

Australian Political Exchange Council All China Youth Federation



***Report of the 20th Delegation to the
People's Republic of China***

5 June to 11 June 2011

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Executive Summary

The 20th Delegation of the Australian Political Exchange Council (APEC) to the People's Republic of China enabled participants to gain useful insights into political, social and cultural aspects of Chinese society.

The Delegation visited three regions of China – Beijing, Ningxia and Shanghai.

During the visit, the Delegation was able to explore a wide range of issues including the attitudes of Chinese student media, the complex nature of the relationship between Australia and China, Chinese scientific research aims, economic policy (including requirements for reform and other challenges to the Chinese development model), horticulture, environment programs, the Muslim Hui minority, elections for representatives at the village level, and the provision of social services for youth and the elderly.

The meetings could be categorized as: (1) Informative policy discussions, which predominately occurred in the political centre of Beijing; (2) Formal dinners and events, which are a critical aspect of Chinese government culture and thus were common to Beijing, Ningxia and Shanghai; (3) Visits to local facilities and important cultural sites: these again occurred in Beijing, Ningxia and Shanghai.

In Beijing, the Delegation had a series of meetings with the China University Media Union, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Development Research Centre of the State Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the All China Youth Federation.

A visit to China Youth Daily facilitated a dialogue with students from the China University Media Union. This dialogue allowed the Delegation to be the subject of questioning, rather than the usual role of their asking questions. The questions highlighted a number of important matters, including issues concerning Chinese students studying in Australia.

The Delegation was very interested in the governance arrangements of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, where the Director is an academic rather than a Communist Party official – an unusual state of affairs in China. This appointment shows the importance accorded to scientific research in China, where the Communist Party dominates governance of other significant social institutions.

The enlightening expert perspectives of the representative of the Development Research Centre of the State Council regarding the limitations of the current economic model in China, the necessary economic reforms, and the possible impediments to reform, highlighted the sophistication of Chinese economic policy debates.

The ability of China to continue high rates of economic growth, perhaps more than any other issue highlighted during the visit, is of critical importance to Australia's future. The Delegation was struck by the willingness of elements of the Chinese elite to address fundamental economic reform.

The meeting with Madam Wu Xi, Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, involved a discussion of the Australia-China bilateral relationship, including challenges and opportunities.

The meeting with Madam Dong Xia, Deputy Secretary-General, All China Youth Federation, highlighted some important policies, including “Go West”, a policy designed to decrease inequity by increasing linkage between the less developed west of China with the more developed coastal regions.

In Ningxia – in the west of China – the Delegation met Mr Yu Geshang, Deputy Secretary-General of the Ningxia Autonomous Regional Party Community, as well visiting the Sand Lake (an environmental project), Ningxia Horticultural Industry Park, Xigang Town and the Hui Ethnic Minority Cultural Park

At Xigang Town, there was a dialogue regarding the details of the processes for the election of village level representatives. The development of elections, at the village level, has been described as a significant experiment in democratic representation within the Chinese system. It should be noted that the electoral process preserved a central role for the Communist Party.

The visit to Ningxia highlighted the less developed western regions of China, issues related to the Hui minority group and policies designed to lessen the development gap between coastal and western China. The experience of Ningxia will be long remembered by members of the Delegation.

Due to a significant delay in the flight from Xingxia to Shanghai, the Delegation only spent a limited time in Shanghai. Thus, aside from a formal welcome of the Delegation to Shanghai, the only business meeting was at the Dapugiao Community Centre in Luwan District.

Despite the restricted time in Shanghai, the visit to the Dapugiao Community showcased subsidised community services for local youth and elderly, including child care, art, library, musical performance and sports. However, in visiting Shanghai the highlight was the city of Shanghai itself, one of the world's great international cities.



Members of the Delegation

Robin Scott MP	Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Victoria for the State seat of Preston; Shadow Minister for Finance; Shadow Minister for Workcover. <i>Delegation Leader</i>
Dr John Byron	Senior Advisor (Science and Research), Senator the Hon. Kim Carr, Federal Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.
Monique Earsman	National Organiser, Australian Labor Party National Secretariat.
Bev Barber	State Director, Liberal Party of Australia (South Australian Division).
David Hughes	Advisor, Office of the Hon. Tony Abbott MP, Leader of the Opposition.
Angela Lyle	Electorate Officer, Office of Mr Kevin Anderson MLA, State Member for Tamworth, NSW.



- The Delegation at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From L to R: Dr John Byron; Monique Earsman; Bev Barber; Ms Wu Xi, Deputy Director of American and Oceanian Affairs; Robin Scott; David Hughes and Angela Lyle.

Beijing

- **Sunday 5 June: Arrival in Beijing: Tour of Forbidden City followed by dinner.**
- **Monday 6 June 9.30 am – 1.30 pm: Visit to China Youth Daily and Dialogue with students from the China University Media Union.**

China Youth Daily is an influential national newspaper targeting young people, published since 1951. Students at the meeting were from universities across Beijing. Also present were students from Australia who are studying for postgraduate degrees at Chinese Universities.

The China University Media Union was founded in 2008 by China Youth Daily in conjunction with leading Chinese universities, and with the support of the Central Commission of China Communist Youth League and the Ministry of Education.

The Union is “committed to the integration and sharing of university information resources, enhancing communication and exchanges between university medias, creating new communication capabilities and diversification of communication channels, and also serving the growth and success of university students.”

Unlike most later meetings, this meeting was an opportunity for our Chinese hosts to question the Australian Delegation. The topics ranged from cultural matters through to recognition of Chinese qualifications in Australia.

There was considerable emphasis on the relationship between China and Australia. It was described as an old relationship which is frank but close. Many also spoke of the need for all to understand the cultures of the countries in which they propose to do business. This is not always recognised by many who do business in China. Indeed, some of the Australian students who had been in China for some time felt that many Australian MPs – both State and Federal – do not have a good understanding of China as a trading partner.

The group was keen to hear about the South Australian State Government’s relationship with the Confucius Institute (a non-profit institution that aims to promote Chinese language and culture) in that state.



There is a perception that the Federal Government's changes to student visas will present further restrictions and difficulties for Chinese Students. The general consensus was that students will go to other countries, especially the UK and the USA, where the visa criteria are not as restrictive.

Some of the students thought that the reports of violence against Indian students in Victoria had not helped Australia's image in China. There is an opportunity for Australia to work with the media and educational institutions in China to promote the benefits of an Australian education.

The integration of Chinese students within Australia was considered an important issue. The perception is that students from China tend to 'stick to themselves' and therefore the benefits of integration into the Australian way of life and the ability to practise and use English is lost. Examples were given of the ways students can and do integrate by members of the Delegation, including opportunities provided by state and local governments for community days targeted towards international students.

The recognition of qualifications by Australian authorities – especially medical qualifications – was discussed. It was explained that the Australian Government has strict rules – especially in relation to qualifications such as medicine – and must ensure that qualifications meet the high standards set by Australian universities.

China is Australia's major trading partner. The Chinese are now investing in our pension/superannuation funds, mining sector, science and research, including nano- and bio-technology.

➤ **Monday 6 June 2.30 pm onwards: Visit to the Great Wall**

➤ **Tuesday 7 June 9.00 am – 10.00 am: Chinese Academy of Sciences**

The Delegation visited the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) at their Beijing headquarters and was met by Mr Cao Jinghua and his associate Mr Zang Shizhuan. Mr Cao gave a comprehensive overview of the CAS and the history of its formation.

The CAS is China's most prestigious national academic institution in natural sciences and the country's largest comprehensive research and development centre. The Centre's mandate is to develop original scientific discoveries and technology for the advancement of China's people.

Unlike most of the other peak government institutions and universities in China, the Director of the Academy is a scientist rather than a Communist Party Official. This is recognition of the special regard in which the Academy and its activities are held.

Scientific and technological research only started to develop seriously in China in the 1930's after what they saw as the humiliation inflicted on China as a result of their inferior weaponry during the First World War. With the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the importance of the Natural Sciences being recognised at that year's Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the CAS was established. However, it took quite some time to receive the funding it required to become the institution it is today.

The initial focus of the Academy was as a learning and government policy institute, but with time it has moved more heavily into research and development (R&D). Since 1998 increased funding for the Academy has allowed it to greatly expand its R&D program. The CAS has developed into an organisation with around 57,000 staff, working in 117 institutions based around the country.

The CAS has two main roles: as a merit-based academic institution, and as a practical research centre driving scientific development in China. Half of its funding base of approx 27 Billion RMB is provided by the government, while half is raised from commercial applications by its development arm.

The academic division boasts 50,000 graduates and includes over 20,000 with PhDs, and over 25,000 with Masters degrees. It focuses on practical experience as an educative tool. The CAS is proud of the fact that its graduates leave the academy prepared to "go into the field".



The R&D division is the engine of scientific research in China. This part of the Academy is heavily involved in research related to environmentally sustainable development, for example food production, adaptation to climate change, bio-pesticides, and also commercial projects like clean-energy production and pharmaceuticals.

Major challenges of the CAS are to retain quality students and employees whose skills are in high demand, and to keep a careful balance between scientific endeavour and the national interest.

The CAS is committed to demonstrating its value to the people of China through the creation of jobs and income revenue for their citizens. It is determined to play a significant role in the future of the Chinese economy and contribute to the aim of lifting the bulk of China's population out of poverty.

► Tuesday 7 June 10.40 am – 11.40 am: Development Research Centre of the State Council

The Delegation was met by Mr Zhang Yongsheng, and his associate Mr Xuan Xiaowei. Mr Zhang gave a presentation on the role of the Development Research Centre (DRC), the current economic state and, in particular, China's latest five-year plan.

The five-year plan concept provides a comprehensive economic plan for the entire country, with detailed economic development guidelines for all its regions. The guidelines are said to “map strategies for economic development, set growth targets, and launch reforms”.

Economic reforms instituted by the Chinese Government in 1979 created the foundation for their exceptional growth: China has had a consistent record of around 9% per year growth in their GDP, which has allowed a doubling in the size of the economy every seven years.

The growth of the Chinese economy is unique as its development has been much faster than the expansion of any of the existing developed economies, the growth has been sustained longer than any other developing economy and, once fully industrialised, China is expected to be the largest economy in the world. It currently holds second place to the United States.



The current five-year plan attempts to address some of the challenges facing the current economic model that make it unsustainable in the longer term. The stated aims of the plan are to:

- Bring balance – economic, social and between the urban and rural population. The plan seeks to reduce China's dependence on exports and imports, moving to a more service-based economy; and to
- Move to a cleaner economy, with an emphasis on reducing carbon emissions and land degradation.

The hope is that these reforms will bring an improvement to efficiency, with the risk of inaction being that the imbalances in the economy may accumulate and stall growth.

With regard to future reform, one of the biggest issues facing the nation is that the easier reforms have already been completed, leaving the most difficult to come. The most challenging of the planned reforms includes removing the privileges of vested interests that do not serve the majority of the people.

The reforms include the creation of:

- Checks and balances within government processes;
- A fair market for competition; and
- Sector-specific policy reforms that are intended to remove government owned monopolies.

The Delegation was impressed by the openness of the discussion.

In Mr Zhang's summary he outlined why China needs to embrace the momentum to reform:

- To avoid an economic crisis resulting from a stall after such rapid and sustained growth;
- To enhance the legitimacy of the Communist Party by working on Party processes and transparency;
- So that China's economy can integrate successfully with the international economy; and
- To increase regional competition.

The Delegation was given the opportunity to ask questions on specific areas:

Q: What is your thinking about the introduction of social insurance schemes such as aged pensions and superannuation into China?

A: The DRC sees the need for a social insurance model and has been looking at the approach taken in Singapore. Mr Zhang commented that with the economy still growing so well, such a scheme could easily be accommodated.

Q: What do you think about the problems faced by Chinese companies wanting to invest in Australia but facing restrictions due to their nature – the fact that they are state-run and have management processes that may not conform to Australian requirements?

A: Mr Zhang reiterated that one of the major motivations for reform was so that they could better integrate with the international economic community. The cost of moving from the government-owned monopoly model will be high, particularly for those with vested interests in those monopolies. Even within China, privately run businesses face significant obstacles in dealing with government run companies. He told us that the reform process in this area was going to be difficult and the status quo hard to change.

Q: A further question to the above – will China be disadvantaged if it is not going to be able to attract foreign investment to its companies because they are government-owned enterprises?

A: Mr Zhang felt that openness was improving, but within China, Chinese firms still insist on preferential treatment. The requirement for foreign investment has not yet been realised.

Q: Have there been any recent developments concerning enforcement of contracts, particularly with regard to property rights?

A: Any reform in that area is likely to be by way of an institutional mechanism rather than a legal one.

Q: What is the current position concerning carbon emission targets in China?

A: China is working to create the circumstances in which market forces drive the move to a cleaner environment. They are undertaking a range of measures such as avoiding deforestation, planting trees and creating a carbon offset. They would also like to establish a water trading market.

Internationally they are prepared to defend their right to pollute as an emerging economy, but internally they are working hard to improve the environment, and they embrace the new economic opportunities that will develop as a result.

Q: Do you favour government investment in environmental programs or a market based system?

A: Mr Zhang argued that the market-based approach was going to be more successful. Mitigation of damage is best driven by self-interest. China expects that they will have a market established within five years.

► Tuesday 7 June 2.00 pm – 3.00 pm: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Delegation was hosted by Ms Wu Xi, Deputy Director of American and Oceanian Affairs, who outlined China's historical and economic view of foreign relations. There was discussion of the Australia-China bilateral relationship, including challenges and opportunities.



The challenges include the differences between Chinese and Australian history, leading to difficulties in understanding each other (e.g. Taiwan) and different views on Chinese investment in Australia.

In regard to opportunities, Australia and China were seen as having complementary economies, especially with the expansion of domestic spending with the new five-year plan. Overall the strength of the relationship and the opportunities for cooperation were emphasised in the meeting.

► Tuesday 7 June 4.00 pm – 5.00 pm: All China Youth Federation

The Delegation thanked the Federation for their hospitality in arranging and facilitating this AUSPOL Delegation to China.

The links between Australia and China have been extended through visits from various Australian political Delegations, in particular the recent successful visit by Prime Minister Julia Gillard. The Federation is very happy to continue to conduct political and student exchange, as well as establishing dialogue with overseas youth forums.

Madam Dong Xia, the Deputy Secretary-General of the All China Youth Federation, spoke about the wider social issues and the important role played by the Youth Federation in planning the future of China.

Madame Dong said that the 12th five-year plan will bring about a transformation of economic development. There are opportunities for Australia – for example, consumption of dairy products has increased enormously. At one time Chinese people did not drink milk, but now one billion people are consuming dairy products. There is a shortage of suitable pasture in China, so there is a clear opportunity for Australia to make up the shortfall.

Between 9 million and 15 million new jobs have been generated in the urban areas under the current five-year plan. However, the population in rural areas is not counted in employment figures and farmers are considered to already have a job, even if their income is low.

China has a family contract system of land use which means everybody owns a small piece of land. Productivity is not high and therefore the head of the house often leaves to find a job in the city.

In this regard, the current five year plan proposes to raise the urbanisation ratio from 47% to 49%. In order to assist this process, when a poor rural family moves to an urban area, they are matched with a rich family so the children can help them to study and invite them to join the communities.

Concerning overseas study, Australia is considered a favourable country. However, students studying in Australia face a number of issues: the standards for Chinese students must be as high as it is for Australian students, and many need help in career development.



Chinese students in Australia have not always integrated well with the general Australian community. Chinese people are often reserved, and there is a shortage of programs aimed at improving integration. During the summer, China organises work for students in farms, factories and government departments. Chinese students in Australia seldom have these kinds of opportunities.

The Chinese students who study abroad fall into two classes: the rich often study at overseas institutions as a way of avoiding entrance exams to Chinese universities; the poor see such study as a way of improving their lives. The latter have to get together years of wages from their families to finance their study.

Chinese parents see such investment as worthwhile, as they are deeply committed to their children's education. To this end, there are many programs to develop leadership and to help people from poorer backgrounds advance themselves. Despite this, there is still a big divide between the rich and the poor.

There are programs for university graduates to work for a period in villages, assisting village committees. Many students agree to participate in these programs, particularly those from poorer families. After two years, they will be given preference to become village and government officials. These programs provide an important opportunity for poorer families to advance socially.

University entrance exams are considered a fair opportunity for everyone to advance socially: it is possible to go from farmer to government official in a single generation. Indeed, many Chinese high officials are children of farmers.

In response to a query, Madame Dong said that staff at the All-China Youth Federation are recruited mainly from member organisations, and are nominated by those organisations to work in the Secretariat. The President of the National Committee is elected by National Committee Members.

Positions at the Federation are not always popular due to the perceived opportunity cost: university graduates often prefer to work for companies that offer higher salaries, but people who are interested in socially-oriented work often choose to come to the Federation.



► **Tuesday 7 June 6.00 pm onwards: Welcoming banquet, All China Youth Federation**

Yinchuan, Ningxia Autonomous Region

➤ **Wednesday 8 June 3.30 pm: Tour of Imperial Tombs**

➤ **Wednesday 8 June 6.00 pm onwards: Meeting with Ningxia Autonomous Region Leader**

Mr Yu Geshang, Deputy Secretary-General of the Ningxia Autonomous Regional Party Community, expressed views of the relationship between the two countries and in particular the opportunity that the Delegation would have to understand the different cultures of China through visiting Beijing, Ningxia Autonomous Region and Shanghai.



He stated that the understanding of the cultures of our two countries brings with it a long standing friendship and an opportunity to increase economic development between the two countries.

Mr Yu Geshang had visited Australia previously and has been left with a very good impression.

A brief overview of Ningxia Autonomous Region was provided to the Delegation. Ningxia Autonomous Region is to the west of China, it is one of the poor areas of China and one of the less developed. It has a population of 6.3 million people with a 30% Muslim population.

There has been rapid social and economic development. This has meant an increase in living standards. Through the Chinese Government's Go West policy many young people are now playing a critical role in the government's objective to assist people out of poverty. Currently there are 150 million in China living in poverty (defined as living on less than \$1 per day per head), and China is taking strong action to lift the standard of living throughout the population.

The meeting was followed by a banquet hosted by the Autonomous Region Leader.

➤ **Thursday 9 June 9.30 am – 12.00 noon: Sand Lake**

Sand Lake is an environmental area about 60 kilometres north of Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia Autonomous Region. The area contains about 45 square kilometres of lakes and over 20 square kilometres of desert. The area attracts millions of visitors each year from China and abroad.



Sand Lake is famed for its beautiful natural environment – it is home to some 200 species of birds – for its resorts and theme parks, and for its environmental projects.

The authorities have taken some trouble to protect the area from the effects of industrial pollution, and a paper-mill – for example – uses wheat grass as a fibre source, and features full recovery of alkali from its outflows.

► Thursday 9 June 2.30 pm – 3.30 pm: Hongmei Horticulture Industry Park

During the Delegation's time in Ningxia, local officials repeatedly stressed the importance of agriculture to the regional economy. Not only does the region produce much of their own fresh produce but they have also identified various niche markets in organic fresh vegetables – they distribute their produce all over China.

A visit to Ningxia Horticultural park was an opportunity for the Delegation to see just how important this industry is to the region. At over 100 hectares, the purpose-built facility was evidence of the value the Ningxia region, and their government in particular, placed on horticulture.

The Delegation spent quite some time touring the climate-controlled greenhouse facilities which were impressive in their own right. Delegates were told how the park is used to trial new technologies and methods in agricultural production. There was a distinct focus on combining agricultural technology with developments in organic production.



► Thursday 9 June 3.30 pm – 4.30 pm: Xigang Town

The Delegation was welcomed by three officials at the local administrative building of Xigang – a town of 3,218 people. The town has nine party teams and ten communities divided around the various residential areas. Each committee has one dedicated administration officer.

Xigang is not a wealthy town, as the officials repeatedly stressed, with average personal income of 7,000 RMB this year which they hope will increase to 8,000 RMB over the coming year.

The Delegation was invited to try a special variety of locally-produced cucumbers which are grown in mobile greenhouses. Delegates were told that the greenhouses had contributed to the economic development of the village. While Xigang has traditionally been a rural village, many farmers have lost their land and will need to move into business to make money.

An election will be held on 28 November to elect party and government officials. The village officials explained their electoral process. Five positions will be elected. Every village resident has a vote. The Delegation was advised that that the people will elect those who can “best make their village rich.”

Applicants will be reported to the party committee. If 80 per cent of villagers approve, then they will be elected. The process of voting is confidential while ballots are counted publicly.

Under their system, three committees are elected, namely; a Party Committee, a Village Committee and a Village Supervision Committee. Only party members can vote for the election of members to the Party Committee while all villagers are entitled to vote for the election of members to the Village Committee.

Delegation members asked about the process for candidate selection and were advised that blank tickets are sent out and villagers rank their top five candidates. If there is no opposition then candidates are elected.

For the position of Director and Deputy Director two names appear on the ballot, while for the positions of Committee Members five names are given and a villager can vote for three of the five. In order to be successful a candidate must also have more than half of all villagers vote for them.

The Delegation was informed that this system is similar to that operating right across China with an election every three years. Theoretically anyone over the age of 18 is eligible to be elected however, the official advised that in practice only those between 35-55 years old are elected.

At the conclusion of the visit to Xigang the Delegation was given the opportunity to meet with some families in the village and tour their homes.

➤ **Friday 10 June 8.40 am – 10.00 am: Hui Ethnic Minority Culture Park**

The Delegation visited the Hui Ethnic Minority Culture Park, a facility dedicated to the Hui Muslim minority group.

The park was established in September 2005 by the government of Ningxia, and is designed to showcase ethnic Hui culture and traditions.

The Culture Park includes a museum, replica mosque and traditional Hui housing, Regular cultural performances are held, to promote knowledge and understanding of Hui culture.



Shanghai

► Friday 10 June 6.30 pm onwards: Banquet, All China Youth Federation, Shanghai branch

Due to a long delay at Yinchuan airport, after arriving in Shanghai the Delegation was only able to participate in a formal dinner.

The dinner was hosted by the Shanghai branch of the All China Youth Federation to welcome the Delegation to Shanghai.

► Saturday 11 June 8.30 am – 9.30 am: Oriental Pearl TV Tower & Urban Development History Museum

The Delegation visited the Oriental Pearl TV Tower in Pudong, including the viewing platforms and the Shanghai Urban Development History Museum.

Later, Labor members of the Delegation visited the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China, while Coalition members inspected the Nanjing Road mercantile district.

► Saturday 11 June 9.30 am – 11.00 am: Dapugiao Community, Luwan District, Shanghai

The Delegation was greeted by the Community Director, Mae Wang, and the head of Youth Affairs, Xiao Xia. Ms Xiao offered us a warm welcome and a general introduction to the Community and its facilities.

The overall picture was of a trans-generational community facility that serves a similar purpose in an urban environment to a village community in rural China. The focus was on participation in activities, the preservation of traditional skills as well as the acquisition of modern ones, a strong focus on cultural aspects, and the strengthening of the fabric of Chinese community life.

The Delegation was informed that the Community has exclusive use of three floors of the building – two are open to the whole community, while level 5 is reserved for young people. Of the community's total population of 60,000, around 20,000 are young people. Around 1,100 people come through the doors each day, about 80% of whom are local community members (the balance being visitors or new arrivals). Participation in the Community's activities is free of charge – but the students (young or elderly) have to provide their artworks for free in return.

The brief overview was followed by a tour of the Community's premises. As the Delegation passed into each area, its main uses were explained (often different uses during the week for the seniors and on weekends for the youth), and frequently the delegates were afforded the opportunity to meet community members and observe them undertaking their activities.

Many young people attend classes at the community facility (year-round but particularly during summer) to develop skills, including piano and other instruments,



journalism, dance, yoga, table tennis, English, Shanghai regional dialect, drawing, pottery and painting, including many classes in the traditional artforms.

There are also many classes for older people, including singing, calligraphy, pottery and painting. A lot of their work was on display in various parts of the building, revealing the vast range in calligraphic styles at the command of the community's members, including some very ancient scripts only known to the more elderly members.

The Delegation inspected a reception room decorated by a famous Shanghai oil painter named Dong Jin Sheng, whom the Delegation was fortunate to meet along with his class of talented children later in the tour. Mr Dong teaches painting to the children on Saturdays and during the week.

The tour also took in a photographic exhibition space which features a changing selection of images of China (and especially Shanghai), including pictures taken during the colonial period before 1949, and the phases of change since the PRC was founded.



The Community is fortunate to house a library that is connected to the Shanghai City Library. A member can borrow a book at this branch and return it at any other, and vice-versa. This is not only convenient but ensures that the community resource is integrated to other services that are offered throughout the city. The Community branch library has a special shelf for Braille books, and members of the community have established a blind readers club that meets and holds reading sessions once a month.

A recital hall seating about 150 people was the site for a rehearsal for a performance scheduled for July to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party. The ensemble featured eight traditional stringed instruments, accompanied by a Western-style orchestra of about 20 pieces. The anniversary performance was being organised by the local branch of the YMCA, which is a member organisation of the All-China Youth Forum.

The building also houses an e-Community Centre, which provides facilities for online learning, a digital information service and classes in computing. A cinema shows films primarily for the seniors (who prefer the older movies). A high-tech gym provides treadmills, stationary cycles, free weights and other equipment for the use of young and old alike. A café serves as a tea-house in the mornings and a venue for vigorous competition in Xiangqi (Chinese chess) in the afternoons. A clean and cheerful child-care centre caters for various age groups from infant to primary school age. The Delegation, being for the most part monolingual, was humbled by the impressive languages skills of children around 6-8 years old in an English class, in marked contrast to the Delegation's virtually non-existent Mandarin.

After the visit to the Community Centre the formal aspect of the Delegation's work was complete. The Delegation returned to Australia departing China on Saturday and Sunday, arriving in Australia on Sunday and Monday.

Acknowledgements

The Delegation was hosted by the All China Youth Federation (ACYF). Without the generous hospitality of the ACYF it would have been impossible to examine such a range of topics in such diverse locations.

The assistance of Ms Wang Yi, Program Officer, International Department, ACYF, was of particular benefit to the Delegation.

The efficiency, good cheer and knowledge of Mr Geoff Barnett, the Accompanying Officer from the APEC, was essential to the success of the visit.

The report itself is the collective work of the Delegation as it is based on the notes taken and other work of the various members.

