Australia-China Relations Institute
澳中关系研究院

Transcript

Australian-Chinese voters' concerns and priorities

Speakers: Ms Erin Chew, founder of the Asian Australian Alliance
Mr Osmond Chiu, Research Fellow at Per Capita
Professor Wanning Sun, Deputy Director at UTS:ACRI
Moderator: Ms Linda Jaivin, Chinese politics, language and culture expert
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Ms Linda Jaivin:

Welcome everyone to this panel on Australian-Chinese voters' concerns and priorities. Before we begin I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the unceded land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to them, their Elders and their ancestors with gratitude for looking after this land for tens of thousands of years and bequeathing a rich cultural heritage to Indigenous and settler peoples alike. I'd also like to pay respects to any indigenous people in this room tonight.

My name is Linda Jaivin, I'm a Mandarin speaker, cultural commentator and the author of 12 books including *The Shortest History of China*. My next book is called *Bombard the Headquarters!: The Cultural Revolution in China*, coming out June. I've lived in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China and I am a literary translator from Chinese with a specialty in film subtitling as well. It's my really great pleasure to be here, I want to welcome everyone here and welcome everyone who is watching online as well and to introduce you to the members of the panel tonight because we've got a spectacular panel.

Professor Sun Wanning is the Deputy Director of the UTS Australia-China Relations Institute, which is hosting this session. She's a professor in media and communications and a member of the Australian Research Council College of Experts. Professor Sun is the author of numerous books and reports, including this latest, well latest? From August 2023: *First-generation PRC migrants and social cohesion: Views on news about the PRC and Chinese-Australians*. You can find this one online. She has also written about migrant communities in China. And what is very relevant here is, as well, is her work on Chinese-language media in Australia and the politics of Chinese diasporic communities here. She's a frequent contributor to publications, including *Crikey* and *The Conversation*, as well as academic journals. Thank you for this Professor Sun, Wanning. I'll call you Wanning now.

Next to Sun Wanning is Erin Chew. Erin is a social activist, a freelance writer, an entrepreneur and the founder of the Asian Australian Alliance, which over the last 12 years has sought to empower and advocate for all

Asian-Australians and create a platform for positive change, especially around issues such as racism and representation, the challenges faced by Asian-Australian LGBTIQ communities and domestic violence against Asian-Australian women. She spends half her time in the United States and half her time in Australia. And she's currently collaborating on a project on redefining xenophobia in contemporary Australia.

Finally, we have Osmond Chiu, who is a research fellow at the Per Capita think tank. And he's worked in policy roles for over a decade, including as a reference group member for the Commonwealth Government's recent Multicultural Framework Review. He's a frequent contributor to *The Guardian*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Canberra Times*, and was previously recognised as one of the 40 most influential Asian-Australians under 40, for his work in the category of public sector and government. He's worked in policy roles for a very long time, and we are very privileged to have you here tonight. As we are all of you.

I want to start by asking Wanning to give us some definitions, because you will read in the papers the 'Chinese-Australian community' or 'Chinese-Australian voters'. We're actually talking about a really widely diverse group of people. Last Monday, I met somebody who was showing another group a photograph of his ancestors in Darwin in 1870. And then there are people who have recently come and are not confident in English. When political commentators and journalists talk about Australian-Chinese people in the context of politics, what do you think they get wrong? And what are some useful guidelines for everyone, including us this evening, as we delve into this topic as we think about Australian-Chinese communities?

Professor Wanning Sun:

Well, thank you Linda.

I think that's a great question to start the discussion, because I think the term 'Chinese community,' we have heard that expression so often. But it's really a lazy term, really. Who is in the Chinese community? And also, the other term that's often used is the 'Chinese-Australian community', single. And again, who is in that community? But it's very understandable that this is used, because it's convenient. But it really doesn't portray an accurate picture of complexity of people.

Look, from the last consensus, about 1.4 million people in Australia said they identified themself as having some kind of Chinese heritage. So, in numerical terms, that's about 5.5 percent of the entire population. But people with Chinese heritage is a very broad and vague term and you could also tick more than one box. So, the person that you have referred to in Darwin could be ticking both Chinese and Irish, or something like that.

So, in terms of recommendation, I think we could just start by being a little bit more careful with the term, and who are we actually talking about. And that's why I'm always a bit wary when people say I can speak on behalf of the Chinese-Australian community. And I think that claim is a bit problematic. And I think Erin and Osmond here probably will have no trouble agreeing with me, that we're not here to speak on behalf of the entire community. We're not spokesperson in any sense of the word. I think what we are here is to offer some of our thoughts, to share some of our thoughts based on our own research, evidence that comes from our research and observations.

So, in terms of the generations, there are people who were born, brought up here, like Erin brought up here, born here. Like Osmond, born and brought up here. Or like me, who is first-generation migrant from the PRC. Osmond probably would tell you he has Hong Kong and Taiwan background, and Erin has Malaysian-Chinese background. So, in terms of generation, there could be born and brought up here. We call them 'ABC' [Australian-born Chinese]. Or you could have many generations here, or the second generation. In fact, some of the first-generation PRC migrants are already having children who are old enough to vote. So, we call them second generation, or technically 1.5 generations, is the people who actually were brought to Australia when they were a little child.

So, in terms of place of birth, it's extremely diverse as well. And as I said, some born here, some born in China, some in Taiwan, some in Hong Kong –

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Singapore?

Professor Wanning Sun:

And Singapore and Malaysia. Yes. And also, in terms of language, you've got people who speak only English and nothing else, or people in Taiwan will say they speak Guoyu. They don't say they speak Mandarin. And in Hong Kong can speak Cantonese. And there is a whole range of Southern dialects, know Toisan, Hakka as well. And, of course, the latest arrivals, mostly speaking various dialects or mostly Mandarin. So, in terms of identifications, why a lot of people are happy to be identified as an Australian-Chinese, some may just prefer to be called 'I'm Taiwanese,' or 'I'm from Hong Kong,' or –

Ms Linda Jaivin:

I'm Australian.

Professor Wanning Sun:

Or 'I'm an Australian.' Yeah. Yes. So, it is extremely diverse.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

So going back to the second part of that question – and if either of you have insights into this, or three of you – so we have a press, we constantly see in the Australian-English language media references to 'Chinese-Australians' or 'Chinese-Australian community', et cetera. What is the danger there? What are they getting wrong? What is the thing that is giving people who read English-language media here a seriously wrong impression, aside from what you were explaining?

Ms Erin Chew:

I think one of the biggest issues is that they see us as one homogenous community. So, if you're Chinese, you're all from China. It's not saying being from China is bad or anything, but they forget that we come from a diverse range of Asian countries, Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia and other parts of Asia. But also the descendants who descended from Gold Rush Chinese and those early Chinese. So, all these things are not defined, but when the media, or what we call I guess 'China hawks,' if you want to use that term, talk about the topic of Chinese-Australians, Australians, Chinese, it's always about that community as one homogenous people. And that we are all potentially suspicious, because of the narratives that are put out there about the growth and influence of mainland China. So yeah. Osmond, you want to add to that?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

Yeah, I think the way I like to think of it is rather than 'the Chinese-Australian community', I think of it as 'Chinese-Australian communities', because what makes someone Chinese? Is it shared language? Not necessarily. Is it cultural practices? Not necessarily. There are different cultural practices even within mainland China itself. So, I think that is how I think of it, is not really one singular sense of being Chinese. And the views of people within particular communities is shaped by history of migration, history of power. What it is to be Chinese diaspora from Southeast Asia is very different to being someone who came from mainland China, like

the experience of being a minority and having discrimination. And it can lead to very different views. And so I think that's a bit of context that a lot of people don't really understand.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

And I think that's –

Professor Wanning Sun:

If I could just pick up on that. The Professor Andrew Jakubowicz has written an article, which actually has quite usefully pointed out that sometimes when we look at the multiculturalism, we tend to look at the ethnic communities as a particular interest group. But because of the fact that Chinese communities are so diverse and it's impossible to actually look at this 1.4 million people as all belonging to one particular interest group economically, politically and socially and culturally and linguistically.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

And these are all really important points. And we've spent a bit of time on them. I think just to make the point to really talk about – And I think you made a very good point, Erin, about it does result in everybody falling under suspicion if a certain group is under suspicion. So –

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I think one other point I'd like to flag is that for Chinese communities, unlike a lot of other ethnic communities, there's not really a peak organisational structure as well. So, it's actually far more fragmented than a lot of other ethnic communities in Australia. Where there are organisations, they tend to either be very interest specific or geographically specific.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Yeah. That's a really good point.

And my next question is for you, Osmond. Given this, given what we know about the incredible diversity in this community and its interests, as you well pointed out, what does your research tell you about the main factors that shaped various Chinese-Australian voters' choices in the last election? And what do you see in terms of continuities and change this time around? In other words, what were some of the issues that, if people were looking at the vote or looking at the election from the lens of being Chinese-Australian, whatever that meant to them, what's going on that's similar? What's going on that's different?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

Yeah. So, I think in the last election, Chinese-Australian voters played a pivotal role in determining the outcome. So if you read the Liberal Party's 2022 election review, it noted that the two-party preferred swing in the top 15 seats with Chinese ancestry was about, I think 6.6 percent, compared to the general swing against the Liberal Party – the Coalition – of, I believe, it was two or three points. Well, 3.7, I believe. So, there's a significant larger swing. So, unpacking that a bit more, if you read both the Coalition and the Labor's election reviews, it really flagged that this perception that Chinese communities were being demonised had a real impact. So, it was acknowledged by both the Labor Party and the Liberals. Obviously each put a different spin on it. But there was definitely a sense that talking about China, the threat of war, had a real impact on voters. And I think it's worth understanding why it had such an impact, because Chinese-Australian voters have, in my view, an outsized impact compared to a range of other ethnic groups. So, Chinese-Australians, as Wanning has said, they're about 5.5 percent of the population. But if you look at where they're located, a

large proportion live in marginal seats. So, there's about 150 seats in the House of Representatives. You need a majority in there to form a government. At least five of those seats, over 20 percent of citizens in that seat have Chinese ancestry.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

I think Bradfield is 24-point-something.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

And Bennelong is even higher. But if you even look at seats that have more than 10 percent Chinese ancestry, you're looking at about 20 seats. And when you look at the seats that changed hands, eight seats had Chinese ancestry above 10 percent. And you might think, 'Oh, that's only a small portion,' but when you're talking about marginal seats, these are seats where the margin is less than five percent. You don't need to swing everyone's vote, you just need to swing enough votes. And looking at the best available data, which is from the Lowy Institute's *Being Chinese in Australia* reports. They had a report that they released in 2020, 2021, 2022. You can actually see the collapse in identification with the Liberal Party. So, in 2020, about 42 percent said the party they most closely identified with was the Liberal Party. The following year that had fallen to 28 percent. The year after that it went up slightly to 32 percent. But essentially they lost a quarter of people who identified with them.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

That's so interesting. Can you tell us when the identification with the Liberal Party started? If you give us a historical overview?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

There's been a perception that Chinese communities really shifted towards the Coalition probably in the 2000, 2010s. So, if you look at Labor's 2019 election review, it really talked about how one of the reasons why they were not able to win the seats of Reid and Chisholm was because there was a shift by the Chinese community against the Labor Party. And there's possibly a few explanations for that. The great migration of people from the PRC after the 2000s, who likely didn't have the memory or association of the Liberal Party with an anti-multicultural stance that was much more prominent in the 1980s, 1990s, changing socioeconomic class composition, as well as particularly in New South Wales, there was a concerted effort by the Liberal Party to build relations with culturally diverse communities.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

That's really interesting. And actually, I want to ask Erin – because of your work looking at Chinese-American communities and how they vote and so on, you've been looking at the voting patterns there – what are some of the similarities and differences between the way that Chinese-Americans and Chinese-Australians in all their diversity choose who to barrack for? And is this the turning towards the Liberals? One thing that I think has happened, and I don't know, because it's only anecdotal that I know about, is that there's a number of Chinese supporters of Trump. So, could you talk a little bit about affiliations there? And what lessons we might draw from what's happening, or happened in the States?

Ms Erin Chew:

Yeah. So, it's interesting. I think just tagging on what Osmond mentioned about the different paths of migration, of all the different Chinese communities, depending on where they migrated from, similarly to the Chinese-American communities, it's very generational in terms of how they conceptually see politics and

political parties. So, in the US they talk a lot about the model minority and that Chinese communities, Chinese-Americans and Chinese-Australians and Asian-Americans and Asian-Australians generally fit in what that idea of model minority: that we come to US, come to Australia, that everyone works hard, make sure their children go to university, get a good degree, eventually they buy a house, own a car, and they don't tend to speak out when it comes to political issues or social issues. So, that stereotype or that narrative was beneficial possibly for the migrant generation of Chinese-Americans and Chinese-Australians.

But, with a generation like myself and Osmond and others who were born and raised here, it actually is to our disadvantage, because we are always put into that stereotype. And we don't talk about enough about that in Australia, whereas in the US this is an ongoing conversation about the model minority and how it actually has become a burden for the Chinese-American communities. In terms of their voting patterns, I think conceptually the Chinese communities are always seen as a lot more conservative in how they vote politically. Chinese-Americans are the same, because they see that if we vote for the Republicans, they're better for the economy, they're better for my job and earning capacity and things like that. And that's similar to how a lot of Chinese-Australian communities, when they voted for the Liberal Party, how they see – We may think, 'Oh, that's just a stereotype,' but conceptually that is how they see it, that if we vote for the Liberal Party, they're better for the economy. Whereas the Labor Party is more for the unions and more for the working class. 'We're not working class. We are above that working-class threshold.' So that is also very similar in many ways.

But, where it has attracted Chinese-Americans to more Trumpism is also, again, very generational. So, you see a lot of Chinese-Americans who are more on the belief of that pro-democracy, maybe anti-communism type of ideology. Those people were very loud and proud, particularly in New York, in San Francisco, where there's huge concentration of Chinese-American communities there. And they're loud, loud and proud. But they don't necessarily represent the majority, because when you're loud, you look like the majority, whereas in reality, you may not be.

So, that's one group, and they like that Trump's hard line against the CCP [Chinese Communist Party]. And they feel that, oh, if Trump is president, as he is now again, that basically he will put that hard line on mainland China and push Xi Jinping and whatever his ambitions are down, not thinking that the residual impact on the domestic community, the racism and things like that. And one thing that you see that's quite similar in that period of that 2020 to 2022, where in America it also shifted to Joe Biden and the Democrats. And when he won the election was also due to the racism and the political racist rhetoric coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, where for the first time, many Chinese-American communities or Chinese-American people, and also Chinese-Australians who may always thought, 'Oh, there's no racism issue.'

For the first time, they either knew somebody who faced racism as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, or they experienced that themselves. And then you see people like when Scott Morrison was Prime Minister and him saying that we need to go and investigate the origins of COVID-19. And then you have Trump calling it the 'Kung Fu virus' and things like that. So that I think shifted, but it may not work now. See what I mean?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

It's very interesting. I want to tease out one of the things that you were saying, asking Osmond and wanting to comment – Oh, and by the way, at seven o'clock, more or less, we'll be going to questions and you'll have an opportunity to ask questions yourself. So, I just forgot to mention that we'll be doing that later.

Well, one of the things I wanted to tease out is this notion of the relationship with mainland China, the PRC and all of that, whether that is different in Australia. I mean, we're so much closer here and I'll ask Wanning first because you've explicitly studied the mainlanders, but it's not actually just about the mainlanders. Do we have in our Chinese-Australian communities a more neutral or even friendly view towards China even in difficult times? Or what are the differences with what Erin was painting for the United States in that regard? In the way that we here look at China?

Professor Wanning Sun:

That is a very complex question.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

It is.

Professor Wanning Sun:

I think I'll just start addressing that by just talking a little bit about this particular cohort, what we call the PRC community. And I think it might be useful to talk about that because they are the latest arrivals. The people from China who migrate from China to Australia and US, it started to happen after China started the economic reform in the '80s and in the '90s. So, you've got the layering of Chinese-ness there. And then on top of that, starting from the '90s, you have the people from the PRC and they came in large numbers. And so, as a result of that, they dramatically shifted the demographic composition of the so-called Chinese diaspora. If you just look at the Australian situation, out of that 5.5 people who identify themselves as having some kind of Chinese heritage, 2.2 identify themselves as having Mandarin as the first language spoken at home. So even though they are the late arrivals, numerically speaking, they're poised to become almost like the more dominant group in terms of numbers.

And this group, I'll sometimes I think that the differences between them and the other so-called Chinese communities is probably as big as the differences between them and the so-called mainstream Australian public, right? First of all, the more recent are migrants, so their English proficiency is very uneven, right. Some speak good English and others don't, and most of them just struggle through. And then the other thing is that they have closer ties with families and the networks in China than people like Osmond and Erin. So that doesn't necessarily mean they're exclusively subject to suspicion, as we can tell from Osmond's story. But usually when we talk about them as likely agents of influence, most people actually talk about them – In fact, some people actually argued that we should actually have migrants only from Hong Kong to Taiwan and not so much from mainland China. That kind of argument also was made. And also, China is not an electoral democracy, now they're coming to this country where voting, unlike the US, is compulsory here.

So, there is this kind of civic citizenship engagement issues here, which is very, very important for this particular new arrival groups. I think the government has invested money, and there are some community groups are doing their bit to train and to provide information and the civic education, how to vote and how to be responsible citizens. And also, as you mentioned, they're facing a very, very different media landscape because they straddle the two media systems. You've got the English-language media system here, and they've got this state Chinese media here, and they find that actually, for different reasons, neither of them serves their own cultural needs very well. Hence, the emergence and the thriving of the Chinese-language media in diaspora that's produced locally, which not only translate and broker content from both sides but also presented to the community by putting their own diasporic slant to it.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

We'll be getting more deeply into that.

How do you think there might be, in your reading, and you Osmond, do you think that there's a significant difference in views here towards the PRC, than there are in America where it's a further thing and a more demonised thing? And I mean nobody, no leader of any party here could really get away with some of the stuff that, for example, Trump would say about China. Even with Scott Morrison calling for that investigation, the language is quite different. Do you see a difference?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

Yes. My analysis of why there's a difference between Australia and the US, it partially comes down to political economy. Obviously China is our largest economic trading partner, but my view is that the political incentives are very different.

In the US it is politically beneficial for parties whether Democrat or Republican, to talk up the threat of China and the problems that exist. Whereas in Australia, the last election showed that actually it backfires. The Coalition attempted to make it a huge issue, forgetting that for most people, the only people who swing their votes on, well making China a foreign policy issue are Chinese-Australians. And you can see the impact it's having.

So, obviously this week there's been a lot of talk about the PLA [People's Liberation Army] naval ships off the coast of Australia, but if you look at the transcripts of Peter Dutton, he's pretty much avoided saying 'China'. Which says a lot given that in the lead up to the election he was talking about the threat of war. He's explicitly trying to avoid saying the word 'China' at all. He's letting his other shadow ministers really put out the more strident message, which I think is very interesting.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Very.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

And in terms of the political incentives, I talked about how you had those five seats where over 20 percent of the population had Chinese ancestry. You might think, 'Oh, so what if a few of them change?' But based on that Lowy Institute report, if they've lost a quarter of their vote, at least a quarter of their support, just do some simple multiplication, means they're probably losing at least one, two, three percent of primary vote. You think, 'Oh yeah, that doesn't matter.' Marginal seats are less than five percent. You have a seat like Bennelong, which is less than one percent. Because of that concentration, and also because of the way the Chinese community is really fragmented, you can't really broker through any particular organisations. So, it can have a huge impact if it cuts through.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Yeah, that's really, really interesting.

Ms Erin Chew:

Could I quickly add something?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Yeah.

Ms Erin Chew:

So, I think another difference with the Chinese-Americans is that we don't experience here, is that Chinese Americans have that issue of affirmative action in college admissions. And so, in terms of what that means is that in the US, as you know, it's not like how it works here, where you can go through getting government-funded placement, but also you can choose how you want to pay your university education. Whereas in America, it's either scholarship, get a student loan, and that's pretty much it.

So, to get into those big universities, it's not just about your marks that you do in your exams and things. It's all about what you do outside. And so, a lot of Chinese-American communities invest a lot in their children's education to ensure that they can get into the Ivy Leagues and the good universities in the US. And so, their thinking is that affirmative action, who is meant to bring a little bit more equality and was brought in by the Democrats: 'We'll give the disadvantaged communities more placements and their children won't get that placement anymore'. And so that has also been a shift in terms of how they vote.

And then you have issues around the anti-Black type of sentiment, which is a lot more bigger in America. Particularly, I think 2014, the police, Peter Liang, who was a police officer in New York who shot Akai Gurley. And that really split how the Chinese-Americans thought. 'Oh, Peter Liang was treated unfairly when he was arrested and he shot a Black guy. And Black people in America are criminals' – that's a general idea of how a lot of, particularly the Chinese-Americans who are from the more migrant generation, maybe a lot more like what Wanning mentioned about English is a bit here and there, some may not necessarily have a lot of English comprehension. They're just thinking, 'Well, black people are criminals, so what they did is the right thing.'

So, that also split and how Chinese-Americans voted. So, I think a lot of those two things changes where we don't necessarily face that in Australia. And like I said, like Osmond said, we are closer to mainland China, and so that's why it affects us more where when they do take that rhetoric that, 'Oh, China is a threat to our national security,' doesn't necessarily win votes from our Chinese-Australian communities. And that shows that our voting intentions and our ideas on who we vote for has changed significantly. That we are a lot more articulate when it comes to thinking about how we vote, and we are thinking a lot more comprehensively. And that also is due to the generational changes of Chinese-Australian votes.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Very interesting.

I want to turn the topic to media. And you have – Wanning, you were just talking about this complexity of Chinese-language media and of other sources of information. I'd love you to give us a bit about, just give us a view of the landscape of the media that Chinese-Australians in their different communities would be looking at. I mean, from the right, to the left, to the middle. And part of that is, is *SBS* considered neutral or reliable? What are the trusted media in the different parts of the community? Could you talk about that a little bit?

Professor Wanning Sun:

Oh, God. The issue of trust, again.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

I give you all the big questions.

Professor Wanning Sun:

Again, the issue of trust is excellent because that report you've just referred to is about to what extent the PRC communities trust the Australian media's coverage of China. And what I have found from that study is that while a lot of the majority of respondents told me that they do not trust Australia's mainstream coverage of China, they place higher trust on the Australian mainstream media's coverage of Australia's domestic issues.

So, in other words, it's not that they have lost faith in Australian media per se, it's only when it's coverage of China. Okay. And in fact, when I asked them, 'Do you trust the Australian media more? Do you trust the Chinese media more?' They would definitely trust the Australian media more than – So there is a very, very complex,

but coming back to the question of media landscape, it is indeed quite a complex landscape they find themselves inhabiting.

Because on one hand you've got the English language, what we call mainstream media. And I'm not sure how many or what percentage of people in that group actually are able to tell which ones is on the left and which ones on the right. And some might even think that ABC is actually part of the government because that's how *CCTV* in China is, right? Others are more discerning. So, that's on the mainstream side, English side.

And on the other side, you've got the *People's Daily*, *China Daily*, and all of them are freely available online if they want to access them. So, we did some surveys trying to find out just how much they're consuming these medias. We find actually they're not really spend that much time looking at the English-language media. They're even spending even less time looking at the state Chinese media. But they're spending a lot of time looking at the Chinese-language digital media, that are produced by local organisations that do a couple of things.

One is to translate the content from the English-language media and to inform them, but only on issues that actually the editors think are more relevant to their life, right. Such as about policies and stuff like that. And also, so, this kind of Chinese-language media – I call them diasporic media – are highly country-specific. In the US, they're more interested in the US-specific issues. And in Australia, even it's actually city-specific, like *Sydney Today*, it's different from *Melbourne Today*. So, as a result of that, people are accessing a lot of information and just don't think that they don't spend a lot of time on mainstream media that they don't access the content at all. That's not the case at all. They do access it, but in a filtered and curated kind of way.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

That's fascinating. And I was wondering in that context, what do we know about how effectively the various political parties, and I suppose independent candidates are using Chinese-language digital media, including social media to woo Chinese voters? What do we know about the effectiveness of that and how –

Professor Wanning Sun:

Woo is a very good word. Because it seems to me one of my ongoing argument is that, please don't just look at Chinese community, people in China as just voters, okay. Look at them as citizens and look at them as consumers even, but don't just come election time, 'Let's figure out how to access them.'

But having said that, they are trying very, very hard to access the community. And apart from actually holding community forums where the politicians and the candidates come to meet people in-person, they do rely on a great extent on Chinese-language media. I have seen quite a few examples of Liberal Party's using Chinese social media WeChat subscription account to push their advertisement as well as the editorial stuff. That's one way of doing that. The other way is doing that is simply for the parties to place their political ads, paid ads in these Chinese newspapers.

But having said that, a lot of this is done through the Chinese language platform, social media platforms. And WeChat started to become quite useful starting from the time when Bill Shorten was running. Remember that? Yeah, Bill Shorten was trying to become the Prime Minister. And he actually was quite active in getting his Chinese-speaking assistant to set up some WeChat groups because WeChat operates in a very odd way. You have to be in the group in order to access that. So, it's a semi-private kind of thing. So, the Labor Party tried very hard in that election to use WeChat. And the Liberal Party were initially quite critical and even decided to boycott the use of WeChat at one stage. But finally they probably thought, 'Ah, hell, well you can't beat them, join them.' So they started to have WeChat accounts, including Scott Morrison himself.

But in the last year or so, new technology, new platform such as Xiaohongshu or RedNote become much more attractive to politicians because it operates more or less like Instagram. So, it's more accessible and you don't have to go through to join someone in order to access them. And you can try to hide someone or engage someone to help you to grow your 'fandom', if you like. And also – because Xiaohongshu is good with short audiovisual materials, rather than lengthy discussion – And the politicians can upload an image, video of themselves, one or two minutes going to Chinatown, 'Hey, I'm here enjoying Chinatown, having some dumplings and blah blah,' just to show that, trying to endear themselves to the communities and so on and so forth. So, that's from the politicians' point of view.

From the point of view of the Chinese voters, I think Chinese social media is also, is very, very useful. Of course, it's got positive side and the negative side. The positive side is that it becomes a very, very important place for them to find information about all matters electoral. And it's also the places for them to find out informations that allow them to reach what they consider to be informed decision by discussing the pros and the cons of each party. And it also allowed some people to do some fact checking because the flip side, downside of this Chinese social media is that other social media platform is prone to disinformation and then misinformation.

And then we see this very clearly during the referendum campaign where there are a lot of rumours, disinformations about what would happen if you vote Yes. And even though some people tried very hard to actually also put out messages for Yes-voters as well. And I think that in the last election, oh no, it's Shorten's election, think there was the – Labor was also quite effective about the Medicare campaign, Medicare scare campaign. So there's a lot of room for that kind of disinformation, misinformation to take place. And of course, it's their Chinese-language platforms, so they're subject to Chinese censorship. So sometimes even though you are not saying anything political, you're just uploading a picture of you going to Chinatown. Maybe the people at the Chinese platform might think, 'Oh, we don't want too many politicians on the platform because it might become politically too sensitive.'

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Like they were accidentally standing in front of the Falun Gong or something. Who knows?

There's so much to talk about. I want to shift the topic in a moment. But the misinformation, disinformation thing with the Voice is so interesting. People kept sending me on my WeChat account all this stuff, Chinese-language videos, which said, 'If you vote yes, you're going to lose your home. The Aboriginal people are going to take over your home,' all this sort of thing. And in the end, one of the Chinese community pro-Yes people, who I did an event with in Ryde with Mandarin first voters. She said, 'Let's make some videos because the way you can go viral on Chinese social media is have a non-Chinese person speaking Mandarin.' So we did a whole bunch of countering disinformation videos where I was saying, 'You won't lose your home according to the 1993 freehold title extinguishes native title,' all this sort of thing.

Professor Wanning Sun:

All in Chinese.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

All in Chinese. And it did get some traction, but I mean, there's so much, I mean, you can bring these things up in misinformation, disinformation again.

But I did want to get to something really important, and that is the effect of the so-called 'China threat narrative' on the community and the way it votes. And Osmond, you had a rather dramatic personal experience. I don't know if all of you remember, but it was 2020 I think, the Senate was doing hearings on

diasporic communities and their issues. And Osmond was one of three people who were testifying when Eric Abetz, the Liberal senator, Eric Abetz, demanded that you and the others in his words, 'unconditionally condemn the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship'. That kind of thing where your loyalty is questioned on account of your ethnicity, what did that tell you about the impact of China threat discourse on people in Chinese-Australian communities?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

What it told me was it was far worse than I had expected. It's one thing to have an intellectual abstract discussion about these issues. It's another thing to get confronted with it in-person, well, it wasn't in-person, but get confronted with it. And I would hope that what happened and the aftermath really sent a message that that kind of questioning of the loyalties of Chinese-Australians wasn't acceptable. I would hope that, but I think the fact that the no-longer-a-senator didn't really apologise suggests there is a minority that feels that kind of line of questioning is acceptable.

I would say that my experience isn't unique. You've had politicians such as Jason Yat-sen Li, Sally Sitou talk about this loyalty question being raised and used against them in whispering campaigns, during elections. And I do think that does have an impact, not just on an individual who decides they may want to run for office, but it also has an impact on their family. It's one of the multiple things you have to consider. And, unfortunately, often it's done in a very sly way for political advantage, and it's really important that a strong message is sent that it's completely unacceptable.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

I'm going to ask Erin to briefly comment. We're getting close to question time.

You're working on redefining xenophobia in contemporary Australia. Do you want to just say a little bit about that?

Ms Erin Chew:

Yeah, so I think a lot of that idea of that research comes down to talking about our identity. So, in Australia, and there's a difference between how Chinese-Americans see their Chinese-American identity and how Chinese-Australians, how we see our identity in Australia. Because we are situated in the Asia-Pacific region, anything that comes from mainland China is always going to be closer. And a lot of the times I think we look at what the Australian media, not just the ones that we know, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sky News*, and all them put out, but even to a certain extent some subliminal negative narratives put out by places like ABC, it has pushed our identity, are we Australian or are we Chinese? And when we say are we Chinese, are we siding with mainland China and Xi Jinping and the CCP? So that is what it is. There's no such thing as that middle ground where we can be critical of the Chinese Communist Party, but we are also critical of the Australian media landscape and the constant racial and negative narrative. Sometimes it's very direct and sometimes it's very subliminal, in images, in titles, and things like that.

And, so, I think first of all, the language that is used in the media is very lazy and lacks a lot of sensitivity. And when we talk about that China threat, that does impact on our identity, how we see ourselves as Chinese-Australians. And if I ask a lot of people, a lot of them, they'll just say, 'I'm Australian,' rather than, 'I am Chinese-Australian,' as an identity, because they feel that term Chinese is going to put them in that 'you're pro-CCP'.

In America, it's a lot different. The Chinese-American identity has been born out of a lot of movements, where Chinese-Americans know their history, a lot of Chinese-Australians do not know the Chinese-Australian history.

In Chinese America they have Asian-American studies which was born out of a lot of movements to push out African-American studies, Latino studies, and things like that, so they can learn their history. A lot of movements, I think one of the biggest movements that defined the Chinese-American identity was in the 1980s with the Vincent Chin incident. I don't want to talk, that's a big story, but if you look up Vincent Chin, that was a pivotal movement for a lot of Chinese-Americans informing their identity and standing up for their rights. And if you look even further back in history, a lot of Asian-Americans, social activists and those who are advocates, actually fought with people like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X during the civil rights movement.

So, you see that their identity has been formed in that way, whereas in Australia we never really had all that. We don't have Asian-Australian studies as something people can study, or Asian-Australian Heritage Month. In the US, they have Asian-American Heritage Month where they can celebrate their identity, so that identity is stronger. Chinese-American political representatives, whether they're on a state or national, they're also more strongly able to identify with their Chinese-American heritage.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

That's really, really interesting.

Osmond, you wanted to add something, and then we're going to have a final question for everyone.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

The one thing I wanted to say is that while there are similarities in the experience of the Chinese diaspora across Western colonial societies, so New Zealand, Canada, the US, what makes Australia a bit different is the role of White Australia as being foundational to our country. And John Fitzgerald talks about it in his book, *Big White Lie*, that the idea of being Australian was created, and they created a caricature of the Oriental Chinese person to counterpose to say, 'Oh, the Australian was egalitarian, believed in democracy.' Whereas you had the Oriental, the Chinese person who was servile, didn't believe in democracy, etc, etc. And when you start to unpack it and understand it, it really gives you a sense that there is that deeper level of xenophobia that exists in Australia that we really haven't unpacked and thought about in a deep level.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

That's a really great point actually.

It was very interesting, I was at a conference in Canberra earlier this week of a Chinese-Australian leadership conference. And they talked about the idea of identity, and the idea that where do you place yourself on your Australian-ness and your Chinese-ness? Where do your parents place you and where do you think Australians place you? And the people pretty much place themselves in the middle, but the parents would place them as being more Australian, especially if they were immigrants, and Australians place them as being more Chinese. So, it's this constant negotiation of notions of who you are.

I'm going to ask, well, two little questions.

If you were to name one issue that you think is going to be driving Chinese-Australian votes in this coming election, whether it's cost of living or whether it's the China-Australia relations or whatever. I know, it's a silly question because we talked about complex communities, but if you were going to name one issue that you thought was at the forefront of many Chinese-Australian voters, could you each just name what issue that would be first?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I'm happy to go first.

Ms Erin Chew:

Yeah, go first.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I think cost of living is going to be the key issue, but the question of trust.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Trust in?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

Trust in whether or not Peter Dutton will be better. And I think people will have reservations based on what he had previously said about China and talking up the threat of war. Obviously he's done a bit of a 180-turn more recently, trying to avoid even talking about the subject. But the fact that you have different messages coming from different Coalition shadow ministers and you have some pretty superficial attempts.

The example that comes to mind is there was a recent event he did, I think with the Member for Menzies, Keith Wolahan, about Chinese-Australian veterans, and he referred to Billy Sing, the decorated ANZAC sniper and said he had a great story, you should Google him, but in talking about Billy Sing, he said Billy Sing came to Australia even though Billy Sing was born here. So, it suggests that a lot of it is actually pretty superficial, and can you actually trust that he won't revert if he gets elected?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Right, very interesting.

Ms Erin Chew:

I think Chinese-Australian communities, like every other Australian communities is going to be concerned with cost of living, the economy, and whether they're going to be able to feed their family and pay their mortgage. I think that's the big thing.

And I think another issue is maybe it's, taking what Osmond said, but also that question of has the Labor Party done enough as a government to – I guess what Chinese-Australian communities when they voted for the Labor Party, those who did, some, those who may have changed their votes from say, voting for the Coalition to the Labor Party – Has the Labor Party done enough?

Labor Party promised a lot of things in terms of whether they were or were not going to repair the fragmented relationship with China. Have they been able to achieve that? Maybe yes, maybe no. And whether they want to revert back to what they were voting previously, whether they were conservative voters or whether they're going to continue voting for the Labor government. Or whether they're going to vote for all these independents that are coming in. And so I think it'll come down to whether the government has done enough to win the votes again.

And are we still seen as a stereotype? Are we still seen as those who just hold banquets for politicians to come up and say, 'ni hao ma,' and, 'xin nian kuai le'? And walking behind a lion dance during Lunar New Year? Do they see more value?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Yeah, basically it's interesting, because you both agree cost of living, and then you have this mirror, the two different sides. On the one hand, can you trust the Coalition? On the other hand, did Labor do enough?

Very quickly, and then we're going to go to a one-word answer for the final question and then open up.

Professor Wanning Sun:

I noticed that a latest survey that's done by a Chinese-language newspaper in Sydney provide a list of issues, but ask the Chinese-Australians, and mostly probably I imagine Mandarin speakers, to nominate only one as the top one. And there are about up to 20: Healthcare, education, immigration, economic management, and blah, blah, blah. And 20 is a lot. Housing, visa issues and refugee issues, housing. And I was really interested to find that of course the biggest percentage is economic management, that is which party is better at management. That's about 14 to 15 percent, remembering from top of my memory. But right next to it is about 12 percent is which party will be better at handling Australia-China relations.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Fascinating.

Professor Wanning Sun:

Now this, if you ask the Australian general public which party is going to be better – it would be really, really, really, really low down there. Of course, it's not as high as economic management as issue, it's almost as high. So, I think that's something, that's one message to take home.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

And it's worth noting that Peter Dutton did actually go out, and he's been saying, 'Oh, I'll be a better manager of the relationship.' So he's been actively trying to change that.

Professor Wanning Sun:

It's interesting, let's see how things are going to play out. Because I just noticed Penny Wong made an opening remark at the Senate Estimate today on the issue of the Chinese live fire exercises, and she's criticising obviously Liberal Party, saying, 'They are at it again,' that's her word. 'They are at it again, they want to make China the election issue. And they forgot about what it means for the Australian exporters and the Chinese-Australian communities'. That's her words, not mine.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Very interesting. We've got so many things, we can tease these things out in the discussion. I want a one-word answer for the final question.

Tonight is election night, the elections have just been held. And you are all Antony Green, or Antonia Green, Antonia Lu. The polls have just closed, who are you predicting is going to win from the Chinese-Australian community votes? Just counting those, one word, one word answer. Who's winning?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

We won't know tonight.

Ms Erin Chew:

I think that's a difficult question.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Take a punt.

Ms Erin Chew:

Take a punt. If I'm going to take a punt, and being very impartial, I would say the government remains the same.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

On the Chinese-Australian vote.

Professor Wanning Sun:

Well again, quoting the same survey, it seems at the moment there are still more supporters for Labor from this community, this particular cohort, but the distance between the Labor and Liberal is fast dwindling compared with last time. So, there's a 50 saying they'll still vote for [Labor], 40 say they're going to vote for Liberal, and the rest to all different other parties.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Well, we've covered a lot of territory. That's been absolutely fascinating. I could listen to all of you for another hour, but we need to turn to questions. We do have a microphone. Raise your hand, we'll give you the microphone.

And before you start, I want to say no statements, we just want questions. If you start to make a big speech or a statement, I'm going to cut you off. So I'm just telling you that now so you don't think that I'm horribly rude. I will be horribly rude though.

Audience question:

Thanks, Linda. Two questions, if I may.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

And identify yourself.

Audience member:

My name is Alan.

Two questions, actually two follow-up questions.

First one is – Thank you, Osmond, for making that comment about mentioning trust –The first question is, to what extent do you think Chinese-Australian voters still remember the provocative remarks that Mr Dutton made under the previous administration?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I think people do remember it. I think it's one of those things where when people feel their identity is under attack, it really activates them politically. And when people are pretty angry about something, it's often really hard to shift them back.

Professor Wanning Sun:

Yeah, I can go with that.

I would just like to quote, I actually had it on a screenshot but I forgot to bring it with me. I was watching what people are saying on Xiaohongshu, on Red Book. Someone posted a message about, 'Well, should we vote for Dutton or not?' There is a variety of opinions. One said, 'I'm going to go back and vote for Liberals this time.' And others said, 'I think I want to go for Liberal, but I just can't trust Dutton. I still have very, very vivid memory. It's not Morrison, but I still can't trust Dutton.'

And I support Osmond's hunch that it's very hard to forget that, and many people haven't forgot that. The question is to what extent they decided to still go back to their voting preference to Liberal despite of their niggling suspicion about Dutton?

Ms Erin Chew:

I think we need to also realise that Chinese-Australian voters are a lot more observant voters. We think more critically. We don't just think, oh, because my parents voted Liberal Party, or because my parents came during a Labor government that I will vote the same way. We are a lot more critical in what we think. And I think, as we said earlier, that whole rhetoric around Dutton bringing back the China threat or the threat of war and all the things that came from that. I think if no one brought that up, that may not necessarily have been an issue, that relationship between Australia and China may not necessarily have been an issue. But because it was brought up constantly and put in a negative sense, I think it has become a big election issue. And I think Chinese-Australian voters are realising that they are critical in the elections.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Really good point.

Before you do your second question, do we have other people who want to ask a question? We can come back to you. Do you mind yielding the microphone?

Audience question:

Thanks for that. Marcus Rubenstein here, thanks for your input tonight.

One of the things I guess Osmond brought up was that Chinese voters tend to believe the Liberals are better economic managers, I think – ergo that a Liberal government is going to protect their savings, protect their investment, and protect their long-term financial interests. I think one of the reasons –

Ms Linda Jaivin:

What's your question?

Audience member:

Okay, I'm getting there. I have to preface it so it gives it some context. One of the reasons the teals won, and I live in a teal seat, is because Liberal voters there realise that it's for the most part rhetoric that they're not necessarily better economic managers, so they could make a more informed choice. Are second generations of Chinese more likely to eventually arrive at that view and think, well, hang on, maybe the major parties aren't the solution for us, we can look elsewhere, rather than have this stereotypical, if you will, perception that one party or the other just serves their interests?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

It's a big hypothetical, clearly the phenomenon of people voting for major parties is declining. And it's not just something that's happening in Australia, you're seeing the fragmentation of party systems around the Western world as people see there being a wider variety of viable choices. And I think in the case of the teals, that was a big factor, that it was seen as a viable choice where they could actually win. So that's where people often park their votes. So, I think it's very possible, but I think we are in an era where there is a lot of change, so I don't like to make too firm a prediction. Because who knows what's going to happen over the next few years, whether or not we have a situation where minority governments become the norm in Australia, like in Canada, or whether we're going to see something like going back to 2013? I think it's just very unclear at the moment.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Did you want to add something or should we –

Ms Erin Chew:

Just very quickly, I think if we look at the last election, and I think if we look at a second and even possibly a 2.5 generation of say Chinese-Australian voters, a lot of us from the last election also saw the teals as possibly just a white people thing. Because most of the teals that were being pushed out in the media and pushed out in public were women of not non-diverse colours, skin colours. And I think we saw that. And then we saw people like Dai Le, whether we agree or disagree with her stances, she was not necessarily included in that teal thing. And I think as a second to 2.5 generation voters, I think we see that how that plays in this election, I think we can't really tell, but I think how Chinese-Australian votes probably will go how Australia has generally voted. And that's a lot of them is moving away from the main political parties.

And I think one more quick point is that they want to bring in the Greens and whether the Greens have had a big impact in Chinese-Australian votes. And I think the Greens, their policies still don't necessarily resonate with a lot of an older generation of, say, Chinese-Australian voters, but it may change. We have a newer generation who possibly have more concerns over climate change and a lot of Chinese voters would attribute, say, climate change policies to the Greens as a very simple basic thought process. But whether the Greens have penetrated and engaged a community effectively or not is still very difficult to say. I think it'll be interesting to see how they do in this coming election as well.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Thanks, Erin. Because I had actually intended to ask something about the Greens and the independents, so that's a very good point about different generations and their concerns.

Did you want to say something about it?

Professor Wanning Sun:

If I can say something about the Greens, I'm just saying that the Greens is one of the few parties that actually have come up clearly saying we want to have a very independent foreign policy and against the AUKUS. I think if there are strategists in this group for Greens, they probably should actually think about the fact there are messages from the Green that could resonate with the Chinese communities and they could do better.

But coming back if I like with your questions about whether there might be generational differences in terms of holding this perception of whether the Liberals are the better economic managers or not, I think to some extent that could be true about the generational difference. Just as Erin was talking about the parents voted for Trump, their children voted for the Dems, Democrats. In Australia you could also see the parents actually come from the more conservative small business background, still continue to vote for Liberals, holding that perception or the belief, whereas the younger generations having been educated in Australian universities and have a more integrated with the general public think otherwise and vote otherwise.

And also, the other thing is that within the Mandarin-speaking communities, that perception still is quite prevalent even though that is first-generation or maybe despite the fact they're first-generation or maybe because of the fact they're first-generation, yes.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

All possibilities.

Yes, over here we've got a question and then over here.

Sorry Alan, we'll get back to you if people run out of questions.

Audience question:

Can I just speak?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

You've got a microphone right there.

Audience member:

Oh, okay. Thank you. Thank you. Bevan Ramsden from the Independent Peaceful Australian Network.

Since both the major political parties, Liberal and Labor, support AUKUS, which is preparation really for a US war, or hostilities against China. Do you think the apprehension about that, which is quite deep in the Chinese community, I think, and the wider Australian community, do you think that might mean a movement away from the two major political parties?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Interesting. An AUKUS question. What do you think?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I guess on the question of AUKUS, looking at the Lowy Institute's polling from *Being Chinese in Australia*, there was a significant difference in the perceptions of Chinese-Australians versus the community more broadly.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Absolutely. What was that difference?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I think there was generally a belief amongst the general public that AUKUS was more likely to make Australia safer, whereas amongst Chinese-Australians it was pretty split. I think from recollection it was a quarter said yes, safer, a quarter said no, and the rest were a mix of makes no difference or unsure.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Fascinating.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

In terms of whether it will have an impact on politics in Australia, again, I think we are living through a pretty rough ride at the moment where we are a bit unsure about the direction the international order is going in so I would say that there are a range of possibilities, but it's really unclear at the moment. It might mean that some people think alliances are even more important because every power is going and doing their own thing. It might have the opposite effects, but it will depend on world events and a lot of things that are maybe outside our control.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Very interesting. Did you want to add something?

Professor Wanning Sun:

Yeah, I would just say that research has indicated that when it comes to voting, the general voters tend to play a lot less focus on foreign policies and defence policies than domestic issues, economic issues and the immigration and so on and so forth. And it's not more than [a few] percent really in terms of how important it is.

With the Chinese-speaking communities, various Chinese communities, even I can tell you that there is data to show that there is high level of disapproval of AUKUS within the Chinese communities simply because they associate – Let's face it, AUKUS is about China. The elephant in the room is about China. In order to drum up support for public opinion for AUKUS, you've got to talk about China threat. And then you've got to talk about the war. Chinese communities that I've talked to are really, really worried about this becoming true and are even worried about you talking too much because they believe that might become a self-fulfilling prophecy, you talk so much. This piece is very much on their mind.

Having said that, I haven't noticed that AUKUS is front and center in their consideration of which party to go for. It is actually the general question of which party is better at the handling relationship with China that seems to be more important than the AUKUS issue per se. And I think to a large extent I think is probably fortunately or unfortunately for the both major parties, they haven't really informed the public, including the Chinese-Australian public, about what AUKUS is about, what it all means. People are not really terribly informed about that.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Yeah, that's really true. Did you want to –

Ms Erin Chew:

Just very, very quickly and I think what Wanning said, I don't think AUKUS is the biggest issue, the elephant in the room. And I think if we break it down, it is just basically the Western Bloc versus mainland China. And I think when we look at the Chinese-Australian communities and how they would vote, I think some of them would also look at their ethnicity in terms of where their Chinese ethnicity is from. You may have parents who come from some of the Southeast Asian countries with that whole islands issue and who owns what, that can impact on how they vote. Or those who are say Hong Kong or Taiwanese background, that potential, how they see the China threat and that can influence their votes. I think again, I think Wanning said it is about the relationship rather than AUKUS as an issue, but I think AUKUS is part of the issue rather than being the main issue.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

And that's such a good point too, that if you come from Taiwan you might have a completely opposite perspective if you care more about the safety of Taiwan than – We have a question here, the microphone here. Thank you.

Audience question:

Do you believe that the larger numbers of Chinese who've come in recent years, mainly from the PRC [People's Republic of China], and that they're the people who have no knowledge of the history and discrimination that Australia had against Chinese people for over a century, that this has influenced their vote?

Professor Wanning Sun:

Who do you want to speak to?

Mr Osmond Chiu:

Look, I suspect that does have an impact, but I also think that we have to be honest that while racism still exists today, it is much better than it was decades and decades ago. And I think for a lot of people the pandemic was a big shock to them because while they may have had slights against them or people saying things that were a bit off, I think for a lot of people it was that first experience of being really threatened by random people.

The way to say it is, yes, I think there's not really an understanding of that because they haven't personally experienced it, whereas people who grew up here, so for example, like myself, having the memory of One Nation and Pauline Hanson has really shaped my views and my politics. And for a lot of people who may have migrated after the turn of the century when she wasn't really as much of a thing anymore and there wasn't a focus on Asian immigration may have a very different experience and may not be thinking about it.

Ms Erin Chew:

I think it's very diverse. I think even if you just look at the PRC communities, those who say came in the late-1980s, 1990s as opposed to the more recent arrivals, their voting intentions will be very, very different. Those who probably are the more recent arrivals have come to Australia for different reasons. They've come from a country where it was generally more prosper in terms of the economic situation and a lot of them had benefited from that. A lot of them who stayed on from that late 1980s and 1990s have benefited from the economic prosperity and the policies at the time that the PRC government put in.

In terms of how that translates into Australia, I think that even among people like myself, our generations, still lack an understanding of the history of racism in Australia. I think we can add that on top of the recent arrivals of PRC, that general disconnect and understanding that there were Chinese in Australia during the Gold Rush period and the oppression and the racism that they went through that is not even in the thought processes. I think we do need to bring up that history a lot more and I think that's going to be really important to build that foundation of our identity and how we form our identity.

Professor Wanning Sun:

I agree. I think that the ignorance about history is an important issue and I think everybody, including the Australian general public could do with a little bit more. Not just this community but the general public so that they know more about what happens in Indigenous issues and what was happening during the White Australia issue. And Osmond brought up Pauline Hanson, but for those people who arrived in the last decade or so, they didn't live through that so that makes a difference too. I think history is always really, really important.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

I've been told that we have five minutes, so we're going to try to do two questions. Let's see. And if you have one person you want to answer it, just name that person, if you don't want everybody.

Audience question:

Do you think that Trump's presidency and his comments, his negative comments about traditional American alliances is going to be swaying Australian-Chinese voters?

Ms Erin Chew:

That's an interesting question. I think if we just look generally, just say how the general Australian public votes, the general Australian traction, we do tend to somehow follow, not too publicly to the overwhelming extent, but to some extent, how Americans vote. When we look at the Chinese-American versus Chinese-Australian vote, the Trump comments probably hit closer to home for Chinese-Americans, particularly for, say, Chinese-American civil rights organisations which are concerned about the deportations of Chinese migrants who were walked across, who came across the Mexico-US border. In terms of the undocumented situation, a lot of Asian-Americans, including Chinese-Americans are undocumented and their concerns in terms of whether they're going to be receiving deportation papers.

In Australia, I don't think that really resonates in terms of we are concerned about illegal immigrants coming into Australia. I don't think that's really in that dissonance within a lot of Chinese-Australian votes. But I think the general similarity is that a lot of those who may have migrated, say, from Chinese and they migrated from China or from other Asian countries, there'll be that thought that, well, I came in the right way so other people should also come in the right way. Where a generation like Osmond and myself and even people like Wanning Sun, who comes from different thought perspectives will think that, well, that's not actually correct because we are all coming in from the oppression of Indigenous people. All of us are technically illegal if you want to put

it in that way. And I think that's a different generation of thinking rather than an older generation. So, I think it's very different in terms of how the Trump comments would impact on Chinese-Americans as opposed to Chinese-Australians.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Good point.

We have time for one more quick, quick question. It was in the front here, this gentleman.

Audience question:

Thank you.

My question is, how come we don't hear much more from the leadership within the Chinese-Australian community? I'd like to hear more of this. What can we do about it?

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Interesting question.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I sort of addressed part of it earlier that when you talk about the leadership within the Chinese-Australian community, there's no peak body really. Who do we mean is the Chinese-Australian leadership? That's part of the issue. And as well as the fragmented nature of, well, communities. I find my own experience is that I'm very mindful that I have a very different background from the plurality of Chinese-Australian communities who come from the PRC who've migrated in the last 20 or so years. A very different perspective, a very different life experience. And I think one of the real challenges is that that diversity isn't properly represented and it is going to be an ongoing challenge because there are different views, different perspectives.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

And perhaps one of the big challenges is because of the nature of the fragmented communities, not so much of hearing from the leaders of those communities, but perhaps having more Chinese-Australians involved in politics as candidates and so on. That might, I don't know, address that issue more, having more political participation and visibility.

Mr Osmond Chiu:

I also think there's a generational thing as well where it's often a lot of the Chinese-Australian organisations are an older generation, whereas a lot of younger Chinese-Australians aren't really involved. They often are involved in maybe Asian-Australian organisations. And there's a range of those organisations that have come up, obviously work around climate change, Asian Australian Professional Collective that came out of the ANU leadership program that was set up for Chinese-Australians. I guess that there are leaders, I think they're just not in the traditional organisations that we associate with.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

Yes, because we have to wrap up. I'm just going to have Wanning say a few things, but I want everybody to really look online and would you just say the name of your organisation again, the Asian Australian –

Ms Erin Chew:

The Asian Australian Alliance.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

And there you'll see an effort to create leadership support and –

Ms Erin Chew:

Advocacy.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

– and advocacy. That's a place to go.

Wanning.

Professor Wanning Sun:

I just also trying to say something about Kingsley's question about Chinese community leaders. I think this notion of community leaders itself has gone through some kind of a shift, if you like, with the arrival of the mainland Chinese and the young people as well, as Osmond was referring to. It's become more fragmented as you said and it has decentralised because there's not a single Chinese organisation can claim to speak on behalf of the whole group because they're not interest group, as we discussed earlier.

And the other thing is, I like to say is that just because they're not a certifiably community organisation leaders doesn't mean there's no leadership. Because I think if you look at what's going on in the Chinese social media, my research has actually discovered there is a lot of what we call the key opinion leaders and exercising leadership in terms of informing the public in terms of organising things, in terms of mobilising activism in a very mediated way via social media.

In a way they don't necessarily see each other person-to-person, but if you have 500 people within one WeChat group and that person could be an engineer or could be a taxi driver or something, have no official title, but they could play a pivotal role, say in, for instance, the organising masks during the COVID era, if they wanted to support Black Life Matters protesters who were told, 'You can't go outside unless you've got masks,' so that group just decided we're going to organise amongst ourselves to donate enough masks so that these people can go out and protest. That's done through social media and start in a very, very decentralised mediated way and through the opinion influence, if you like.

Ms Linda Jaivin:

The fact that leaders are now defined quite differently and just as the communities are defined differently too.

Professor Wanning Sun:

And they come spontaneously and some of them are self-appointed rather than through election or through –

Ms Linda Jaivin:

It's a very complex political environment. But I think we've covered quite a few topics and in some depth. I'm just absolutely delighted by, and I would like you all to thank, Professor Sun Wanning, Erin Chew and Osmond Chiu for their contribution tonight to this wonderful understanding of – And thank you all for coming. Thank you very, very much.