanges, joint research projects and community festivals forge bonds more resilient than photo-op diplomacy. Second, reconciliation with First Nations people requires confronting the histories a nation once tried to erase. Publicly acknowledging mixed-heritage narratives signals to global Chinese diasporas and domestic audiences alike that Australia values its complex past.

Third, soft power thrives on authenticity: the strength of *Our Story* lies in its unvarnished truths, not in state-sponsored gloss.

As the exhibition prepares to tour China in 2026, it forces a reckoning: how does a nation reconcile its suppressed histories with its multicultural present? By reconnecting with these hidden roots — embodied in everyday objects and intimate stories — Australia may yet forge its most resilient, relational partnership with China and its people.

“In an age of tariff wars and tech sanctions,” says [Dr Jilda Andrews](#), curator of the museum, “*Our Story* isn’t just an exhibition. It’s a milestone in putting First Nations voices at the centre — creating a space for truth-telling, listening and honest conversation.”

The exhibition *Our Story: Aboriginal–Chinese People in Australia* runs at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra until 27 January 2026.

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*The views expressed in this article may or may not reflect those of Pearls and Irritations.*

### Marina Yue Zhang

*Dr. Marina Yue Zhang is an associate professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney (UTS: ACRI). Prior to this position, Marina worked for UNSW in Australia and Tsinghua University in China. Marina holds a bachelor’s degree in biological science from Peking University, an MBA and a PhD from Australian National University.*

*Marina’s research interests cover China’s innovation policy and practice, latecomers’ catch-up, emerging and disruptive technologies, and network effects in digital transformation. She focuses on industrial such as semiconductors, biotechnology and biopharmaceuticals, and clean energy transition. She is the author of three books, including “Demystifying China’s Innovation Machine: Chaotic Order,” co-authored with Mark Dodgson and David Gann (Oxford University Press, 2022).*

*In addition to academic publications in technology and innovation, Marina also writes analysis pieces on the intersection of technology and international relations in *The National Interest*, *The Diplomat*, *The Conversation*, *The Interpreter* by Lowy Institute, *East Asia Forum*, and comments on science and technology issues on BBC News, Bloomberg TV and other news outlets.*

# Prefab collaboration between Australia and China could help tackle housing shortages

June 16, 2025 — Pearls & Irritations

*Imagine a “Lego city,” swiftly assembled yet unshakeably strong, its steel modules secured to solid foundations and reinforced with seismic bracing, expertly engineered for both speed and strength.* This isn’t a scene from a fantasy film, but a real model of prefabricated and modular construction designed for efficiency, scalability and increased housing supply, which could be a faster and smarter solution to Australia’s housing shortage.

This could also create a new opportunity for Australia and China to collaborate, as China has expertise and precision manufacturing in prefabricated construction. This partnership could deliver mutual benefits, a true win-win scenario.

Housing has become increasingly unaffordable for the average Australian due to soaring property prices and rising rents. With demand outpacing supply, driven by a rapidly growing population, the lack of new homes has made housing one of the country’s most pressing issues.

Advances in modern manufacturing techniques applied to prefabricated and modular construction have the potential to significantly accelerate housing delivery while reducing costs. By harnessing automation, robotics, precision design and fabrication methods, the construction timeline for a high-quality home can be shortened from a year to as little as three months. “Making a house in a factory instead of onsite can cut construction time in half,” said former Australian minister for Industry and Science Ed Husic.

The Australian Government announced on 22 March that it would lead a national effort to speed up housing construction with a targeted investment of \$54 million (US\$35 million) in advanced manufacturing of prefabricated and modular home construction. Australia and China have a significant partnership in prefab housing construction, with China being a major exporter of prefab components and homes to Australia.

Over the past few years, Australia has imported hundreds of millions of Australian dollars’ worth of prefab housing materials and modules from China alone. In 2023, Chinese goods accounted for about

70% of Australia’s prefabricated imports. In 2024, Australia imported prefabricated buildings worth \$175 million (US\$114 million) from China, according to the United Nations Comtrade database on international trade. As an important player in this real “Lego city” enterprise, China could collaborate with Australia to expand this trade.

Is further strengthening Australia-China collaboration in prefabricated construction both beneficial and achievable? The answer is yes. Will it be easy? The answer is no. Bridging the gap between ambition and implementation requires substantial efforts and co-ordination. When sourcing prefabricated buildings from overseas, mutual recognition of standards is essential.

The Australian Building Codes Board has released a comprehensive “Prefabricated, Modular, and Offsite Construction Handbook”, developed in collaboration with the Building 4.0 CRC, an industry-led research initiative co-funded by the Australian Government. This handbook provides essential guidance on utilising Modern Methods of Construction safely, sustainably, and in compliance with the National Construction Code.

China has issued guidelines promoting the use of prefabricated construction, where building components are primarily manufactured off-site and then assembled on location.

Both countries could strengthen efforts toward the mutual recognition of more construction standards. For Chinese construction firms to succeed in the Australian market, they could thoroughly study local regulations, ensure alignment with relevant standards, and develop detailed project plans before submitting bids.

This project once again highlights the growing potential for deeper collaboration between the two countries in this area. This partnership helps transform innovation into real-world impact – delivering high-quality and affordable housing to more people. Such co-operation, expanding and diversifying bilateral trade, enhances trade resilience and drives it toward smarter and greener solutions.

It doesn’t just build homes; it builds opportunity and well-being.

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The Australia-China Friendship Society is a non-profit organisation, run completely by volunteers. It was founded in the early 1950s to promote friendship and understanding between the peoples of Australia and China.

In keeping with that objective we engage in the following activities:

- ☐ We hold regular meetings at which we hear speakers who have expert knowledge about China
- ☐ We publish our Bulletin on a regular basis.
- ☐ We organize tours to China and other countries, at the lowest possible cost.
- ☐ We host delegations from China.
- ☐ We organize language, painting, cultural and other specialist tours in China.
- ☐ We organize excursions and social occasions for members and friends.

Membership is open to anyone who supports our aim of promoting friendship and understanding between Australians and Chinese.

**DISCLAIMER:** The views expressed in articles published in the Bulletin are not necessarily those of the ACFS.

## Australia-China Friendship Society NSW Membership Application Form

To renew your membership or to join, please pay by Direct Deposit, bank details below: Donations welcome!

	\$30 Individual member		\$35 Family				Donation \$ _____
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Direct Deposit: Commonwealth Bank

BSB number 062 099; Account Number 1021 3918 – Please make sure you indicate your name!

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☐ **Renewal**    ☐ **New Member**