

# Australia's China Knowledge Capability: Fellows' views

## Australia's China Knowledge Capability

CURRENT CAPACITY  
FUTURE NEEDS

## Project overview

Australia's ability to engage effectively with China—across federal and state governments, private sector, non-profits, cultural organisations and diaspora communities—depends significantly on the capacity of Australia's higher education system to train personnel, conduct research and communicate evidence-based findings for the benefit of these sectors and the general public.

At present there are critical gaps in our understanding of the capacity of Australia's universities to meet these needs. The project will survey Australia's research and training capacity to effectively engage with and understand China at an important juncture in the relationship; and identify the knowledge needs of select stakeholders involved in the China relationship.

## Objectives

- Map Australia's research and training capabilities in China studies.
- Provide a survey of current and emerging knowledge requirements for select stakeholders.
- Undertake a preliminary assessment of the capabilities needed to support informed and effective engagement with China.

## Team

The project is guided by an Advisory Group comprising experts from academia, business, and government, chaired by the Academy's International Secretary, and former President, [Professor Joe Lo Bianco AM FAHA](#).

Advisory Group members:

- [Professor Louise Edwards FASSA FHKAH FAHA](#), Council member, Australian Academy of the Humanities
- [Professor John Fitzgerald AM FAHA](#), Former President, Australian Academy of the Humanities
- [Mr Kevin Hobgood-Brown AM](#), Managing Director, HHK Advisory
- [Professor Vivian Lin](#), Director, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, Hong Kong University
- [Professor Anne McLaren FAHA](#), Asia Institute, University of Melbourne
- [Mr Peter Varghese AO](#), Chancellor, University of Queensland
- [Mr Jason Yat-Sen Li](#), CEO, Yatsen Associates

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## Note on “China knowledge”

We take a broad view of the subject matter relevant to understanding greater China.

We are looking at China knowledge in two senses: deep, comprehensive study of greater China e.g., through a BA Hons in China studies, time in country and related postgraduate or professional work.

But there is also a wealth of China knowledge spread across many disciplines. As essential as China studies is, Australian universities' engagement with China is too big for one discipline or area study to contain.

[humanities.org.au](http://humanities.org.au)

THE MAPPING AUSTRALIA'S CHINA KNOWLEDGE  
CAPABILITY PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL  
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## Questions for Fellows

1. What are your observations of the current state of Australia's China knowledge capability? (Refer to page 3 for the project's working definition of China knowledge capability)
2. What are Australia's future needs?
3. What is the role of research about and with China in building Australia's China knowledge capability?
4. Who (stakeholders, organisations) relies on and uses Australia's research on and with China?
5. How do research teams currently build China knowledge capability?
  - a. Training; developing the next generation of China researchers?
  - b. Through cooperation with Chinese researchers?
  - c. Connections, exposure, industry partnerships? At what levels?
6. How can researchers, research teams, and/or universities improve Australia's understanding and uptake of China knowledge capability?

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## Working Definition of Australia's China Knowledge Capability

Australia's China knowledge capability is...

- a pipeline of individuals who over time develop a deep and informed understanding of China and of Australia-China relations
- a set of institutions, especially universities, that generate this capability and should themselves exemplify it
- a national asset that is
  - reflective of the wide range of Australia's interests
  - conducive to self-correcting public debate
  - informed about
    - the inherent interest of Chinese civilisation
    - China's place in the world – both strengths and limitations
    - the dynamics of Australia-China relations
    - the diversity of Chinese Australians, their connections across the region, and significance in Australia's multicultural story
    - the importance of cross-cultural communication in Mandarin Chinese and other dialects, and the extent to which language and translation influence Australia-China relations

Capabilities of which university researchers and teachers should be leading providers...

1. understand China for its own sake, China's global outlook, regional contexts, and bilateral relations
2. understand the practical implications of how China differs from / is like Australia including but not limited to
  - differences in the way political and state power is organized, deployed, and limited
  - similarities between the everyday concerns of Chinese and Australia people
3. better support and make use of Chinese Australians' China knowledge capabilities
4. provide independent Australian expertise on China sufficient to inform policy making across Australian governments and society
5. engage with China: manage risks, negotiate, solve problems, learn from and with China
6. exemplify the conduct of relations with Chinese people and institutions
7. use Australia's China expertise abroad, especially into the immediate region