

Chapter 16

Public diplomacy, culture and sport, and the Chinese-Australian community

Relationships are an intrinsic part of the whole deal with China, but we need to get to know her and we need to look at her not just as a superpower with geographic proximity to us and a big trade dollar. It has to be more than a marriage of convenience. We have to get to know the Chinese people so that relationships are built on trust, respect and transparency, and it has to come from both sides.¹

16.1 This chapter will consider the role of culture, sport, and tourism as a means to promote China literacy and the broader bilateral relationship. It will include a case study of the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) visit—illustrating the means through which greater understanding between our two nations can be attained as well as its utility as a platform for the political and economic relationship. It will then consider the role of the Chinese–Australian community in Australia.

16.2 Communication through culture and sport is a highly effective means of promoting understanding and awareness and bringing people together. It can have flow-on benefits for the economic and political relationship.

16.3 Australians have every reason to be proud of their culture. Indeed, the Australian Film Commission has noted:

For Australia, culture is a vital element of our national sovereignty, providing the opportunity for the expression of the nation's regional, ethnic and historical diversity. The development of a national culture, shared values and national identity, as expressed through our cultural production is considered by many to be a sign of good governance.²

16.4 Cultural exchange provides a means whereby Australians can tell other nations about Australia and its people. It enables Australians to demonstrate how we conceive of ourselves, where we have come from, and where we are going as a nation. Similarly, exposure to the cultural products of other nations, such as China, enables us to learn about them.

Cultural interaction and public diplomacy

16.5 Public diplomacy refers to government activities that are designed to communicate cultural understanding, and create a positive perception or promote the activities of a nation or government. Jocelyn Chey has written:

1 V. Kelly, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 17.

2 Australian Film Commission, *Submission P43*, p. 2.

Like companies and institutions, national governments commission activities designed to improve relations with the public. If the government's targeted recipients are located offshore, these plans or activities become part of official international relations or what is usually called 'public diplomacy'.³

16.6 Numerous foreign governments have recognised the role of cultural communication and public diplomacy in promoting positive perceptions and facilitating relations with the peoples of other countries. The UK has recently published a major report on its public diplomacy program in China entitled *Think UK*.⁴ In his foreword to the final report assessing the success of the *Think UK* project, HE Christopher Hurn, British Ambassador to China, wrote:

Engagement between the UK and China is of fundamental importance to both countries. Having an accurate perception of each other's country helps us get the best out of our relationship. During the research for *Think UK* we tried to see Britain through Chinese eyes. We found that all too often it was backward-looking perceptions which predominated—tradition, continuity, conservatism, the achievements and impacts of the Industrial Revolution. We sought to show that the UK has come a long way since then. *Think UK* set out to demonstrate how modern Britain was diverse, innovative, and full of creative ideas that were changing our world...as a result of *Think UK* I believe that increasing numbers of Chinese people will choose to become involved with Britain, and form long-lasting partnerships.⁵

16.7 The United States government also places a high premium on successful public diplomacy which tends to be more geared towards subtle political influence—promoting understanding and identification with policies and political agendas—rather than fostering societal or cultural understanding. Mr Christopher Ross, former coordinator for public diplomacy and public affairs at the US Department of State has written:

[Public Diplomacy] is not traditional diplomacy, which consists essentially of the interactions that take place between governments. The practitioners of traditional diplomacy engage the representatives of foreign governments in order to advance the national interest articulated in their own government's strategic goals in international affairs. Public diplomacy, by contrast, engages carefully targeted sectors of foreign publics in order to develop support for those same strategic results.⁶

3 Jocelyn Chey, 'From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy', Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Re-Orienting Australia China Relations*, p. 163.

4 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Think UK: Final Report*, Feb 2004, www.fco.gov.uk (accessed: 22 May 2004).

5 HE Christopher Hurn, British Ambassador to China, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Think UK: Final Report*, Feb 2004, p. 7.

6 Christopher Ross, 'Public Diplomacy Comes of Age', *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:2, p. 75.

16.8 All activities conducted under the auspices of public diplomacy have as their underlying aim the promotion of understanding about a nation's people or way of life. Ross described it as a longer term effort to develop an overseas understanding and appreciation of a nation's society, people and values.⁷

16.9 Australia, as a mid ranking power in the Asia Pacific, does not have the resources to engage in an expansive public diplomacy strategy. That does not mean, however, that there is not scope for more activity. Australia should actively promote overseas understanding of our society, people and values. More effort in promoting Australian political, cultural and social activity will be of direct benefit to Australia and will promote greater understanding and affinity between the people of China and Australia.

Fostering Australia–China relations

16.10 Having considered the nature of cultural interaction and public diplomacy, we now turn to its use as a means to foster Sino-Australian relations.

16.11 Chey has written that, following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Australia and China in 1972, Australia embarked upon a new era of extensive international diplomacy. Throughout the 1970s, the aims of Australia's international public diplomacy and cultural relations were to promote an image of a new and independent Australia, consolidate regional relationships, enrich the domestic arts and satisfy the aspirations of members of the emerging multicultural society who were eager to reinforce ties with their homelands:

When the government normalised relations with China, cultural relations assumed a prominent place in the bilateral relationship. Scholars, artists and the general public all enthusiastically embraced opportunities for engagement with China.⁸

16.12 The 1980s saw the development of increasingly strong cultural relations between China and Australia, especially following the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's 'Open Door' policies. Chey claims that the increased economic freedom had a flow on effect into the arts. The Chinese were increasingly allowed to access foreign radio broadcasts (such as Radio Australia), and a number of official cultural exchanges took place, including an exhibition of paintings from the Ming and Qing dynasties from the Palace Museum, and an exhibition of terracotta warrior figures from the tomb of the First Emperor of Qin. Australian photographic and contemporary art exhibitions toured China. China's 'Open Door' policies also created new

7 Christopher Ross, 'Public Diplomacy Comes of Age', *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:2, p. 80.

8 Jocelyn Chey, 'From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy', Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Re-Orienting Australia China Relations*, p. 165.

opportunities for cultural exchanges managed by commercial interests or community organisations.⁹

16.13 The positive gains achieved through the 1980s were, however, set back by the Tiananmen Square massacre and the rise of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in the late 1990s. Chey observed that although official cultural exchanges suffered during this period 'the real force emerging as the foundation of the relationship...was not government-led and government-directed, but people-to-people social contacts and cultural networks'. According to Chey, the development of relations during the 1990s were due to the active promotion of multiculturalism, and the expanding number of Chinese migrants to Australia who were keen to explore their cultural roots and national identity.¹⁰

16.14 Australia and China have shared a considerable history of cultural exchange since the initiation of diplomatic relations in 1972. According to the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, this history is of great significance to the bilateral relationship:

Mutually beneficial cultural exchange programs between Australia and China have been highlighted as an essential component of the relationship between the two countries, strengthening the political, social and cultural links.¹¹

16.15 When Mme Fu Ying visited Western Australia (WA) in April 2004, she commented on the responsibility incumbent upon both nations to continue to foster greater cultural understanding. According to the WA Department of Culture and the Arts, Mme Fu Ying and Cultural Counsellor Mr Wang Zhigang:

Made it clear that cultural exchange projects were highly important to the future of the trading relationship and that they hoped to see increased levels of cultural exchange to match the increased levels of trade.¹²

16.16 Various witnesses to this inquiry drew the committee's attention to the need for Australia to take a more proactive stance in cultural promotion and public diplomacy. The WA government underlined the need for increasing trading links to be met with growing cultural interaction.¹³ Dr Dawn Casey emphasised the importance of cultural exchange in promoting mutual understanding, the existence of real interest in China for Australian cultural product, and the need to spark a similar degree of interest for Chinese cultural product in Australia:

9 Jocelyn Chey, 'From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy', Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Re-Orienting Australia China Relations*, p. 172.

10 Jocelyn Chey, 'From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy', Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Re-Orienting Australia China Relations*, pp. 175–176.

11 West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Submission P59*, p. 2.

12 WA Government, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Submission P45*, p. 4.

13 WA Government, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Submission P45*, p. 30.

A few years ago I took an Indigenous exhibition to Guangzhou, at their request, together with performers from the Torres Strait. There was an amazing outcome for Australia and for them—almost 30,000 people attended during the three-week visit. It seems to me that we need to do—and be supported to do...meaningful exchanges in cultural programs and create an awareness in the Australian population as much as within the Chinese population.¹⁴

16.17 Dr Casey outlined the types of areas in which meaningful cultural exchange could take place, ranging from museum exchanges, science exchanges, cultural conversations, explorations of joint histories, and public exhibitions in both Australia and China.¹⁵ She also noted that cultural exchange is a useful mechanism for bilateral dialogue and communication because it allows the expression of pride in ones cultural heritage and can avoid the pitfalls of other 'politicised' forms of engagement.¹⁶

Promoting China in Australia

16.18 Evidence to this inquiry has indicated that several organisations actively work to promote China awareness in Australia, through many different types of activities.

The Australia–China Council

16.19 The Australia–China Council (ACC) was established in 1978 to nurture the relationship between China and Australia and actively promotes cultural exchange.¹⁷ It has a very small budget of \$A740,000 per annum and comprises eight appointed members and a chair person. The ACC believes that the emphasis on cultural exchange programs should be on young Chinese and Australians, as 'the future relationship depends heavily on educating today's young people to understand each other'.¹⁸

16.20 The ACC has a residencies program, whereby people interested in encouraging the relationship between Australia and China may stay in an apartment in Beijing for up to three months. The residencies program is aimed at people involved in cultural projects, such as artists and writers. The ACC also has a residence

14 D. Casey, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 19.

15 D. Casey, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 19.

16 D. Casey, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, pp. 29–30. Ms Dysart, on behalf of the ACC, also underlined the importance of cultural exchange to the bilateral relationship. It is only through direct experience of each other's cultural values that we can get to know each other and trust each other so that there are no misunderstandings and we can move forward in our business dealings, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 32.

17 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 32.

18 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 32.

relationship with the University of Hong Kong. The ACC is about to trial a new program, whereby successful applicants receive an accommodation subsidy.¹⁹

16.21 Ms Dysart told the committee that the independence of the ACC from government allows it to engage on politico-cultural issues with a degree of freedom. The ACC has established the Alice Tay Award for Human Rights, awarded to an Australian applicant who has contributed substantially to furthering understanding of human rights issues in China. The ACC also brought the director of the film *Blind Shaft* to Australia to attend the Sydney Film Festival. *Blind Shaft*—although not screened widely in China—provided information about mine disasters in China. According to Ms Dysart:

[the film screening] was an opportunity for Australians to see not only what is being produced in China culturally but also the problems. I also think that, in its own small way, it sends a signal to China of how Australia feels about those sorts of human rights issues. We do things like that. The reason we can is that we are separate from government and people do not question it.²⁰

Asialink

16.22 Asialink has had a 15 year involvement with public diplomacy, developing Asia–Australia relations, with an emphasis on the people-to-people aspect of bilateral and regional relationships.²¹ It believes that public diplomacy promotes stronger bonds and contributes to the balance of relations. The underlying aim of its policies is to enhance Australia's understanding of the region using 'education' in the broadest sense of the term.²²

16.23 According to Ms Jennifer McGregor, Executive Director of Asialink, China has been a significant focus of Asialink's work, especially in the past few years.²³ She stated that Asialink's successful arts program has provided a 'template' for the establishment of other bilateral person-to-person links in the public policy sphere, especially in the areas of mental health and water use.²⁴ Thus it would seem that initial cultural links have paved the way for a number of other links to be formed across a variety of sectors. Asialink also conducts a 'Conversations' project, where it brings next-generation leaders from Asia and Australia together to discuss major issues, allowing the formation of personal links between future decision-makers.²⁵

19 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, pp. 33–34.

20 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 39.

21 J. McGregor, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 51.

22 J. McGregor, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 63.

23 J. McGregor, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 51.

24 J. McGregor, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 55.

25 J. McGregor, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 56.

The Confucius Institute

16.24 Dr Gary Sigley indicated that, in addition to the role the Confucius Institute will perform in promoting the study of Chinese languages, it will also assume a role in promoting Chinese culture. Dr Sigley stated that the Institute could work with the Chinese Embassy and the Perth International Arts Festival to bring out internationally prominent cultural troupes from China, and would participate in events within the Western Australian cultural calendar whenever possible. Dr Sigley also raised the possibility of working with the Australia–China Council to facilitate an exchange program for artists and writers.²⁶

Other institutions

16.25 The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance informed the committee that during 2003, a number of Chinese commercial live performance companies toured Australia. Chinese performers and live performance companies also participated in some of Australia's major performing arts festivals. Australian audiences have also enjoyed the performances of a number of Chinese circus companies.²⁷

Promoting Australia in China

16.26 A number of organisations are involved in promoting Australian culture in China. The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) informed the committee that in 2002, Australia was invited to present a week long cultural program at the China Shanghai International Arts Festival.²⁸ According to DCITA:

Australia's image as an innovative and sophisticated country was highlighted through a showcase of contemporary arts which introduced Chinese audiences to a wide range of arts genres from street theatre, contemporary dance, orchestral music, circus, physical theatre, new media arts, visual arts and documentary film.²⁹

16.27 DCITA also informed the committee that the Australian film industry has a strong reputation in China—especially in post-production. The Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator the Hon Rod Kemp, announced in July 2005 that 10 leading Australian feature films would be presented in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou as part of a series of Australian film festivals. It is intended that the festivals will lead to increased bilateral cooperation between Australian and Chinese film makers. A treaty in bilateral film co-production is currently being negotiated, with the same purpose. The Minister stated:

26 G. Sigley, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 68.

27 Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, *Submission P44*, pp. 16–17.

28 DCITA, *Submission P62*, p. 5.

29 DCITA, *Submission P62*, p. 5.

Australia's film industry produces top quality films enjoyed around the world. But Australian films are relatively unknown to Chinese audiences. We plan to change that.³⁰

16.28 The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (Alliance) noted that whilst Chinese cultural performers come to Australia fairly frequently, 'conversely, Australia's performing arts companies have rarely been to China.'³¹ The Alliance observes that groups such as Circus Oz and the Flying Fruit Fly Circus have both brought Chinese artists to Australia to train with their performers, but neither circus has ever performed in China. Similarly, Opera Australia has not been seen in China.

16.29 The Alliance noted that dance is one area where Australia has a higher profile. The Sydney Dance Company was the first western modern dance company to perform in China. In 1985, the Company performed in four Chinese cities, and was invited to do so again in 1998. In 2002 they were invited to perform at the Shanghai International Festival of the Performing Arts. The Australian Ballet has also toured China four times in 1993, 1996, 1999 and 2001.³²

16.30 The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra toured China in 2002 as part of celebrations to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Australia and China.³³

16.31 The Australia–China Council (ACC) outlined its support for Australian studies centres in 25 universities throughout China. It considers that these centres are an important part of its program.³⁴ The ACC provides grants for a number of projects.³⁵ It also supports a biannual Australian Studies Conference in China. The 2004 conference was held in Xuzhou and was themed 'Australia and Globalisation'.³⁶

30 Media Release: 'Australian films to feature at Australia-China film co-production seminar', 12 July 2005, <http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/kemp/media/mediareleases> (accessed 29 August 2005).

31 Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, *Submission P44*, p. 17.

32 Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, *Submission P44*, p. 17.

33 See <http://www.arts.voc.gov.au/arts/general/archive/release/16mso.htm> (accessed 30 August 2005).

34 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 34.

35 Australian–China Council, *2003–2004 Annual Report*, p. 11. In 2003–04, Australian studies centres in China published 12 books and more than 40 articles in academic journals. It had over 70 academics researching and teaching Australian studies; taught more than 60 PhD or Masters students writing Australian studies theses; and taught more than 1700 university students doing courses in Australian studies.

36 Australian–China Council, *2003–2004 Annual Report*, p. 10.

The WASO – A case-study in soft diplomacy/cultural exchange

16.32 In its submission, the West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) detailed its upcoming tour of China. The committee considers that WASO's activities are an ideal case study for examining the benefits that can flow from cultural exchange.

16.33 The WASO claims that the timing of the proposed tour in May 2006 is 'absolutely unique within the historic trade negotiations between our two countries', claiming that the tour would offer significant and important economic, as well as cultural, returns to Western Australia.³⁷ The tour will also coincide with the first shipment of North West Shelf gas to China.

16.34 The orchestra will have two concerts each in Beijing and Shanghai, with single concerts in Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong.³⁸ WASO has indicated that these cities have been chosen because they represent the key cities offering business development opportunities to Australia. They also reflect Perth's sister-state relationship with the Zhejiang Province. In its view arts and culture have a vital role in developing long lasting bonds between people and regions:

...They help to promote understanding and respect for cultural differences and are invaluable assets in creating goodwill, which is essential to the establishment of mutually beneficial trade relations.³⁹

16.35 WASO's submission identified a number of benefits for WA broadly broken down into two categories: 'diplomatic' and 'cultural'. Amongst the diplomatic benefits arising from the tour, WASO stated that it would:

- provide a celebratory offering to China in recognition of the unique and valuable relationship between our two countries;
- showcase many of WA's attributes to the Chinese audience;
- provide a venue and opportunity for WA government officials to develop closer relationships with their Chinese counterparts;
- provide a context for the celebration of the negotiations for a proposed FTA, demonstrating the opportunities for culture and tourism; and
- facilitate meetings of government delegations, business, organisations, and individuals in an informal and relaxed environment where hospitality can be offered and relationships built.⁴⁰

16.36 Amongst the cultural benefits, WASO claims that the tour would continue a major cultural exchange program between the two nations, demonstrate an

37 West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Submission P59*, p. 2.

38 West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Submission P59*, p. 2.

39 West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Submission P59*, p. 2.

40 West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Submission P59*, p. 7.

unprecedented level of arts and business partnership, and could also be linked into the lead-up events to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.⁴¹

16.37 The committee congratulates the WASO on working so effectively with the various government, business and cultural stakeholders to arrange the tour, and wishes it every success in 2006. The committee hopes that events such as this will become a regular occurrence.

Other links

16.38 Victoria has actively promoted cultural relations through sister-state links. In October of 2004, as part of celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the sister-state relationship between Victoria and Jingsu, a tapestry was commissioned from the Victorian Tapestry Workshop for display in the new Nanjing Library. Announcing the initiative, Premier The Hon Steve Bracks MP stated that it would also 'weave in well with the sister-institution link between Nanjing Library and the State Library of Victoria'.⁴²

16.39 The National Library of Australia (NLA) informed the committee that its Chinese language collection is the largest in Australia, comprising some 250,000 monographs, 5,100 serial titles, 250 newspaper titles, 10,000 reels of microfilm and 15,000 sheets of microfiche in Chinese, as well as a number of online resources. The NLA stated that the collection's emphasis is on modern and contemporary China. In 2004, the NLA celebrated its China collection with a public exhibition entitled *Xanadu: Encounters with China*:

The exhibition, based on some 150 items chosen exclusively from the Library's collections, was viewed by over 23,000 visitors. They were able to gain a greater understanding of the history of China and its society through the drawings and photographs depicting all aspects of court and street life from the 13th century to the eve of World War II in 1939.⁴³

16.40 The NLA stressed the importance of people-to-people links in facilitating its relationships with Chinese libraries, such as the National Library in China, the National Central Library in Taipei, and over 50 other Chinese libraries and institutions. Formal delegations, informal visits and staff exchanges from Chinese library staff form an important part of the NLA's relationship with China. The NLA also indicated that it has a cordial relationship with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Canberra. In March 2005, the Embassy presented the NLA with a replica of a Chinese terracotta warrior that has been placed on display in the Asian collections reading room.⁴⁴

41 West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Submission P59*, pp. 7–8.

42 See <http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/arts/news/media/22Tapestry.htm> (accessed 30 August 2005).

43 National Library of Australia, *Submission P32*, p. 1.

44 National Library of Australia, *Submission P32*, p. 1.

Sport

16.41 According to the WA government's submission, Australia and China are two of the world's top five sporting nations.⁴⁵ Sporting interaction can lead to a number of positive benefits—social, political, and economic.

General sporting links

16.42 The Chinese government has always understood the value of political and cultural communication through sport. Chey observed that in the 1970s, when the Chinese Communist Party sought to improve its image overseas, it embarked upon 'ping pong diplomacy':

Chinese table tennis delegations were dispatched to various western countries, including Australia, where they received extraordinary reception—not so much from sports enthusiasts as from the general public...Many were prepared to accept uncritically the political olive branch offered by the table tennis delegations without questioning more deeply what China's public diplomacy objectives might be...the Chinese cultural efforts did succeed in breaking down some of the barriers between the two societies—so much so that a cultural 'open door' policy began to emerge in the 1970s, well before its economic counterpart.⁴⁶

16.43 Mr Mike D'Arcy observed that Australian sport has gained considerably from interaction with Chinese sports people. Australian gymnastics, table tennis, volleyball, and badminton have all benefited from the involvement of Chinese coaches and players.⁴⁷ Similarly, Chinese yachting, rugby union, golf, horse racing, and track and field have benefited from interaction with Australian sportsmen and women.⁴⁸

16.44 Aside from elite sporting interaction, Mr D'Arcy has identified social sport as an area where significant advances could be made in the relationship between Australia and China. He is of the view that Australia is in a strong position to significantly contribute to the Chinese government's programs aimed at increasing the uptake of social sport.⁴⁹

16.45 The WA Department of Sport and Recreation also provided the committee with detail concerning WA's sporting interaction with China, and the benefits that can

45 WA Government, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Submission P45*, p. 1.

46 Jocelyn Chey, 'From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy', Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Re-Orienting Australia China Relations*, pp. 166–167.

47 Mike D'Arcy 'China-Australia Sporting Relations: History and Prospects', Colin Mackerras (ed.), *Australia and China: Partners in Asia*, Melbourne, 1996, p. 157.

48 Mike D'Arcy 'China-Australia Sporting Relations: History and Prospects', Colin Mackerras (ed.), *Australia and China: Partners in Asia*, Melbourne, 1996, p. 157.

49 Mike D'Arcy 'China-Australia Sporting Relations: History and Prospects', Colin Mackerras (ed.), *Australia and China: Partners in Asia*, Melbourne, 1996, pp.158–161.

arise from sporting interaction including the promotion of WA as a tourist destination.⁵⁰ For example, in June 2005, Basketball Australia announced a new four-nations tournament that is part of Basketball Australia's drive to forge stronger relations with Asian basketballing nations. It is hoped that the tournament 'will become an annual feature of the international basketball calendar, with Australia and China hosting the event on a rotational basis'.⁵¹

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

16.46 The 2008 Olympics provides opportunities for a new level of cooperation between Australia and China, and should serve to enhance considerably the sporting and broader bilateral links between the two nations. In a speech delivered in China in 2003, Sydney Olympics CEO, Mr Sandy Hollway stated:

International relations is not only about the conduct of political and economic affairs between Governments and businesses. It must also be underpinned by the sort of deep international understanding that can only come from closer and closer relations between people. The Olympic games is the most successful popular embodiment of internationalism yet invented by human beings...Because Australia hosted the most recent Summer Games; because we did so successfully; because there are lessons to be learnt; and because we have companies, government agencies and individuals with a proven track record, Australia is in a uniquely good position to help.⁵²

16.47 In its submission, DCITA provided information on the 2005 MOU between the Australian Sports Commission and China's State General Administration of Sport. The MOU identified the key areas of future cooperation between Australian and Chinese sporting organisations, coaches, athletes and administrators in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics and beyond. They include:

- greater cooperation and communication on international sports issues;
- facilitation by both peak bodies of greater direct links between national sporting organisations in Australia and China;
- encouragement of more cooperation and exchange between researchers in the fields of sport education, science, research and medicine;
- a joint commitment to working against doping and violence in sport, including a closer working relationship between the respective anti-doping bodies in both countries; and

50 WA Government, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Submission P45*, p.1.

51 Mr Scott Derwin, <http://sportsaustralia.com/articles/jun05/artid3279.html> (accessed 29 August 2005).

52 Media Release: 'The Australia China Oration Series 2002', <http://www.austemb.org.cn> (accessed 29 August 2005).

- support for cooperation on training of sports administrators, coaches and athletes.⁵³

16.48 DCITA also outlined the Cooperation Memorandum between the Australian Sports Commission and the Beijing Sports Bureau. This agreement outlines activities of interest for Australia in partnership with China. The Memorandum proposes a number of mutual activities between the two countries, namely: athlete training exchange; cooperation and collaboration in applied research projects; and staff (coach/scientist) exchanges.⁵⁴

16.49 In November 2004, the Australian Olympic Committee also signed an MOU with Chinese Olympic officials to facilitate cooperation in the lead up to the 2008 Games. This agreement allows for athletic exchanges, participation in bilateral and multilateral competitions, and exchange of training expertise.⁵⁵ Australia swimmer, Grant Hackett commented:

It's definitely an advantage to us...there are certain things that we can learn off the Chinese, even in [the pool] and you know, we've seen how much in gymnastics and particularly diving, that we've moved forward, and that was learning from the Chinese.⁵⁶

16.50 Some commentators envisage long-term changes taking place because of the Olympic Games. Dr Jie Chen was cautiously optimistic about the positive impact that the Olympics would have on democratisation and Chinese civil society growth.⁵⁷ He claimed that the growth in government-supported volunteerism in preparation for the Olympics 'in many unexpected ways justifies activism by the citizens after the event.' Dr Chen drew parallels with the 1995 International Women's Conference:

It feels like the 1995 women's conference in Beijing. Most Chinese activist women's organisations were spawned by the event. They did not exist before the 1995 conference. Some of them were not allowed to continue but some still went on. So that is a scenario I can predict for the 2008 Olympic Games. I think overall it is positive. Looking at the Seoul Olympics, they had a similar impact on civil society in South Korea. The government likes to pretend that everything is going to be great, exactly like other Olympic Games in terms of citizen volunteerism or whatever, and after the event everything will cool down a bit because of political pressure placed on

53 DCITA, *Submission P62*, p. 7.

54 DCITA, *Submission P62*, p. 7.

55 John Taylor 'Correspondents Report—Australia seeks sporting ties with China' 7 November 2004, <http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2004/s1236242.htm> (accessed 29 August 2005).

56 John Taylor 'Correspondents Report—Australia seeks sporting ties with China' 7 November 2004, <http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2004/s1236242.htm> (accessed 29 August 2005).

57 J. Chen, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 82.

citizen groups. But then you will see that there have been one or one and a half steps forward. I am very hopeful.⁵⁸

16.51 The committee considers that sport provides an ideal vehicle for cultural communication between China and Australia. Both nations are justifiably proud of their sporting achievements, and will grow stronger through exchange and cooperation.

Getting the message across?

16.52 Despite the success of many cultural and sporting initiatives, there is considerable scope for improvement. Although the work currently being done by various organisations is contributing to the positive direction of the bilateral relationship, as Ms Dysart stated:

We should be doing it on a much bigger scale. We should be sending far more people and putting much more resources into this people-to-people relationship.⁵⁹

16.53 Most organisations active in promoting Australian culture and sports would like more funding. The ACC, which receives a lot of applications for general funding, indicated that, with more funding, it would be able to provide seed funding for many more bilateral activities:

For example, we gave the West Australian Ballet \$10,000 in our last funding round. The total budget for their project, which was to tour La Boheme through China, was over \$200,000. But what can often happen with a small amount of money is that it can give it a kind of official endorsement and encourage corporate sponsorship. We are working at that sort of level, but obviously, if we had more money, we could be much more effective. We reject a lot of applications.⁶⁰

16.54 Jocelyn Chey claimed that the beginning of the new century has not provided an encouraging environment for the development of Australian cultural relations with Asia, in general, and China in particular:

All too often cultural exchanges have been replaced by exchanges of trade significance. One reason for this shift is probably because these exchanges do not impinge on the problem of national identity. Another is that they suit the materialist spirit of the age, which values all academic and cultural activities in commercial terms. In keeping with this, trade is now the dominant theme of bilateral relations with China.⁶¹

58 J. Chen, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 83.

59 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 35.

60 D. Dysart, *Committee Hansard*, 29 June 2005, p. 35.

61 Jocelyn Chey, 'From Rosny to the Great Wall: Cultural Relations and Public Diplomacy', Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Re-Orienting Australia China Relations*, p. 178.

16.55 The committee notes that much of the evidence provided by the Federal government on the promotion of culture and sport in China has focussed on commercial gain, rather than on the inherent value that such activities play in fostering general good will and understanding. The committee would like to see a move away from this emphasis toward a greater recognition that the prospects for future interaction also depend on filial relationships and mutual understanding.

The contribution of Chinese-Australian community groups

16.56 The committee is aware of the presence of a variety of Chinese–Australian community organisations that promote the bilateral relationship, as well as contributing to and culturally enriching Australia.

16.57 Chung Wah has been in existence for 96 years, and is the oldest ethnic organisation in Western Australia. It provides social welfare services, looking after over 300 seniors from the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian ethnic communities. Chung Wah has developed such a strong reputation for the provision of high-quality services to the community, that the federal government provides funding for their support programs:

We are one of the most reputable service providers in Western Australia. It was the initiative of the Department of Immigration in Western Australia to ask us to take over looking after the welfare of the Cambodians. From there we went on to the Vietnamese. The idea is that Chung Wah has matured as a Chinese community organisation; it is time that we extend our services to other Asian groups.⁶²

16.58 Chung Wah takes an active role in promoting traditional Chinese culture, acts 'as a bridge for new Chinese migrants to embrace Australian culture so as to integrate with mainstream Australia', and also runs a weekend school attended by over 1000 Chinese and non-Chinese students.⁶³ For example Mr Richard Tan, President of the Chung Wah Association, told the committee that he had led a delegation to the city of Fuzhou to attend a conference on the voyages of Admiral Zheng, thought to have visited Australia some 600 years ago. Chung Wah also has strong links to the Chinese Government, and its representatives in Australia. Mr Tan stated:

We have a very close relationship with China in terms of education, cultural links and so on. Our textbooks in the Chinese school are all donated by the Chinese government.⁶⁴

16.59 Chung Wah also has links to the All China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, a Chinese Government Organised Non-Government Organisation

62 R. Tan, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 37.

63 R. Tan, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 33.

64 R. Tan, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 39.

(GONGO), forming a bridge between the Chinese-Australian community and Chinese migrants that have returned to China.

Recognising our Chinese–Australian history

16.60 The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia recognised the 'significant contribution that Chinese immigrants have made to Australia from the early gold rush days'.⁶⁵ Professor John Fitzgerald likewise noted the place of Chinese in Australia's early development. He told the committee that at the end of the Second World War there were about 15,000 Australians of Chinese ethnic background. Today there are roughly 500,000, of whom about 40 per cent can claim to have relatives in or be linked to the People's Republic of China. Professor Fitzgerald highlighted the immense and enduring contribution the Chinese Australian community has made to economic relations, cultural relations and social or people-to-people relations between Australia and China. However, he noted the general lack of awareness in the broader community of the contribution Chinese Australians have made to this country's progress.

Is not always as widely recognised as perhaps it should be. In particular, immigrants from the People's Republic of China...are highly skilled and educated. They are ideal citizens for a knowledge driven economy. The question I would pose is: how welcome do they feel, how much do they feel a part of Australian public life and how widely is their contribution recognised? Are they recognised as free and equal partners in Australian citizenship?⁶⁶

16.61 He noted that, in addition to being educated about China, Australian children should also be taught about the important role the Chinese had in building Australia:

...we need to pay greater attention to our own Chinese Australian history and to our own Chinese Australian society and the role it plays in linking Australia to Asia at the present time, about which very little is known. The role played in Australia's business by social, cultural and business leaders from Australia's various Chinese ethnic communities is absolutely instrumental, and very little attention is paid to it.

...In Australia there is a sense that we still cling to an old notion of white man goes to Asia doing business. That is not how it is happening. Elements of that story could be recast to make Chinese-Australians and, more broadly, Asian-Australians feel more welcome and more widely recognised for the very important role they play in Australia's relations with China and the region.⁶⁷

16.62 Professor Fitzgerald considered that the growth of Asian–Australian communities is as important to Australia's future as good international relations with

65 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, *Submission P14*, p. 1.

66 J. Fitzgerald, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 79.

67 J. Fitzgerald, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p.80.

Asian communities abroad. Whilst acknowledging the importance of submissions that consider the international aspects of improving Australia's bilateral relations, Professor Fitzgerald added:

I believe that we will do wonders for our relations with China by working closely with our Chinese–Australian communities. At the present time they are the key to the economic and social linkages with China. To ignore them and imagine that white men in pith helmets are still wandering around the jungles of Asia dealing with this relationship is beyond its use-by date. In my view, we have got to embrace and welcome Asian–Australian communities.⁶⁸

16.63 Furthermore, Professor Fitzgerald considered it is also very important that Australia's new Asian–Australian communities are taught that Australian history has always had a part for Asia. As an example, he suggested that the achievements of Chinese Australians in the 19th and 20th century should be promoted, stating:

It is little known here that China's modern commercial revolution in Shanghai was built by Australian Chinese. The four great department stores on Nanking Road are all built by Sydney Chinese. If you visit Shanghai now—I will take you to the commercial heart—you will not find anybody who is Australian who can tell you, 'This was built by Sydney Chinese: the Kwok family, the Chen family, the Lee family and the Ma family.' Their descendants are still in Australia; they know that story, but no-one else does.

16.64 Professor Fitzgerald asserted that there are many other accounts of a similar nature that could be told about Australia and its historical relations with China that have been mediated by our Australian–Chinese communities. He claimed, however, that in a sense 'they have been rubbed out of the story as well as rubbed out of the immigration quota.' He stated:

I think if there is a policy initiative to come out of this, it ought to be to put Asian Australia back into our history and give it the credit it is due. There are marvellous stories and accounts to be told which would stand Australia in very good stead in China if they were told.⁶⁹

16.65 He argued that providing information about the contribution of Chinese Australians to both the Chinese and Australian communities would play an important role in building links with new Asian and Chinese Australian migrant communities:

One can go to Shanghai and learn that Nanking Road—the greatest shopping centre in Asia—was built by Australian Chinese from Sydney. You can learn that there but you would not learn it here, and I think that is a very great pity. Education is one area in which, not by undertaking propaganda exercises but by simply restoring to our history some of the stories that have been erased from it, we would make a great contribution to

68 J. Fitzgerald, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, pp. 88–89.

69 J. Fitzgerald, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 88.

welcoming new Chinese Australians and Asian Australians into a story that has always had a place for them, even if people sometimes want to rub it out.⁷⁰

Recognising and appreciating the Chinese community in Australia

16.66 Evidence to this inquiry suggests that Australia may not adequately value the presence of the Chinese–Australian community. Members of the Chinese–Australian community already have extensive personal networks back in China that Australian companies, government agencies and cultural organisations do not fully appreciate. Ms Valerie Kelly put the situation simply:

We do not do enough to maintain those links or to see where they have gone to and how we capture them. A lot of business migrants who have used Australia are now back in their old countries and we are not doing enough to capture that...By and large, I have taken time to talk to Chinese in Australia—such as people selling groceries, or students. There is an affinity with Australia and Australians that we are not doing enough to tap into.⁷¹

Recommendation 24

16.67 The committee recommends that the Australian government embark on a number of initiatives that would give greater recognition to the contribution made by the Chinese community, from its earliest presence in Australia to the present day, to Australia's development. For example, it would be timely for the production of a book that records such a contribution and also details the achievements of Australians in China.

Conclusion

16.68 Public diplomacy, cultural and sporting interaction, promotes awareness of China and, at a broader societal level, mutual understanding. It fosters a greater awareness of the Chinese–Australian community's contribution to Australia and encourages greater tolerance and understanding. It builds bridges between the two countries. The committee believes that the Australian government should continue to demonstrate its support for public diplomacy including ensuring that there is adequate funding for the cultural and sporting organisations actively engaged in establishing and maintaining their links with China.

16.69 The committee also considers that the Australia government could do more to ensure that the contribution of the Chinese–Australian community to Australia's development is afforded due recognition. Currently the committee believes that this is a neglected area.

70 J. Fitzgerald, *Committee Hansard*, 27 June 2005, p. 89.

71 V. Kelly, *Committee Hansard*, 1 August 2005, p. 21.