

# ACRI OPINION

AUSTRALIA-CHINA RELATIONS INSTITUTE 澳大利亚-中国关系研究院

## Australia's Chinese community caught in the crossfire

James Laurenceson  
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Australian media have been in a frenzy this month over allegations that the Chinese government is seeking to undermine Australian sovereignty.

Much of the attention has been focused on donations made by two wealthy members of Australia's Chinese community to the major political parties. The suggestion is that these donors have close ties to the Chinese Communist Party and that their money was linked with attempts to influence official Australian positions on matters such as China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. There have also been claims that the Chinese embassy in Australia has sought to intimidate those in the local Chinese community who are critical of the Chinese government.

Let's get something clear right from the start. Any attempts to skirt or bend Australian laws and regulations need to be called out and plainly labelled as an unacceptable interference in Australia's internal affairs. This certainly includes attempts to intimidate local Chinese, whether they are naturalised Australians, permanent residents, temporary workers or students.

At the same time however, it is the responsibility of the Australian media to ensure that in the current debate the diversity of the Chinese community is represented beyond just a few ultra-high net worth individuals and political dissidents.

Otherwise, the danger is that the 1.2 million strong Chinese diaspora in Australia will come to be viewed as the collective 'other'. As Australian China expert Professor David Goodman recently remarked, '...this process of othering once let out of the bottle is very hard to put back. It lingers in the collective consciousness and becomes a standard tool for politicians and opinion leaders.'

All Chinese in Australia deserve the respect to freely express their views. This includes those who take stances that are broadly supportive of official Chinese government positions on a range of issues. And all Chinese Australians should be free to give their money to political causes they feel best advance their interests, without having their allegiances questioned. Whether non-citizens should be allowed to make political donations is a separate issue (my suggestion is that they shouldn't).

Contending as one commentator did last year that because some Chinese in Australia 'feel nostalgic about the People's Republic and its ruling party' means that we have 'a group of people who are not integrating and who owe allegiance to a foreign power' is a gigantic slur on the intellect and values of potentially hundreds of thousands of Chinese Australians.

It is true that many migrants from China are proud of their homeland's achievements and believe that overall the ruling Communist Party is doing a good job. Last month an Ipsos poll found that 92 percent of Chinese thought their country was heading in the 'right direction'. This was the highest proportion of the 26 countries surveyed and compared with just 46 percent of Australians.

To assume that this assessment is due to being brainwashed by Chinese government propaganda is an insult. In a report published last year, Australia's foremost expert on local Chinese language media, Professor Wanning Sun, said that migrants from China tend to harbour an innate scepticism or even simply an indifference towards government propaganda. They also get their news from a variety of sources, including mainstream Australian ones.

Professor Sun has also pointed out that the best way to ensure that Chinese Australians fulfil their responsibilities as Australian citizens and embrace democratic values is to ensure they are regarded as equal partners.

In fact, as former Foreign Minister Bob Carr noted earlier this month, what is truly remarkable about the local Chinese community is its *lack* of involvement in Australian political life. In recent election campaigns, the issues that have most stirred their interest are the Safe Schools program and Islamic immigration, hardly the stuff of rabid China patriots.

Fortunately, the seemingly regular China panics in Australian media have, so far at least, fallen flat with the average Australian. In an opinion poll conducted earlier this year by the US Studies Centre and the University of Sydney, 30 percent of Australians rated China more favourably than the US for its influence on Australia. This compares with 29 percent who put the US ahead of China. The remaining 41 percent put them on par with each other. Given the huge differences in political systems, culture and language between Australia and China, this is an extraordinary finding.

Precisely why there is such an enormous stock of goodwill in Australia towards China was revealed in last year's Lowy Poll: the factor most contributing to Australians taking a positive view of China, nominated by 85 percent of survey respondents, was the Chinese people they had met.

A test of leadership for Australian media commentators is whether they are prepared to stand up for the rights of all Chinese in Australia, including those with views that are different from their own.

*Professor James Laurenceson is Deputy Director of the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney.*

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## 澳媒体指责澳华人社区中两位富豪给政党捐款是试图破坏澳大利亚主权

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澳大利亚媒体这个月陷入了指责中国政府的狂热中，他们称中国政府正在试图破坏澳大利亚主权。

报道聚焦在澳洲华人社区中两位富豪给两个主要政党的捐款上。他们认为这两位捐款人和中国共产党关系密切，他们企图用钱来影响澳大利亚在一些问题的官方立场，比如中国在中国南海的领土主张问题。另外这些报道还声称中国驻澳大利亚使馆试图对当地华人社区中对中国政府持批评态度的人士进行威吓。

首先让我们表明立场：任何绕开或违反澳大利亚法律与规定的行为都应该被披露，并应清楚地定性为干涉澳洲内部事务，这当然包括威吓当地华人的行为，无论这些华人是澳洲公民、永久居民、还是持短期签证的在澳工作人员或学生。

然而同时，澳洲媒体也有责任确保在当前的这场辩论中华人社区的广泛参与，而不只是让几个超级富豪和政治异见者来代表他们。

否则，澳洲一百二十多万的华人将有被整体视为‘非我同类’的危险。就像澳洲的中国专家大卫·古德曼最近指出的：“……（把人群）异类化这个过程一旦发生就很难逆转，它潜在大家的意识里，并成为政客和意见领袖的一个常用工具。”

所有在澳华人自由表达意见的权利都应得到尊重，包括那些在一系列问题上总体支持中国官方立场的人。每个澳籍华人都应该可以自由地对他们认为有利于拓展自己利益的政治活动进行捐款，其忠诚度不应遭到怀疑。至于允不允许非公民进行政治捐献则是另一个问题（我建议应该禁止）。

去年一位评论家称在澳的一些华人“怀念人民共和国和它的执政党”，从而意味着我们有“一部分人没有试着融入澳洲并把忠诚献给了另一个国家”。这是对成千上万的澳洲华人的智商和价值观的巨大诋毁。

很多来自中国的移民确实对他们母国的成就感到骄傲，并认为执政的共产党整体上干得还不错。上个月一份Ipsos民意调查发现92%的中国人认为他们的国家在沿着“正确的方向”发展，这在受调查的26个国家中比例最高，相比之下澳大利亚只有46%的人这样认为。

如果认为这个调查结果是中國政府的宣传洗脑造成的，那这个想法是一种侮辱。在去年发表的一份报告里，澳大利亚对当地华文传媒最有研究的专家孙皖宁教授指出，来自中国的移民从骨子里对政府的宣传抱一种怀疑态度，或者就根本不感兴趣。他们从各种不同渠道获取资讯，其中包括澳洲主流媒体。

孙教授还指出，让澳籍华人担负起澳洲公民的责任及接受民主价值观的最佳做法就是确保把他们视为平等的伙伴。

事实上，就像前外长鲍勃·卡尔本月早些时候指出的，我们的华人社区非常明显的一个特点是对澳大利亚政治生活缺少参与。在近年来的选举活动中，他们最关心的是‘安全学校’项目和伊斯兰移民，而不是狂热的中国爱国者关心的事情。

幸运的是，至少目前为止，澳洲媒体时不时掀起的中国恐慌在澳洲普通大众中并没有激起大的涟漪。美国研究中心和悉尼大学今年早些时候做的一份民意调查表明30%的澳大利亚人认为中国对澳大利亚的影响比美国更积极，相比之下，29%的人把美国放在中国前面。剩下的41%的人认为两个国家平分秋色。如果考虑到澳洲和中国之间在政治制度、文化和语言上的巨大差异，这个调查结果非比寻常。

至于为什么在澳洲有那么多人对中国抱有好感，去年的 Lowy 调查给出了确切的答案：85%的受访者对中国持积极态度，最大的影响因素就是他们所认识的中国人。

现在澳大利亚媒体的评论员们面临这样的领导力考验：就是他们有没有做好准备为澳洲所有华人的权益站出来说话，包括那些意见和他们相左的人。