

Dear Mr Gutwein,

I refer to the submission that was provided to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in relation to its inquiry on *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020* and *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2020*.

It was very disappointing that the Tasmanian Government's submission was not finalised for publication prior to the committee's public hearings on 12 and 13 October. Given the potential effects of this Bill on state governments, committee members were denied the opportunity to question the states and territories at the hearings on key components of the Bills.

I would invite you and your officials to review the transcript of our hearings and provide any comments in response. In particular, I would appreciate your comments in relation to the evidence of Dr Mark Harrison, both in relation to his written submission and his oral evidence.

In addition, I would appreciate if you could respond to the following:

1. I note that on or about 15 September 2015, a Confucius Classroom was established at Scotch Oakburn College Launceston with Jingshan School. Please provide full details regarding this agreement including how it came about, who negotiated its terms, the nature of those terms and the extent of funding from Chinese sources.
2. Is the agreement regarding the Confucius Institute still in force? If not, when did it cease? Why did it cease? Please circumstances gave rise to the need to terminate the agreement?



PREMIER OF TASMANIA

Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells  
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee  
C/o: [fadt.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:fadt.sen@aph.gov.au)

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Dear Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Thank you for writing to me as part of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee's inquiry in to the Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill 2020.

The Tasmanian Government welcomes the opportunity to provide additional input to the Committee further to our Submission, which I note was provided to the Senate Committee on 30 September 2020 after we were granted an extension to this date.

Regarding the submission and testimony of Dr Mark Harrison, the Tasmanian Government acknowledges Dr Harrison as an expert in his academic field. We broadly agree with Dr Harrison's view that Australia must have a relationship with China, and that state and local governments and public institutions have a role in sustaining this relationship.

As emphasised in our Submission to the Committee, the Tasmanian Government recognises the Australian Government's central role in managing Australia's foreign relations and setting Australia's foreign policy and has always conducted its economic diplomacy in close consultation with the Australian Government. We therefore support the broad intent of the Bill to formally enable the Australian Government to ensure state and territory arrangements with foreign government entities do not adversely affect Australia's foreign relations and are not inconsistent with Australia's foreign policy.

Regarding the Confucius Classroom at Scotch Oakburn College in Launceston, the Classroom was established in 2015. This occurred after Year 5 students from the College wrote to Chinese President Xi Jinping as a writing exercise in 2014. The College did not anticipate these letters would progress beyond the Chinese Consulate in Canberra, however the letters were delivered to the President. Subsequently, when the President visited Tasmania in November 2014, College students were invited to attend Government House to meet him. The Classroom was then established the following year as an arrangement between the College and the Confucius Institute Headquarters.

Upon the establishment of the Classroom, the College received a US\$35,000 donation, however it does not receive any ongoing funding for the Classroom. The principal benefit of the arrangement is that it provides the College with a Chinese language assistant to assist students with their conversational Chinese. The funds provided in the initial donation have been used by the College to support the language assistant so the College is not (net) out of pocket. The College has also received some Chinese

textbooks through the arrangement, however College Principal Andy Müller notes these textbooks were outdated and have never, to his knowledge, been used.

When the Chinese Ambassador visited Tasmania in 2019, he visited the College and presented them with 10 mini iPads which they now use in the Junior School for a host of educational purposes.

The Classroom arrangement is still in force, however the College recently received a letter outlining changes to the way the arrangement is administered. Confucius Institute Headquarters will be transferring responsibility for Confucius Institutes and Classrooms to a non-government body. Further, this letter points to the College's sister school, the Jingshan School in Beijing, as its direct contact regarding its Classroom arrangement.

Thank you again for writing to me and I welcome further engagement in progressing this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Gutwein MP  
**Premier**