

**The Future of Australia-China Relations: Can International Education Deliver a Network of Informed Opinion Leaders?**

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**The Future of Australia-China Relations: Can International Education Deliver a  
Network of Informed Opinion Leaders?**

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## Abstract

As China is Australia's largest trading partner, much of Australia's future economic success will rely on the next generation of leaders and policymakers having a deep understanding of China's culture and its way of doing business. While not discounting the commercial value of higher education, this thesis focusses on Australian universities' contribution to the public good, through the enduring value of international education as public diplomacy. My study and internship within the Australian Studies Centre (ASC) at Peking University coincided with the Abbott Government's implementation of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) as a public diplomacy initiative. Given that there is little evidence of the efficacy of funded scholarships making a strong contribution to a nation's soft power, I became curious as to why the government highlighted international education to increase its influence in China and the Indo-Pacific region more broadly. As education programs are long-term public diplomacy strategies, and Australian politics have been tumultuous with five prime ministers in five years, investigating the reasoning behind the continued political support for international education as public diplomacy provides an insight into Australia-China relations.

This thesis investigates two key international education programs that were identified in the *Australian Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-2016*; the NCP and the network of ASCs in China. A mixed method approach was undertaken to address the problem: *Have Australian Government-funded international education programs resulted in a network of Sino-Australian opinion leaders who contribute to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China?*

Many nations, including Australia, provide funding support for international education programs as they are thought to build relationships and mutual understanding between the peoples of different nations, and thereby contribute to international goodwill and the cause of peace.<sup>1</sup> Two theories from the psychology and communications literature (the contact

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<sup>1</sup> Molly Lenore Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy" (University of Leeds, 2014).

hypothesis and the two-step flow hypothesis in the development of opinion leaders) were used.

The findings show that the NCP and ASC programs do contribute to breaking down negative stereotypes and building mutual understanding between Australia and China. However, the programs' outcomes would be improved through strengthening the conditions of contact. Government, and, home and host university support for the NCP was high, however, due to the lack of Chinese language skills and opportunities for out-of-class interactions the condition of high acquaintance potential was low. Equal status and common goals were identified as being present for NCP scholars but could be improved as students rarely cooperated on joint projects and felt like they were treated, positively but differently, to local students. Conversely, the ASCs require additional institutional and government support. In contrast to the NCP's adequate funding, the ASCs need increased funding which is aligned to clear objectives. There are opportunities for the NCP scholars and the ASCs to work together to diversify the Australian students' experiences and provide more opportunities for Australian and Chinese students and academics to collaborate.

Because of the intersection between policy and politics, the reasoning behind Australian Government funds for international education programs in China will be subject to change to meet the geopolitical environment of the time. We could naively rely solely on the government's promulgated key objectives, however, without transparency regarding the intent of these programs, any evaluation could be meaningless. The strong fabric of personal and professional links between Australian and Chinese individuals and institutions will assist Australia to navigate difficult times in the bilateral relationship. Considering the limited public funding, using the NCP and ASCs as vehicles for delivering a positive message that Australia is engaged with its region, is sufficient reason for funding these programs. Improving conditions of contact would increase the probability of creating opinion leaders and therefore improving the future contribution that these programs make to the nation's good.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AIIB</b>	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
<b>ACC</b>	Australia-China Council
<b>ACYA</b>	Australia-China Youth Association
<b>ACYD</b>	Australia-China Youth Dialogue
<b>ASC</b>	Australia Studies Centre
<b>AustCham</b>	Australian Chamber of Commerce
<b>ChAFTA</b>	China-Australia Free Trade Agreement
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
<b>IVP</b>	International Visitor Program
<b>FASIC</b>	Foundation for Australian Studies in China
<b>FCI</b>	Foundations, Councils and Institutes
<b>NCP</b>	New Colombo Plan
<b>PRC</b>	People's Republic of China

## CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The skill of managing international relations was once the preserve of the elite. These subtle skills, known as diplomacy, were practised to shore up alliances, strengthen empires and secure trade. In today's mobile world, diplomacy is a more widely practised art, reaching far beyond royal and political circles.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.0 Introduction

Today, many countries, including Australia and China, are using international education programs to increase their influence and promote policy agendas. Policymakers within Australia accept China's importance to the country's future economic success, however managing political and cultural differences in public opinion has proven challenging for the Australian Government. As China is Australia's largest trading partner, much of Australia's future economic success will rely on the next generation of academics, students, business leaders and policymakers demonstrating that they have a deep understanding of China's culture and its way of doing business. Historically, the bilateral relationship that is so important to Australia's future also echoes a collective anxiety within the Australian psyche. This thesis will investigate the role international education plays in breaking down these anxieties and building a network of future leaders who understand one another. While not discounting the commercial value of higher education, this thesis will focus on Australian universities' contribution to the public good through the enduring value of international education as a tool of public diplomacy.

After the Senate Inquiry, the Australian Government increased its focus on public diplomacy to effectively manage its important but complex relationship with the Indo-Pacific region. As a recent Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report notes: 'The Australian Government aims to engage audiences within contemporary Australia to facilitate

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<sup>2</sup> Will Venn, "An Education in Diplomacy," <http://www.unisa.edu.au/Enterprise-Magazine-Home/Issue-2-2015/AN-EDUCATION-IN-DIPLOMACY/>.

networks, and connections between people and institutions to build understanding, trust and influence in advancing [the nation's interests].'<sup>3</sup> Two government-funded international education programs, the New Colombo Plan (NCP) and the Australia Studies Centres (ASCs) in China, have been highlighted in policy documents as influential public diplomacy programs in building a secure future for Australia in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>4</sup> This thesis analyses these programs to investigate what conditions of contact are needed for international education programs to develop opinion leaders who use their networks to make a positive contribution to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China.

### **1.1 Research problem, research questions and hypotheses**

This research investigates the phenomenon of Australian Government-funded education programs as a tool of public diplomacy in China. After three years of study at Peking University and interning at the Australia Studies Centre, I became curious as to why the Australian Government funds international programs as public diplomacy. The use of international education programs as public diplomacy is a long-term strategy. My time in China coincided with the Australian Government's increased focus on the use of public diplomacy to gain influence in the Indo-Pacific region and in China in particular. The decision is even more intriguing given the tumultuous political environment over the last five years resulting in five prime ministers and that there is a lack of efficacy that any public diplomacy initiatives have contributed to Australia's global influence. Julie Bishop, the Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time provided some answers to my questions, from her perspective. However, given that during the recent leadership spill she lost her ministerial position, understanding the government's

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16," ed. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Canberra, Australia2016), p.4.

<sup>4</sup> The Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16, Australia's Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016-2020, The Foreign Policy White Paper 2017, The Public Diplomacy Senate Inquiry 2007 will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

intent behind public diplomacy initiatives is complex and subject to continuous change. The research problem is: *Have Australian Government-funded international education programs resulted in a network of Sino-Australian opinion leaders who contribute to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China?*

The three research questions addressed in this thesis are:

RQ1: Why does the Australian Government fund international education programs in China?

RQ2: Do Australian Government-funded international education programs in China result in students and academics building sustainable personal and professional networks of influence?

RQ3: What conditions of contact are necessary for Australian Government-funded international education programs in China to build mutual understanding, and positively influence the participants' views of each other's nations?

The three hypotheses tested in this thesis are:

Hypothesis 1: The Australian Government funds international education programs in China as it believes participants will contribute to the government's public diplomacy through building positive relationships and mutual understanding between the people of Australia and China.

Hypothesis 2: Engaged opinion leaders shape elite opinion and positively influence public opinion within Australia's bilateral relationship with China.

Hypothesis 3: The NCP and ASCs provide the necessary conditions of contact for Australian and Chinese individuals to contribute towards the goals of mutual understanding, and positively influencing views of each other's nations.

## **1.2 Background to the research**

Through the findings to answer the three research questions, this thesis will contribute

to the body of knowledge around international education, public diplomacy and Australia-China relations. First, the contribution will be an account of the literature where international education and politics intersect in the form of public diplomacy within Sino-Australian relations. Second, the contribution will be through the findings from the analyses of qualitative and quantitative data, in response to the research questions. Figure 1, indicates the locations that are included when Australia-China relations are referred to in this thesis. This research focuses on Australia's bilateral relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) including mainland China and Hong Kong. Taiwan was excluded from the study. For the ease of this research, hereafter the PRC will be referred to as China.



*Figure 1 Locations used in this research: Australia, Hong Kong and mainland China*

### **1.2.1 Sino-Australian relations**

The ascent of China has irrevocably changed Australia's strategic environment. The importance of the Australia-China bilateral relationship is recognised by both nations, but historically, it has 'had its ups and downs'.<sup>5</sup> The DFAT country brief on China discusses that

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<sup>5</sup> Merriden Varrall, "Australia's Reputation in China Entrenched as Greedy, Untrustworthy and a U.S. Lapdog,"

both countries are committed to constructively managing differences:

The Australia-China bilateral relationship is based on strong economic and trade complementarities. The bilateral political engagement is extensive, though both sides acknowledge that Australia and China have different histories, societies and political systems, as well as differences of opinion on some important issues. Both Australia and China are committed to constructively managing differences, if and when they arise.<sup>6</sup>

As a result, good political relations have often helped boost bilateral trading links between Australia and China, while enhanced economic linkages have contributed to the strengthening of political ties between the two countries. As asserted by Yi Yang:

The level of trade and the state of political relations have not always been directly related. This is because trade fluctuations have often stemmed from changes in the domestic economic policies of both Australia and China rather than from the vicissitudes of political relations between the two countries. Australia's China policy has been driven by both economic and political considerations.<sup>7</sup>

There have been high points in the bilateral relationship and China is Australia's largest trading partner in terms of both imports and exports. Australia is China's sixth largest trading partner; it is China's fifth biggest supplier of imports and its tenth biggest customer for exports. Twenty-five per cent of Australia's manufactured imports come from China and thirteen per cent of Australian export is thermal coal to China.<sup>8</sup> As highlighted by Austrade, the economic relationship has evolved beyond the mining sector and is now multi-faceted, involving a two-way flow of tourists, students, investors and migrants.<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 highlights the degree to which China has become essential to Australia's economic future. Now, more so than any other major export customer, Australia is increasingly reliant on the Chinese market, with over one third of all Australian exports going to China.<sup>10</sup>

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*Financial Review 2017.*

<sup>6</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "China Country Brief," <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/china/pages/china-country-brief.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Yi Wang, *Australia-China Relations Post 1949* (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), p.212.

<sup>8</sup> Parliament of Australia, "About Parliament," [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament).

<sup>9</sup> East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and China Center for International Economic Exchanges, "Partnership for Change: Australia-China Joint Economic Report," (Canberra: Australian National University, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and China Center for International Economic Exchanges, "Partnership for Change," p.34.

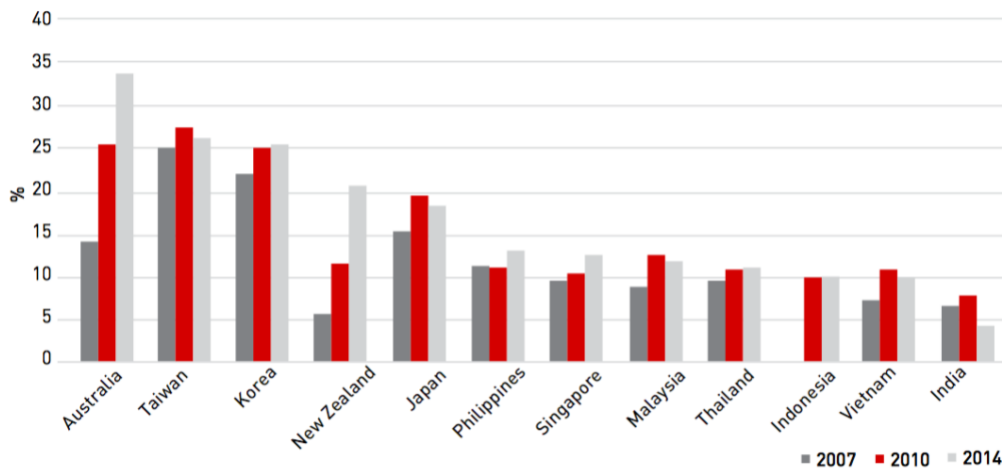


Figure 2 Exports to China as a share of total exports<sup>11</sup>

As outlined in a joint report by the China Centre for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing and the East Asian Bureau of Economic Research at the Australian National University, the Australia-China relationship is economically vital, for both countries.<sup>12</sup> Not only is Australia's economic growth and continued rise in living standards strongly linked to China's economic success, it is also well-known within the Chinese policy community that there are economic benefits in accessing Australian iron ore and coal, and services such as advanced education, science, tourism and research.<sup>13</sup> Trade relations with China and the nation's security are major priorities for Australian policymakers, hence both these topics are discussed in the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017*.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the positive economic partnership since the mid-2000s, when China became Australia's top trading partner, tensions in the bilateral relationship have posed a series of

<sup>11</sup> East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and China Center for International Economic Exchanges, "Partnership for Change," p.34.

<sup>12</sup> East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and China Center for International Economic Exchanges, "Partnership for Change," p.27.

<sup>13</sup> East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and China Center for International Economic Exchanges, "Partnership for Change," p.27.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh White, "Power Shift: Rethinking Australia's Place in the Asian Century," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2005); A. Shearer, "Lowy Institute for International Policy: Perspectives," <https://archive.lowyinstitute.org/publications/uncharted-waters-us-alliance-and-australias-new-era-strategic-uncertainty>; Nathan Church, "The Australia-United States Defence Alliance," The Australian Parliament, [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/AustUSDefence](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/AustUSDefence).

challenges for Australian policymakers.<sup>15</sup> The source of the anxiety felt by a proportion of Australian people toward China has varied from issues including Chinese investments in Australia and land acquisition, China's perceived interference in Australia's domestic affairs, Beijing's establishment of an Air Defence Identification Zone in the East China Sea, the arrest of ethnically Chinese Australian citizens in China, the leasing of the Port of Darwin and, perhaps more simply, the purchasing of bulk Australian baby formula for export.<sup>16</sup> Writers such as Nick Bisley perceive that Australia's negativity is driven through the Australian media and some political commentary. He wrote that 'the sensational and sinister tone in which claims about Chinese influence are presented is seen as problematic at best and downright offensive at worst.'<sup>17</sup> Purnendra Jain and Gregory McCarthy observed:

China's centrality to Australia's economy, migration, tourism and international education is obvious today and likely to continue. Yet there appears to be anxiety among some in Australia about China's rise, especially its growing military power, seemingly aggressive behavior in disputed maritime space, global economic influence, and apparent quest for global leadership. The increasing economic importance of Australia's relations with China heightens the need for future Australian leaders to understand how to build strong social and professional ties with China.<sup>18</sup>

The backdrop of economic dependence on China, mixed with differences in political ideological underpinnings and a sense of vulnerability and anxiety among the Australian people, is a breeding ground for negative stereotyping and misunderstanding. As stated by Rory Medcalf, 'today, for the first time in the nation's history, Australia's chief trading partner is neither an ally, nor the ally of an ally, and does not share its democratic outlook'.<sup>19</sup> Although relatively peaceful times, it would seem that the rise of China's global influence and Australia's

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<sup>15</sup> M. Beeson and J.D. Wilson, "Coming to Terms with China: Managing Complications in the Sino-Australian Economic Relationship," *Security Challenges* 11, no. 2 (2015): p.33.

<sup>16</sup> Lowy Institute, "China-Australia Relations," <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/issues/china-australia-relations>; Michael Vincent, "Australia's Chinese Personal Shoppers About More Than Baby Formula — It's a \$1 Billion Industry," [http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-26/daigou-chinese-personal-shopping-\\$1-billion-industry/9671012](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-26/daigou-chinese-personal-shopping-$1-billion-industry/9671012).

<sup>17</sup> Nick Bisley, "Mistrust of Australia Is Growing in China," <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/mistrust-australia-growing-china>.

<sup>18</sup> Purnendra Jain and Gregory McCarthy, "Between Centrality and Anxiety: China in Australia," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1, no. 3 (2016): p.244.

<sup>19</sup> R. Medcalf, "In Defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's New Strategic Map," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 4 (2014).

increased economic dependence on China has made balancing the bilateral relationship more difficult, sensitive and important than previous governments, such as Whitlam's and Howard's, had to face.<sup>20</sup>

The complexity of Australia-China relations, since the recognition of the PRC by the Whitlam Government in 1972, is discussed further in Chapter Two.

### **1.2.2 The role of diplomacy in international relations**

The concept of diplomacy has been defined in a variety of ways in its application to international relations. Diplomacy as a practice has traditionally existed within the realm of the nation state. In the modern era, state qua state remains wedded to tradition, and is heavily influenced by its historical development. Therefore, Jozef Batora states that traditional diplomacy remains the 'expression of a transnationally shared logic of appropriateness informing actions of and identities of states, distributing shared structures to all states'.<sup>21</sup> Diplomacy is commonly considered to be one means of achieving policy objectives through the exercise of national power.<sup>22</sup> At a basic level, diplomacy is what Nicolson calls 'an essential element in any reasonable relationship between man and man and between nation and nation'.<sup>23</sup>

Diplomacy is used by Ernest Statow to mean:

The application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relations with vassal states; or more briefly still, the conduct of business between states by peaceful means ... skill or address in the conduct of international intercourse and negotiations.<sup>24</sup>

States are the principal actors and beneficiaries of diplomacy, although other entities

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<sup>20</sup> S. Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption," Australia, The 2017 Whitlam Institute Gough Whitlam Oration.

<sup>21</sup> Jozef Batora, "Does the European Union Transform the Institution of Diplomacy?," *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, no. 1 (2005): p.46.

<sup>22</sup> H.J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, U.S.A: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p.135.

<sup>23</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.14.

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, 4th Edition ed. (London, England: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p.3.

such as international organisations may also participate.<sup>25</sup> The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 laid out the enduring framework of acceptable and unacceptable diplomatic behaviour; its text automatically assumed diplomats as agents of nation states and their work an expression of national interests. The functions of a diplomatic mission, according to the Convention, consist of state representation, protection of state interests and the interests of the citizenry, negotiations, monitoring developments and promoting friendly relations.<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey Wiseman highlights ‘the existence of a deeply rooted, state-based diplomatic culture with its own distinctive institutions, values, and norms has been neglected in both the study and the practice of international relations’.<sup>27</sup> Wiseman discusses a new concept of diplomacy, called “polylateralism” as a response to globalization and taking into account non-state actors in modern diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> He goes on to discuss the role of the state ‘will be determined in part by its own resiliency in the face of globalization trends. An important test of state resilience will be its capacity to redefine or reinvent diplomatic institutions as the terms of the global dialogue change.’<sup>29</sup> It is recognised that there is not an all-encompassing, agreed definition of traditional diplomacy: However, for clarity, the definition used in this thesis is ‘the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents, and by peaceful means’.<sup>30</sup>

With the increased state interest in diplomatic practice there has been a rebirth of scholarship in the field of public diplomacy. This provides a voice for public diplomacy, which originally focused on information activities, such as international broadcasting and similar

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<sup>25</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p.71.

<sup>26</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*.

<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey Wiseman, "Pax Americana: Bumping into Diplomatic Culture," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey Wiseman, "'Polylateralism' and New Modes of Global Dialogue," (Leicester: Leicester Diplomatic Studies Programme, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Wiseman, "'Polylateralism' and New Modes of Global Dialogue."

<sup>30</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, p.167.

activities around the Cold War era.<sup>31</sup> The term, 'public diplomacy' was coined by career diplomat Edmund Gullion and, has become part of the everyday vernacular of policymakers, government officials and journalists. Although, the term was first applied in 1965, the practice itself is essentially as old as statecraft and not a new phenomenon.<sup>32</sup> The renewal of interest in public diplomacy has not been limited to the US. National case studies have appeared across the public diplomacy literature in recent years. British public diplomacy has been the subject of several studies by the Foreign Policy Centre.<sup>33</sup> Within the Nordic study, Sweden's public diplomacy is explored to show the ways in which Swedish identity has been negotiated and projected by the Swedish Institute.<sup>34</sup> China's impressive opening ceremony for the 2008 Beijing Olympics has been analysed in terms of image projection and nation branding.<sup>35</sup> Byrne and Hall, and Lowe, investigated Australia's use of the NCP as a public diplomacy strategy.<sup>36</sup> A subchapter of 'China's new diplomacy' describes the Confucius Institutes as educational centres that work to promote Chinese language and culture, and a broader, more informed understanding of China. The Confucius Academy of the University of Western Australia in Perth was launched in 2005 and was the first of its kind in Australia.

While there is a lack of agreement on a single definition of public and traditional diplomacy, there is a general agreement on the distinction between public and traditional diplomacy. According to Jan Melissen, the basic distinction between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy is clear: the former is about relationships between the representatives of

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<sup>31</sup> M. Nelson, *War of the Balck Heavens: The Battles of Western Brodacasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, 1997).cited by; Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>32</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy," p.7.

<sup>33</sup> M. Leonard and V. Alakeson, *Going Public Diplomacy for the Information Age* (London, U.K.: Foreign Policy Centre, 2000); M. Leonard, A. Small, and M. Rose, *British Public Diplomacy in the Age of Schisms* (London, U.K.: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Luis Clerc, Nikolas Glover, and Paul Jordan, *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries: Representing the Periphery* (Leidan: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> G Cowan and N Cull, "Public Diplomacy in a Changing World," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 616, no. 1 (2008).

<sup>36</sup> C. Byrne and R. Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 67, no. 4 (2013); David Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015).

states, or other international actors; whereas the latter targets the general public in foreign societies and more specific non-official groups, organisations and individuals.<sup>37</sup> This thesis uses Hans Tuch's work defining public diplomacy as:

A government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies.<sup>38</sup>

According to Bruce Gregory, 'although we can define and think about public diplomacy as a single instrument, it has multiple components, each with their own organisations, budgets, tribal cultures, and rules for applying principles to behavior'.<sup>39</sup> Evan Potter adds to this by stating, 'public diplomacy instruments include political communication by one government directed at another government through mass media, cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges and scholarships, speakers' programs and international broadcasting'.<sup>40</sup> He asserts that in each public diplomacy case, one state is seeking to engage, understand, and influence another state. Today, governments are seeing the synergy that can develop by giving their public diplomacy strategy greater direction. Australia, through the release of the *Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-2016 (PD Strategy)* is one of many countries that is placing an increased emphasis on the direction of the country's public diplomacy.

The existing public diplomacy literature continues to be criticised as overly empirical, leaving the theoretical side of public diplomacy underdeveloped.<sup>41</sup> As acknowledged by David Lowe, public diplomacy remains a slippery field of study, because it attracts interest from

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<sup>37</sup> J Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy," (Clingendael: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2005), p.4.

<sup>38</sup> H.N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York, U.S.A.: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p.3.

<sup>39</sup> E.H. Potter, *Branding Canada : Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Potter, *Branding Canada : Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy*, p.52.

<sup>41</sup> B.H. Steiner, "Diplomacy and International Theory," *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004); Eytan Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008); B. Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008).

different methodological positions.<sup>42</sup> Public diplomacy literature is also critiqued as there is no agreement on a comprehensive and integrated framework. There have been some models and tools for analysis in several relevant disciplines proposed, but researchers from the different groups have ignored the potential contributions of other social and behavioural disciplines. Available knowledge on public diplomacy instruments reveals substantial gaps. In addition, there remains a grey area between public diplomacy on the one hand, and propaganda, information operations and psychological warfare, on the other. International broadcasting and cultural diplomacy have received much more attention than international education diplomacy.

A new research agenda requires prioritising useful evaluation.<sup>43</sup> Public diplomacy continues to be a contentious field of study because of the difficulties surrounding measuring and evaluating the outcomes. Systematic evaluation of public diplomacy programs and activities is essential for both theoretical and practical reasons, to bolster the relatively limited research that has been conducted to produce reliable and effective measurement techniques.<sup>44</sup> These issues have impacted the field of public diplomacy since the 1960s.

Researchers such as Hall and Smith acknowledge that states in Asia are competing to build and leverage soft power through public diplomacy initiatives but they question the reasoning behind the investment.<sup>45</sup> This is amplified when there seems to be little positive correlation between public diplomacy by Asian states and foreign public opinion. Given so little evidence of efficacy, these writers question why policymakers might believe funding public diplomacy is a worthwhile investment. It is challenging to determine the positive impact of any aspect or initiative of public diplomacy, either on a nation's soft power or its ability to

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<sup>42</sup> David Lowe, "Journalists and the Stirring of Australian Public Diplomacy: The Colombo Plan Towards the 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 1 (2013): p.176.

<sup>43</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," p.74.

<sup>44</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."; Joe Johnson, "How Does Public Diplomacy Measure Up?," *Foreign Service Journal* 83, no. 10 (2006); C. Byrne, "Public Diplomacy in an Australian Context : A Policy-Based Framework to Enhance Understanding and Practice" (Bond Univeristy, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Ian Hall and Frank Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition," *Asian Security* 9, no. 1 (2013).

achieve foreign policy objectives. Writers have also cautioned that public diplomacy might have some unintended negative effects that could undermine rather than enhance international relations. As a consideration, the competition for soft power in Asia may deepen mistrust and increase the potential for hard-power conflict in the region.<sup>46</sup> Sadly, the study of the dynamics and developments underscoring Australia's contemporary diplomatic practice has been largely neglected.<sup>47</sup> All of which justifies Nye's comments that there is a need for more rigorous evaluation of the outcomes achieved by public diplomacy. Public diplomacy and its relationship to soft power are discussed further in Chapter Two.

### **1.2.3 Australia's use of public diplomacy**

Over recent decades, similar to many other states, Australia has become increasingly focused on public diplomacy as a means of influencing foreign public opinion. Through the promulgation of the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* in 2012, and the creation of the Public Diplomacy Unit within DFAT in 2014, it would seem Australia is a relative latecomer to the realm of public diplomacy. In the staff resource *DFAT Public Diplomacy and Advocacy Handbook*, it states that public diplomacy is one of the four key outcomes which DFAT is committed to achieving and that:

The Department seeks to generate public understanding in Australia and overseas of Australia's foreign and trade policies and to project a positive image of Australia internationally... Australia's public diplomacy is raising awareness overseas of our country – as a great destination for tourism and education, an advocate for global trade liberalisation, and a trusted citizen of Indo-Pacific region.<sup>48</sup>

Australia's public diplomacy is about refreshing the nation's image by providing imagery of a modern, innovative and secure country in the region that is ready and willing to

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<sup>46</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."; Michael Wesley, "Australia's Poisoned Alumni: International Education and the Costs to Australia," (Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Caitlin Byrne, Melissa Conley Tyler, and Susan Harris Rimmer, "Australian Diplomacy Today," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 6 (2016): p.581.

<sup>48</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy and Advocacy Handbook," ed. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Canberra, Australia 2011).

lead and do business. However, public diplomacy needs to be more than just image building; the strategy must also work towards building relationships and engaging with people in a meaningful way.<sup>49</sup> It must be recognised that Australia, like most countries, deals with fluctuations in its image that may affect its reputation among its neighbours.<sup>50</sup> This is compounded by the racial exclusion policies of the past, the issue of refugees and asylum seekers, and Australia's perennial perceived lack of independence in foreign and defence policy. Even with the possibility of negative images being driven by events of the past, the resources given to public diplomacy have always been limited.<sup>51</sup>

Australia's foreign policy and diplomatic direction are increasingly developed within the 'intermestic' sphere, where domestic and international policy issues and implications blend.<sup>52</sup> Public diplomacy might be expected to be among Australia's highest foreign policy priorities, as it is geographically located in a region where English is not a majority language. Australia has both a positive challenge and a special opportunity to make a positive impression.<sup>53</sup> However, most Australians are unaware of developments in public diplomacy, since, paradoxically, Australian public diplomacy is rarely discussed outside government.<sup>54</sup> Engaging the Australian domestic audience in international policy debate has been identified as a priority however, creating ways to encourage the dialogue remains a challenge for the government.

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<sup>49</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," ed. Department of the Senate (Australia2007).

<sup>50</sup> Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations*, 1991 (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1991), p.70.

<sup>51</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image.;" Byrne, "Public Diplomacy in an Australian Context : A Policy-Based Framework to Enhance Understanding and Practice.;" Alison Broinowski, "Public Diplomacy and Australian Practice," *Social Alternatives* 35, no. 2 (2016).

<sup>52</sup> Byrne, Tyler, and Rimmer, "Australian Diplomacy Today."

<sup>53</sup> Broinowski, "Public Diplomacy and Australian Practice."

<sup>54</sup> Broinowski, "Public Diplomacy and Australian Practice," p.42.

#### 1.2.4 Australia's use of international education as a public diplomacy tool

It is relatively recently, in the twentieth century, that the potential for international education to contribute to foreign policy, through public diplomacy, has been recognised by states.<sup>55</sup> The literature review highlights that in the past two decades the contribution that international education has made towards Australia's public diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region is not a popular research area.<sup>56</sup> Notable exceptions to this are the works of Laifer and Kitchen; Lowe and Kent; Byrne; Lowe; and Byrne and Hall, which is possibly why most contemporary works cite these writers.<sup>57</sup> The lack of interest from the academy in Australia's use of public diplomacy was mentioned in the 2007 Senate Inquiry, *Australia's public diplomacy: building our image (PD Senate Inquiry)* as only three Australian universities made formal submissions.<sup>58</sup> One of these submissions observed that 'the role and significance of universities in the conduct of Australia's public diplomacy is poorly articulated and relatively unexplored, and hence is not well supported'.<sup>59</sup> The tensions between international education as public diplomacy, and its primary role of teaching and research, have yet to be fully reconciled, leaving this topic as a theme in Australia's public diplomacy.<sup>60</sup>

When leveraged successfully, international education is a prime vehicle to contribute

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<sup>55</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy in an Australian Context : A Policy-Based Framework to Enhance Understanding and Practice."

<sup>56</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."; Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."; Natalie Laifer and Nicholas Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy," *Politics and Policy* 45, no. 5 (2017).

<sup>57</sup> David Lowe and Anna Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy," (International Education Association of Australia); C. Byrne, "Public Diplomacy," in *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016); Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."; C. Byrne and R. Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential," *Clingendael discussion papers in diplomacy* 121 (2011); Lowe and Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy."; Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."; Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy."

<sup>58</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

<sup>59</sup> RMIT, "Inquiry into the Nature and Conduct of Australia's Public Diplomacy " (RMIT, 2007), p.2.

<sup>60</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."; Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."

to Australia's foreign policy priorities and interests, including its soft power profile in the Indo-Pacific. The experiences of international students create powerful personal, cultural, diplomatic and trade ties between Australia and the rest of the world.<sup>61</sup> International education is Australia's third largest export, behind only iron ore and coal, and it is predicted that China will remain Australia's largest source market for onshore international student enrolments up to 2025.<sup>62</sup> Overwhelmingly, the literature has focused on evaluating international education through the lens of the inbound student program. However, to achieve the full public diplomacy benefits, evaluation must include outbound student mobility, research collaboration, and the overall people-to-people linkages that are enabled through international education.<sup>63</sup>

It is worth noting that there is an omission of 'creating peace' in Australia's public diplomacy aims and goals through the use of international education which differs from larger powers such as the US and the UK. Instead, the government has placed its public diplomacy focus on boosting domestic understanding of the Indo-Pacific in Australia and the reputation of Australia within the region. Well-researched prestigious programs in the US and the UK, such as the Fulbright and the Rhodes programs, have the inclusion of goodwill and the cause of peace in their objectives, showing the different political and philosophical intent.<sup>64</sup> The two points make for a difference in motivations for the Australian Government to fund international education programs in comparison to some other countries.

In recent years, there has been bipartisan agreement on the use of education as one of Australia's strategies to strengthen relations within the Asian region through public diplomacy. The Rudd/Gillard/Rudd Governments' *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper 2012* set

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<sup>61</sup> Universities Australia, "Australia's Education Exports at Record High," <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/Media-and-Events/media-releases/Australia-s-education-exports-at-record-high#.WwOdRS9L2qA>.

<sup>62</sup> Deloitte, "Growth and Opportunity in Australian International Education," (2015), p.14.

<sup>63</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."

<sup>64</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

the scene for a shift in the geopolitics of international education towards the Asian region.<sup>65</sup> Prime Minister Gillard highlighted the international education sector for its contributions towards the nation's branding. However, achieving the required dialogue within the higher education sector has its challenges, as Australia's international universities are diverse and fragmented, with limited consideration given to the potential public diplomacy benefits to be cultivated.<sup>66</sup> It is acknowledged that recently Universities Australia, the peak body representing the university sector, changed its approach to the branding of Australian universities. Nevertheless, in 2007, in response to the *PD Senate Inquiry*, Universities Australia suggested that universities gain little recognition for their contribution to public diplomacy, which is to be expected as, 'public diplomacy and soft power are not the primary goals of universities international activities. Education has primacy, and while the public diplomacy benefits are welcome, they are secondary benefits'.<sup>67</sup>

Two education initiatives funded by the Australian Government are the NCP, for Australian undergraduates studying in China, and the network of ASCs in universities in China. These programs aim to bridge the gap between universities' primary goals of teaching, and research and public diplomacy. These public diplomacy initiatives highlight that Australian policymakers respect the importance of the bilateral relationship and are willing to make it a policy priority. In addition, it is expected that investment in the ASCs in China will help boost academic networks of cooperation and create an image of Australia as reliable and business-friendly.<sup>68</sup>

As discussed, economic and trade relations with China have become a prominent objective of Australia's international interests. However, maintaining good bilateral relations

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<sup>65</sup> Australian Government, "Australia in the Asian Century White Paper," (Canberra, Australia 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."

<sup>67</sup> Strategy Policy and Research in Education Limited, (2009): p.50.

<sup>68</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

between the two countries is one of the most difficult challenges for Australian policymakers. This raises the level of importance for participants of Australian Government-funded education programs to not only seize the opportunity to better understand another culture, language and international business practices, but to also build sustainable networks that positively impact people within their sphere of influence. This thesis builds on the work of Byrne and Hall, and Lowe, who have investigated the use of the NCP as a public diplomacy strategy by the Australian Government.<sup>69</sup>

### **1.2.5 The government's public diplomacy goals investigated in this thesis**

DFAT, under the current Coalition Government, released the *PD Strategy* outlining initiatives that 'promote... economic, artistic and cultural, sporting, scientific and education assets to underline Australia's credentials as a destination for business, investment, tourism and study, that emphasise Australia's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region'.<sup>70</sup> This thesis will focus on two of the government's goals. The first, 'an important priority for DFAT's *PD Strategy* is building and nurturing networks of influence and strengthening engagement with domestic and international stakeholders.'<sup>71</sup> The second goal relates to the international education sector's efforts to, 'promote Australia's culture of resourcefulness, entrepreneurship and ingenuity; and our creative industries, scientific research, organisations and education system.'<sup>72</sup>

Clearly Australia's reputation can positively or negatively influence political and economic policies and, can be an asset or a liability when pursuing foreign policy objectives or attracting tourists or students, or even gaining access to foreign markets. As outlined by

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<sup>69</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy."; Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."; Byrne and Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential."; Lowe, "Journalists and the Stirring of Australian Public Diplomacy: The Colombo Plan Towards the 1960s."

<sup>70</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16," p.1.

<sup>71</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16," p.9.

<sup>72</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16," p.2.

former diplomat Alison Broinowski, Australia must constantly be aware of how others, especially those in the countries Australia is trying to influence, perceive Australia and how they interpret the public diplomacy imagery put forward:

...it is also very important never to lose sight, which we often do, of how we look from the point of view of the observer - that is, the client, as you might say, in the various countries where we are trying to influence opinion, trying to create a positive impression of Australia and trying to influence people either to want to trade with us, or to travel to Australia, or to be accepting of a wide range of Australian activities.<sup>73</sup>

Australia's use of public diplomacy is consistent with what is generally considered its function by most countries – which is influencing foreign publics in order to promote key policy initiatives.<sup>74</sup> The Australian Government's *PD Strategy* is discussed further in Chapter Three.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This thesis will provide insight into the contribution that recipients of government funds, through international education programs, have made to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China. The findings will be of significance to politicians, policymakers, academics, university executives, international education experts and students who are interested in Australia-China relations. In addition, the findings will highlight conditions of contact that are essential for international education programs to develop opinion leaders who contribute to a network of influence between Australia and China. To be effective, a country's public diplomacy must be aligned to its foreign policy, thus the contents of the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017*, and the creation of DFAT's Public Diplomacy Unit, demonstrate that Australia's politicians and policymakers have a deep interest in this area. However, academic literature regarding Australia's use of education as public diplomacy is yet to follow at the same level.

Further, this study aims to test the effectiveness of Australian Government-funded

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<sup>73</sup> This quote was taken from Dr Alison Broinowski's submission to the 2007 Senate Inquiry into Public Diplomacy in Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.65.

<sup>74</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy."

international education programs in China as a tool for building networks of influence using the contact and the two-step flow hypotheses. A primary assumption behind international education programs is the idea that contact between individuals of different groups will lead to increased mutual understanding. Furthermore, this thesis will investigate whether the NCP and ASCs in China provide the correct conditions of contact that reduce stereotypes and prejudice, as this is one of the most frequently expressed objectives of international education programs.

### 1.4 Programs investigated as part of the study

The two programs investigated in this thesis are key international education programs reported in Australia’s *PD Strategy* to build networks of influence that contribute to Australia’s public diplomacy in China. The first program in the study is the prestigious international scholarship, the New Colombo Plan for Australian undergraduate students studying in China; the second program is the network of Australia Studies Centres in Chinese universities. Figure 3 highlights how the programs work together, both sitting within DFAT.

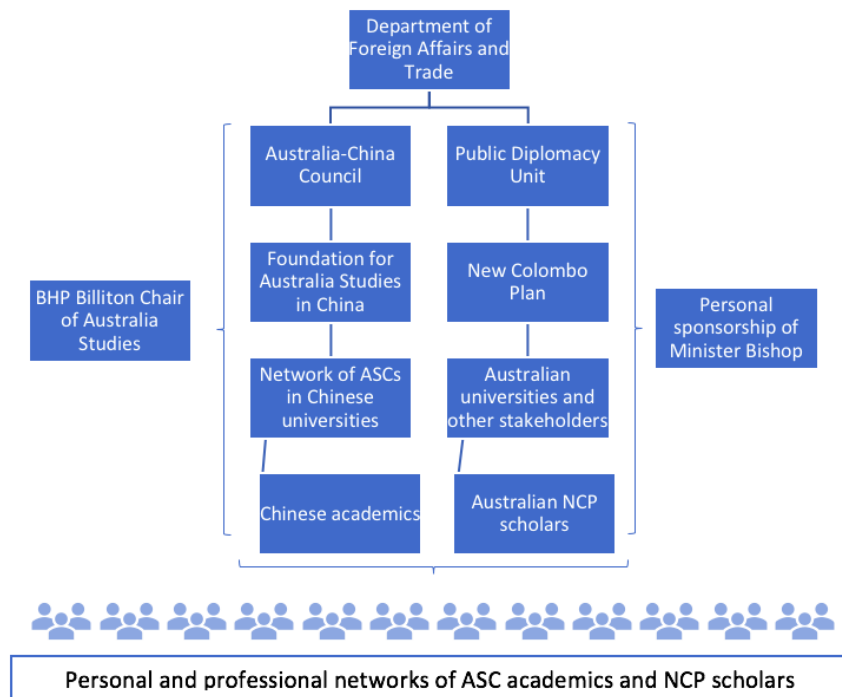


Figure 3 Flow of influence from DFAT’s ASC and NCP programs

The programs are relatively new compared to other international scholarships, such as Fulbright, Erasmus Mundus and Rhodes. As a result, there is limited research investigating the outcomes of the NCP and the ASCs, particularly relating to public diplomacy.

#### **1.4.1 The New Colombo Plan Scholarship**

Upon being elected in 2013, Prime Minister Tony Abbott introduced one of the Coalition's key policies, which was to implement the NCP, and to rebrand and move prestigious international undergraduate scholarships from the Department of Education and Training to DFAT. The NCP is a foreign policy initiative by the Australian Government, which was piloted in 2014 by sending students from 24 Australian universities to study in Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. In 2016 NCP host locations were expanded to 38 countries including mainland China.<sup>75</sup>

The NCP framework has been formed out of the long-standing Colombo Plan which was developed during the 1950s out of a meeting of member countries of the Commonwealth of Nations in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).<sup>76</sup> The original scheme, led by Australia's Minister for External Affairs Percy Spender, was devised as a way for Australia to 'project itself into the region' by engaging with Asia strategically, economically and culturally.<sup>77</sup> While the Colombo Plan saw Asian students coming into Australia to acquire useful skills and knowledge, the NCP is instead focused outwards, with Australian students gravitating towards the region in order to learn from and continue to strengthen ties with the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>78</sup> Prime Minister Abbott described the NCP as a 'two-way street' in which Australia and the

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<sup>75</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "The New Colombo Plan Scholarship," Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <http://www.fasic.org.au/index.php/programs/introduction>.

<sup>76</sup> P. Wicks, *Australia's Relations with Asia* (Melbourne, Australia: Longman Cheshire, 2000).

<sup>77</sup> D. Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan* (Canberra, ACT: Pandanus Books, 2004).

<sup>78</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy."; Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan*.

region could learn from each other.<sup>79</sup> Julie Bishop reported, ‘over time we anticipate that through this and other student exchanges it will be the norm, rather than the exception, for Australian students to have lived and studied in countries in our region.’<sup>80</sup>

While in opposition, the Coalition was determined to endorse a transparent consultation process, engaging the Menzies Research Centre to lead a roundtable discussion with education, business and industry leaders to help shape the parameters of the plan. The NCP Roundtable was advised of the public diplomacy issue, as expressed by education ministers in the region, that there were hundreds, if not thousands, of students studying in Australia, yet virtually no Australians studying in their countries.<sup>81</sup>

The specific aims outlined in the *NCP Guidelines* include:

Lifting knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia by increasing the number of Australian undergraduate students undertaking study and internships in the region. The program is intended to deepen Australia’s people-to-people and institutional relationships with the region through the engagement of students, universities, businesses and other stakeholder networks. Another aim is to establish study in the Indo-Pacific as a rite of passage for Australian undergraduate students, as an endeavour that is highly valued by the Australian community. Finally, the program aims to increase the number of work-ready Australian graduates with regional experience.<sup>82</sup>

There is literature investigating the broader goal of deepening Australia’s engagement with the Indo-Pacific region by strengthening inter-state relations through people-to-people contacts and networks.<sup>83</sup> However, there is currently limited academic and policy literature regarding the NCP scholarship’s contribution to these goals. There has been one government-funded external evaluation of the NCP program which is formative and as such has limited scope and depth. The findings in this evaluation report are discussed further in Chapter Three.

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<sup>79</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, "Abbott to Give \$100 Mln to Colombo Plan," *The Sydney Morning Herald* 2013.

<sup>80</sup> R. Callick, "High Expectations from Asian Century White Paper," *The Australian* 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Expert Roundtable for the NCP, "Expert Input at Policy Round Table on New Colombo Plan " <http://www.mrcld.org.au/events/item/new-colombo-plan?highlight=YTozOntpOjA7czo3OiJjb2xvbWJvIjtpOjE7czo0OiJwbGFuIjtpOjI7czozMjoiY29sb21ibyBwbGwFuIj9>

<sup>82</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "New Colombo Plan Scholarship Guidelines," ed. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016), p.4.

<sup>83</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy."; Lowe, "Australia’s Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."; Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia’s International Education Policy."

In September 2015, DFAT brought together more than 60 NCP alumni from 28 Australian universities to give advice on the design and operation of an effective NCP Alumni Program. An alumni group was established on LinkedIn and state-based alumni events have been arranged.<sup>84</sup> DFAT expects that over time the growing cohort of NCP alumni will play an increasingly important role, with an expectation that in the years ahead:

The NCP alumni will become an influential and diverse network of Australians with direct experience in the Indo-Pacific, strong professional and personal networks across our region, and a driving force in Australia's future prosperity and position in the region.<sup>85</sup>

Specifically, the NCP strategic objectives, which have been largely consistent from the inception of the program, include the offering of prestigious scholarships to support study in the region for up to 19 months. The objectives also include opportunities for regionally-based internships and/or mentorships, language study and flexible mobility grants, which allow for internships, practicums, research and both short and long-term study in the region.<sup>86</sup> This thesis is limited to investigating long-term scholarships within the NCP program.

#### **1.4.2 Network of Australia Studies Centres**

The second program investigated in this study is the network of ASCs in China. The Foundation for Australian Studies in China (FASIC), which has been located within DFAT since 2011, is an independent non-profit foundation established to support the network of ASCs throughout universities in China. The Australia-China Council (ACC) was established by DFAT in 1978 to promote mutual understanding and foster people-to-people links between Australia and China. As outlined on the DFAT website, the ASC's objectives are to enhance the range, volume, quality and value of research on Australia in China, and promote the dissemination of research outcomes through publishing, conferences and other means.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting, "Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan," (Australia: ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017).

<sup>85</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting, "Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan."

<sup>86</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "New Colombo Plan Scholarship Guidelines."

<sup>87</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia-China Council," <http://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/foundations-councils-institutes/australia-china-council/pages/australia-china-council.aspx>.

The Chairperson of the ACC is appointed by the Executive Council, on the recommendation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to provide recommendations on matters relating to furthering Australia's national interests in China through foreign policy and diplomacy. The ACC is located in the North Asia Division within DFAT and is responsible for providing policy advice to the government and promoting bilateral relations among its network of stakeholders in the strategic priority areas of economic diplomacy, education, arts and culture.<sup>88</sup> Secondly, the ACC is responsible for supporting and funding sustainable long-term and high-impact projects that directly contribute to strengthening Australia-China relations, and which support the government's foreign and trade policy objectives. It has increasingly given preference to the projects that involve institutional linkages<sup>89</sup>.

Relevant to this thesis is that the ACC is also responsible for supporting a network of ASCs located in leading Chinese metropolitan and regional universities, through the Australia Studies in China program and FASIC. However, as Greg McCarthy, the former Chair and Professor of Australian studies at Peking University, explained:

The Australian Studies Centres are completely independent. They don't report to the Australia-China Council, or to the Foundation for Australian Studies in china, or to me.

The Chair of the ASC network in China is supported by Peking University, BHP Billiton and FASIC, with acknowledgement and support from DFAT, through the ACC and Universities Australia.<sup>90</sup> This network of over 30 ASCs in universities throughout China is seen as one of the Australian Government's leading public diplomacy and education engagement platforms. This is a unique partnership between the government, corporate and university sectors to advance Australian studies and education in China. It is referred to in the *PD Strategy* as a 'leading example of government, university and private sector partnerships.'<sup>91</sup> The inaugural

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<sup>88</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia-China Council".

<sup>89</sup> Rosaleen Smyth, "Managing Australia's Image in Asia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>90</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>91</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

BHP Billiton Chair of Australia Studies at Peking University, Professor David Walker, was announced in 2012.<sup>92</sup> A key education initiative in the *PD Strategy* are the nine bilateral foundations, councils and institutes - one of the largest being the Australia-China Council - to 'promote people-to-people links and accurate, contemporary images of Australia in support of the government's foreign and trade policy goals'. The ACC is expected to:

...foster perceptions of contemporary Australia as scientifically, technologically and educationally advanced, economically enterprising and culturally diverse. FCI activities are required to build networks and contacts, influence opinion-makers and facilitate exchange of knowledge.<sup>93</sup>

The key themes of the activities supported by the ACC that link the organisation to the *PD Strategy* are: encouraging Australians' knowledge of, and interest in, China; encouraging Chinese knowledge of, and interest in, Australia; and broadening and deepening bilateral contact and exchange. A key program that helps push these themes is the network of ASCs in Chinese universities. Dinah Dysart, a former Deputy Chair of the Council, informed the Senate Committee that the Council gives preference to '...projects that project Australia as an innovative, multicultural, open and liberal society and that offers prospects of long-term institutional links and continuing exchanges'.<sup>94</sup>

A key feature of the ASCs, and one that is relevant for this study, is the ability of these Centres to provide an environment for Chinese and Australian academics to foster an interest in the bilateral relationship through research and teaching collaborations.

### **1.5 Justification for the research**

There are five key justifications for this research project. First, previous research has been undertaken primarily to assess whether international education programs are effective, in

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<sup>92</sup> Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin University was the inaugural BHP Billiton Chair of Australia Studies at Peking University followed by the current Chair Professor Greg McCarthy.

<sup>93</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

<sup>94</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

terms of learning outcomes and participant satisfaction. As one writer warns, ‘the researcher must keep in mind the obvious gratitude of recipients who have been selected for honorific, subsidised foreign travel. Appreciation of such an opportunity and adventure must color the testimony of recent grantees.’<sup>95</sup> Student mobility through the NCP has emerged as a prominent feature within the *PD Strategy*. A substantial body of literature exists that has sought to identify the motivations or choice criteria used by students to select destinations and institutions.<sup>96</sup> There has to date, however, been little research on the benefits gained by the government, through the effectiveness of recipients of sponsored exchanges and collaborations, acting as opinion leaders or ambassadors for Australia. Unlike many previous studies, this thesis will not investigate the level of an individual participant’s satisfaction or learning outcomes. By contrast, the purpose of this research is to fill a gap in the international education and public diplomacy literature by investigating whether Australian Government-funded international education programs result in a network of Sino-Australian opinion leaders who contribute to Australia’s public diplomacy efforts in China.

Second, as referenced in the *Foreign Policy White Paper*, smaller countries like Australia have difficulty influencing the international system, which is ‘predominantly shaped by the actions of much larger nations’.<sup>97</sup> The Australian Government, recognising these challenges, continues to fund higher education programs as public diplomacy, to gain influence

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<sup>95</sup> O.W. Riegel, "Residual Effects of Exchange-of-Persons," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 17, no. 3 (1953): p.321.

<sup>96</sup> T. Mazzarol and G. Soutar, *The Global Market for Higher Education: Sustainable Competitive Strategies for the New Millennium* (Cheltenham, United Kingdom.: Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2001); T. Mazzarol and G. Soutar, "Push-Pull Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice?," *International Journal of Education Management* 16, no. 2 (2002); T. Mazzarol, G. Soutar, and M. Seng, "The Third Wave: Future Trends in International Education," *International Journal of Educational Management* 17, no. 3 (2003); P. Altbach, "The New Internationalism: Foreign Students and Scholars," *Studies in Higher Education* 14, no. 1 (1989); P. Altbach, "Impact and Adjustment: Foreign Students in Comparative Perspective," *The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning: Special Issue on Higher Education and the Flow of Foreign Students* 21, no. 3 (1991); P. Altbach, "Can the United States Remain the Top Destination for Foreign Students?," *Higher Education Crosses Borders* 36, no. 2 (2004); P. Altbach, G. Kelly, and Y. Lulat, *Research on Foreign Students and International Study: An Overview and Bibliography* (New York: Praeger, 1985); Philip G. Altbach, "Can the United States Remain the Top Destination for Foreign Students?," *Change* 36, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>97</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper," ed. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Canberra, Australia 2017).

in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>98</sup> To date, there has been little research or evidence to support the notion that the NCP and the ASCs make a strong contribution towards influencing positive public opinion about Australia in China.

Third, despite the recognition given by the Australian Government and international education experts to the role of public diplomacy and public opinion in foreign policy, little has been written on this matter within the Australian context. Indeed, not much has changed from a decade ago when the *PD Senate Inquiry* reported that the paucity of material on the matter in Australia had been one of the most striking features of the Inquiry. For example, Pauline Kerr from the Australian National University's Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, observed that 'it is quite noticeable when looking through the diplomatic literature that public diplomacy really is not a topic that Australian academics find all that interesting'.<sup>99</sup> The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology also observed that there was 'a real absence of discourse about public diplomacy in Australia outside government circles'.<sup>100</sup>

Fourth, one of the key challenges for implementing public diplomacy activities is gaining attention and maintaining a positive presence in an already crowded space. With a growing economy such as China's, there are an increasing number of countries competing for positive attention from Chinese authorities and businesses. Former diplomat Alison Broinowski highlighted this:

It is very difficult when you are representing Australia overseas to put Australia across in ways that differentiate it from, say, the United States or the UK. Our competitor countries like, say, France, Sweden, Japan or Korea put a lot more energy, effort and commitment—Canada, too, hugely—into their public diplomacy or their cultural relations programs.<sup>101</sup>

More research into the effectiveness of public diplomacy strategies is needed to inform

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<sup>98</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper," p.1.

<sup>99</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.28.

<sup>100</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.28.

<sup>101</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.67.

policymakers, as one of many medium-sized countries that are seeking to build a presence in China. The geographic isolation Australia faces is to the nation's detriment. According to Asialink<sup>102</sup>:

Australia's geographic distance from world centres makes public diplomacy even more important. Given the importance of the Asian region to Australia, strategically, economically and politically, Asialink firmly believes that public diplomacy in this region is arguably the most strategic and logical investment for Australia, and therefore it should be the top priority for our public diplomacy efforts, accompanied by appropriate investments.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, China is Australia's largest trading partner and is challenging the US as the global superpower. The importance of balancing the US security alliance and China's economic partnership has meant that the Australian Government is seeking to implement strategies that will stabilise its relations with both countries and its position of influence in the Indo-Pacific.

### **1.5.1 Justification for the New Colombo Plan and the Australia Studies Centres**

The selection of the two programs within this study, the NCP and ASCs, is justified due to both programs aiming to build people-to-people contact, and create networks of influence that contribute to Australia's public diplomacy in China. First, within its *PD Strategy*, the Australian Government highlights the NCP, and the Australia-China Council and BHP Billiton partnership in funding the Chair of the ASCs, as best practice in regards to education contributing to public diplomacy. More research is needed to understand if the ASCs and NCP provide the right conditions of contact to break down the traditional preference of Chinese academics to collaborate with researchers from prestigious institutions in the UK and the US, rather than in Australia.

Secondly, an aim of the *PD Strategy* is that over time the NCP alumni network will

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<sup>102</sup> Asialink is Australia's leading centre for the promotion of public understanding of the countries of Asia and of Australia's role in the region.

<sup>103</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.68.

establish itself as an influential cohort with direct experience of living, studying and working in the region.<sup>104</sup> More research is needed to understand the ongoing engagement of NCP alumni as opinion leaders in the Indo-Pacific region.

The third justification is that one of the theories in this thesis, the contact hypothesis, is difficult to apply to the research of exchange programs, as each program differs depending on the recipients' goals of their intended study. The possibility of ambiguity is managed by restricting this study to NCP scholarships and ASCs in China, as these two programs have a common goal in contributing to building networks of influence.

The fourth and final justification is that more research is needed to understand the contribution that universities make to the Australia-China relationship. China is the most popular destination for applicants of the NCP, with 76 out of 315 students from 2014 to 2017 choosing mainland China (34 scholars) or Hong Kong (42 scholars) as their NCP study destination.<sup>105</sup> Figure 4, shows the number of NCP recipients (including short term mobility and scholars) and where they studied. There are other programs mentioned in the *PD Strategy*, but the NCP and the ASCs are the only two education programs that promote large scale multi-disciplinary contact between Australian and Chinese opinion leaders across all sectors and across both countries.

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<sup>104</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16," p.7.

<sup>105</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "The New Colombo Plan Scholarship".

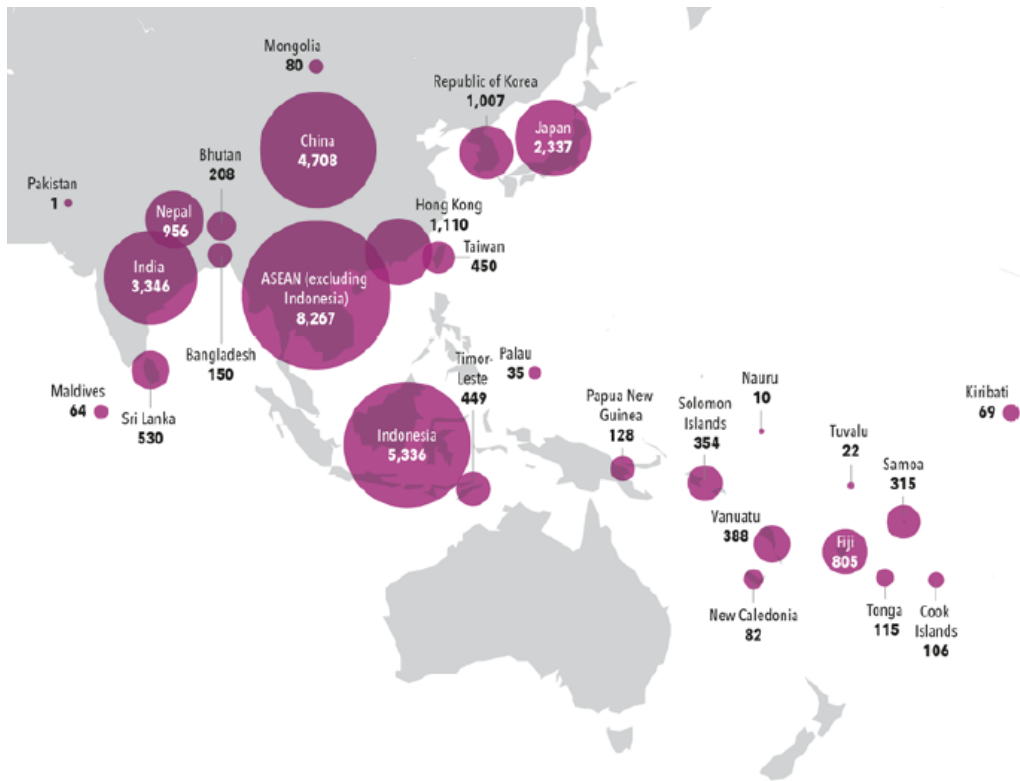


Figure 4 NCP students by destination (includes scholarship and short-term mobility)

There are nine bilateral foundations, councils and institutes that receive government funding, with China containing the largest number of ASCs that receive the most funding. According to DFAT's response to the *PD Senate Inquiry*, the first ASCs were established in Japan, but China has quickly become the country with the most Centres, in line with geopolitical shifts in the region.<sup>106</sup> The ACC has been supporting Australian studies in China for over two decades and provides funding to a network of over 30 ASCs across China. The network is one of Australia's leading public diplomacy and education engagement platforms that is set to grow in importance for Australia-China relations.<sup>107</sup> Academics and policymakers alike are interested in the outcomes achieved through research collaborations from the ASCs.

In summary, this research is justified because of the complexity and importance of

<sup>106</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

<sup>107</sup> "Foundation for Australian Studies in China," <http://www.fasic.org.au/index.php/programs/introduction>.

Australia-China relations. Within the relationship, international education is increasingly seen as a public diplomacy tool. Therefore, the findings from this research will assist policymakers, academics and politicians gain a better understanding of how universities can demonstrate they are achieving not only their primary goal of teaching and research, but also expanding their contribution to the public good by assisting the Australian Government capitalise on the country's economic relationship with one of its major trading partners.

### **1.6 Research objectives**

This thesis addresses the following key questions in its analysis:

1. Why does the Australian Government fund international education as a tool of public diplomacy in China?
2. What have the ASCs achieved to demonstrate academics from the Centres perform a role in promoting collaborations with Australian institutions?
3. Have NCP alumni built sustainable personal and professional networks of influence in China?
4. What are positive and negative conditions of contact under which Australian undergraduate scholars, completed their NCP programs in China?

### **1.7 Theoretical framework**

Eytan Gilboa, one of the original public diplomacy writers, describes the field as 'one of the most multidisciplinary.'<sup>108</sup> Rather than formulate new theoretical constructs for public diplomacy, this research utilises interdisciplinary concepts from several fields, not just public diplomacy. A consensus among contact specialists led to publishing a fine-tuning of work in

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<sup>108</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."

which four conditions were categorised.<sup>109</sup> This thesis uses these four conditions within the research framework. Firstly, social and institutional support, in that there must be top-down support for positive change between two groups in order to lead to an increase in normative behaviours. Secondly, high acquaintance potential to ensure contact is of a sufficient frequency and duration. Thirdly, equal status contact, meaning that existing inequalities between the two groups are removed as much as possible. Finally, participants must share common goals and perceive a sense of co-operation, as promoting competition can often lead to an increase in prejudice as negative stereotypes are used against each other to compete.

Two points that are largely agreed upon in linking international education with public diplomacy in the literature are used as a theoretical basis:

1. Contact between individuals of different nations contributes to mutual understanding and influences the exchange participants' views of each other's nations.
2. Engaging with opinion leaders in a target nation will shape elite opinion and ultimately influence public opinion.<sup>110</sup>

Each of these points are based on interdisciplinary research. The first deals with interpersonal contact and attitude change theories drawn from psychology. The second looks at the opinion leader concept, an idea borrowed from the communications studies literature. The two points draw upon the literature from different academic fields, which are considered the 'parent fields' of the broader area of higher education, as a tool for achieving Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China. All fields are interrelated and therefore dependent upon each other for effectiveness.

This thesis uses the contact hypothesis in the development of intercultural understanding, and the two-step hypothesis to gain further knowledge on building a network

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<sup>109</sup> R. Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>110</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

of opinion leaders. The opinion leader theory is used to further understand who opinion leaders are, and the extent to which they influence decision-making within society and public opinion in general. In this thesis, the definition of opinion leader is: 'individuals in a community whose attitudes influence those of the citizenry at large'.<sup>111</sup> Opinion leaders do not necessarily hold public office. Teachers, students, and successful business people, for example, can also sway public opinion. This approach enabled me to benefit from existing research and apply it in new ways to the public diplomacy practices investigated in this thesis.

### **1.7.1 The contact hypothesis**

There is limited empirical research investigating the contact hypothesis in building positive Australia-China relations. As the aims of the Australian Government's funded scholarships are to build better cultural understanding, boost the 'Asian literacy' of Australian students and strengthen the understanding of foreign publics of Australia's role in the region, more needs to be known about the conditions under which these goals may be achieved. Although the origins of intergroup contact hypothesis were focused on a majority group's negative attitudes toward a minority group, an important shift in literature has been to refocus on bidirectional relationships.<sup>112</sup> The origins of the contact hypothesis were with highly prejudiced individuals, with less research focusing on changing stereotypes and the development of more genuine in-depth interactions between groups. This research seeks to understand the conditions needed to create the right contact between Australian and Chinese students and academics so as to break down negative stereotypes through building intercultural awareness.

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<sup>111</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>112</sup> I Nielsen and R Smyth, "The Contact Hypothesis in Urban China: The Perspective of Minority Status Migrant Workers," *Journal of urban affairs* 33, no. 4 (2011): p.471.

### 1.7.2 The two-step hypothesis in developing a network of opinion leaders

At a time well before online mass media and social media platforms, Katz and Lazarsfeld asserted that ‘the traditional image of the mass persuasion process must make room for people as intervening factors between the stimuli of the media and resultant opinions, decisions and actions’.<sup>113</sup> They assert that individuals receive information directly from its original source, from a possible myriad of media sources, or indirectly through an intermediary also known as ‘opinion leaders’.<sup>114</sup> Since the 1960s, researchers have sought to understand who these opinion leaders are and the extent to which they influence decision-making within society. Holsti’s research on the difference between opinion leaders and the general public showed that 97 per cent of leaders supported an active US presence in world affairs, compared to 59 per cent of the general public, findings that have held constant over two decades.<sup>115</sup> He considered that the support for an active US presence can most likely be considered a result of the public’s concern with international affairs that impact a foreign public, such as protecting jobs and business interest. This may be similar to the Australian public’s current concerns relating to foreign influence.<sup>116</sup> At a time when security concerns are heightened and the geopolitical priorities for Australia are shifting, more theoretical focus needs to be aimed at investigating the role Australia’s public diplomacy strategies play in establishing people-to-people linkages between Australia and China. The focus and reasoning behind Australian Government-funded education programs has changed dramatically from aid to trade and now perhaps from aid to trade and diplomacy, leading to the need for further research that reflects the current situation.

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<sup>113</sup> E. Katz and P.F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence, the Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* (Piscataway, U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers, 1955), p.33.

<sup>114</sup> B.O. Anderson and C.O. Melén, "Lazarsfeld's Two-Step Hypothesis: Data from Some Swedish Surveys," *Acta Sociologica* (1959): p.21.

<sup>115</sup> Ole Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1992): p.457.

<sup>116</sup> Michael Fullilove and Alex Oliver, "Terrorism Trumps China, Us Fears for Australians," The Lowy Institute, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/terrorism-trumps-china-us-fears-australians>.

## 1.8 Research methodology and the two phases of data collection

The decision was made that this thesis should make use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.<sup>117</sup> Patton's work demonstrates that the complexity of a research subject warrants exploration. In this thesis, this is only possible through qualitative scales that measure opinion leadership and is strengthened by the depth of qualitative research through content analysis and in-depth interviews.<sup>118</sup> Mixed methods are required to establish whether investment in these scholars has led to increased knowledge in Chinese culture, and if these participants continue to exert influence within their professional and personal networks on issues related to Australia-China relations.

The contact hypothesis has rarely been used to measure the impact of international education programs on people's stereotyping or prejudice. In previous research, the two-step flow has mostly been used to quantitatively investigate mapping networks of influence.<sup>119</sup> Semi-structured follow-up interviews, after the survey data has been analysed, will allow me to identify examples of positive contact for participants in the NCP, and how interactions, if any, positively influenced cultural understanding.

Using scales of opinion leadership, this research will identify the NCP alumni who have continued their engagement with China and show personality traits of leadership and influence. It is these 'opinion leaders' who have been able to utilise their NCP program and experience working and studying in China to begin developing a network of influence. In addition, the influence of their personality type will be identified. Most important, the scales of opinion leadership will identify if NCP alumni have remained engaged with China. Quantitative

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<sup>117</sup> J. Brannen, "Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: An Overview," in *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Res* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992); M.Q. Patton, *Utilization-Focussed Evaluation*, 3rd Edition ed. (Newbury Park: Sage Publication, 1996).

<sup>118</sup> Patton, *Utilization-Focussed Evaluation*; M. Nisbett and J. Kotcher, "A Two-Step Flow of Influence? Opinion-Leader Campaigns on Climate Change," *Science Communication* 30, no. 3 (1990); T.L. Childers, "Assessment of the Psychometric Properties of an Opinion Leadership Scale," *Journal of Marketing Research* 23 (1986).

<sup>119</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

analysis of scales in the online questionnaire allowed me to identify those who were considered opinion leaders, and supplement the surveys with semi-structured interviews with these people. Qualitative research is required to get a better understanding of the influence of opinion leaders and the conditions of contact that have led to their continued engagement with China.

Triangulation of data will be utilised to address some of the limitations of the methodology.<sup>120</sup> The potential for bias by research participants was considered, particularly given that respondents received funding and, therefore, may have a sense of gratitude. Most research into scholarship programs asks participants to explain how involvement in their program changed their lives, and the level of satisfaction with their program. Criticism of this approach is that participants, when they believe their responses will be known by their funding body, will inevitably answer positively.

The potential bias was overcome by the following two-phase approach to data collection and analysis, to investigate answers to the three research questions. Phase One, consisted of interviews with experts within government, the Australian Embassy, universities and the private sector, with expertise in international education, public diplomacy and Australia-China relations. The interviews occurred in Beijing, Canberra and Sydney to gain an understanding of the ASCs and the NCP, and how participants contribute to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China. A desktop audit of the outcomes of ASCs was used to investigate the level of activities. Phase Two, followed with surveys of the NCP alumni (who chose to study in mainland China and/or Hong Kong) to identify conditions of positive contact, and to measure indicators of active opinion leadership. In addition, in-depth interviews of alumni who were identified as opinion leaders was undertaken to give voice to their experience studying in China, and their continued engagement with the Indo-Pacific region as NCP alumni.

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<sup>120</sup> R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th Edition ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); W.G. Zikmund, *Business Research Methods* (Fort Worth, TX Dryden Press, 2000); G. Weimann, "The Influentials: Back to the Concept of Opinion Leaders?," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55 (1991).

### **1.8.1 Phase One: interviews with experts and desk audit of ASC reports**

While conducting a review of the history of public diplomacy in Australia, and the use of education to boost Australia's influence in the Indo-Pacific region, it became clear that there are limited publications in Australian literature. Therefore, the first phase will focus on documenting how international education is used by the Australian Government to support and build its relationship with China. This phase will begin with semi-structured interviews with experts, government officials and private sector professionals who are engaged in the education sector and/or Australia-China relations. In addition, a content analysis will be conducted of the ASCs' financial and output reports that were submitted by the Directors of the ASCs and collected by ASC staff. Through the analysis, I will provide insight into the recent activities of the ASCs. Finally, a deeper understanding will be achieved through interviewing senior officials within the Foundation for Australian Studies in China, the Australia-China Council and the network of Australian Studies Centres.

### **1.8.2 Phase Two: NCP alumni surveys and interviews of opinion leaders**

Phase Two is an analysis of survey data from NCP scholarship alumni to identify (using the contact hypothesis and the opinion leadership theories) the impact of the in-country experience on the scholars' abilities to build cultural ties and enact their role as opinion leaders in Australia-China relations.

NCP alumni who qualify as active opinion leaders will be followed up with a semi-structured interview. The purpose of the follow-up interview is to better understand the individual's NCP experience and how it enabled the scholar to continue their involvement as an opinion leader in Australia-China relations. These interviews will be semi-structured, giving the NCP scholar a voice to tell their story, and an opportunity for me to gain an in-depth understanding of how their specific experiences could be utilised in future programs.

A more comprehensive discussion of the design and research methodology is provided in chapters Three and Four. Figure 5, outlines the research design, including the research problem, and three questions, three hypotheses, objectives, theoretical constructs and methodology.

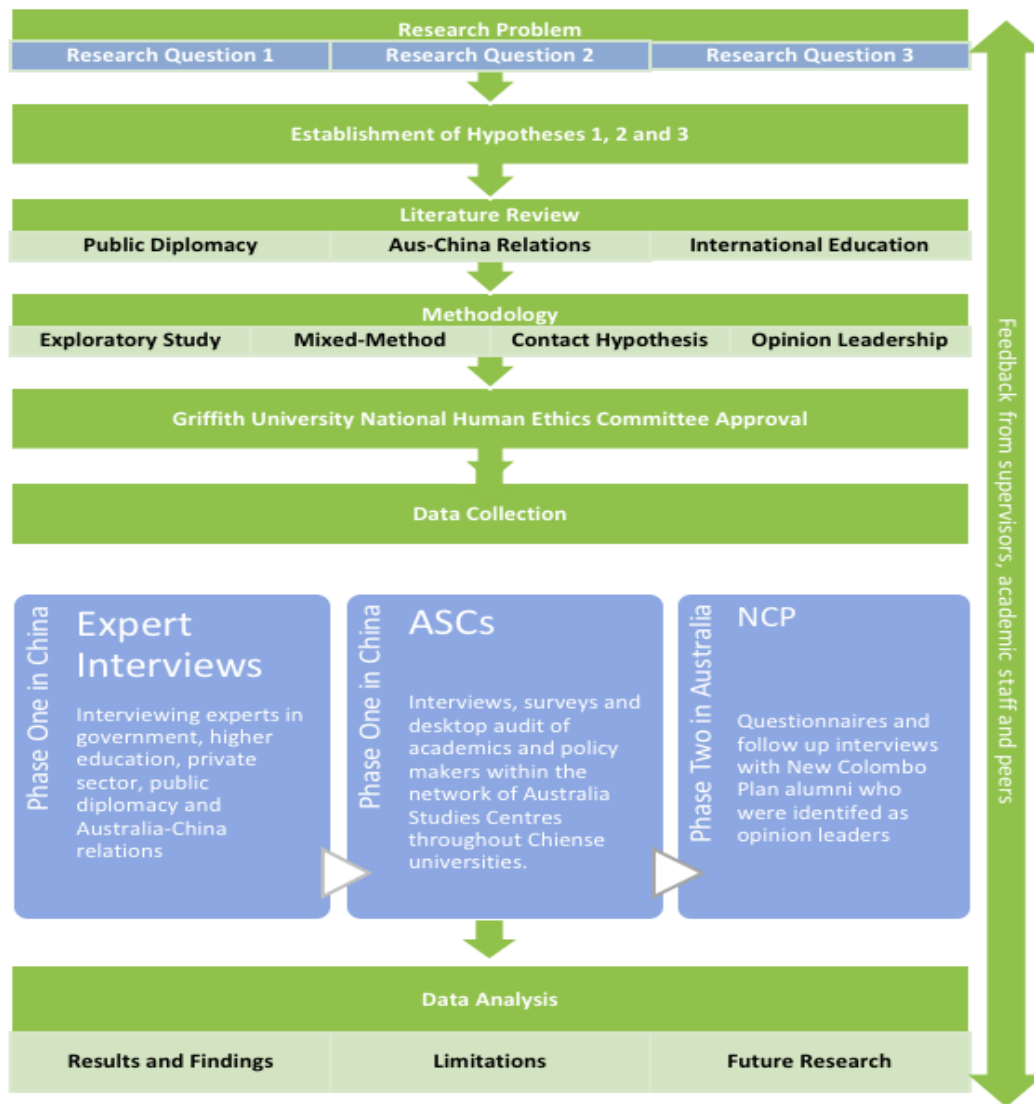


Figure 5 The research process outlined

### 1.9 Structure of the thesis mapped to the chapters

The chapter design and the process of constructing the thesis are complementary. The integration of the two is illustrated in Figure 6, which shows the process of developing the thesis and its relationship to the chapters.

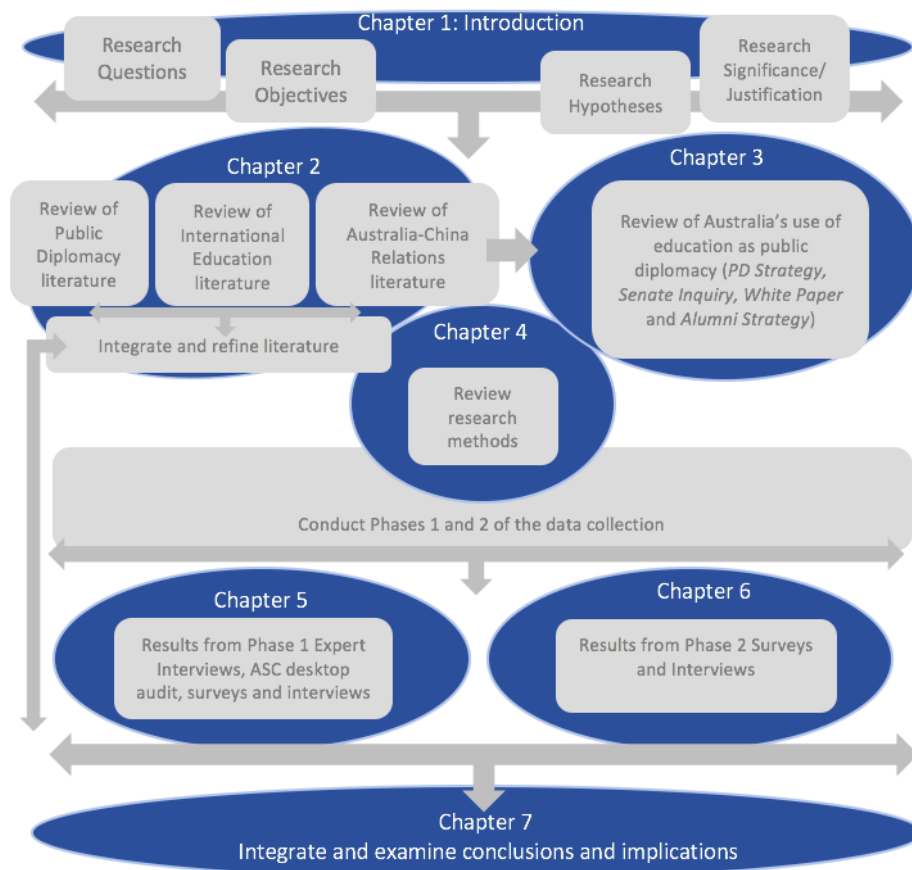


Figure 6 Process of the development to the thesis mapped to the chapters<sup>121</sup>

### 1.10 Limitations

There are four key limitations to this study, some of which may be addressed through future research. To address the identified limitations, ‘the contact hypothesis’ and ‘the two-step flow hypothesis with opinion leadership’ will be used to triangulate the data. The procedures, which are central to all research such as, ‘protecting against threats to validity, maintaining a chain of evidence, and investigating and testing rival explanations’ will be utilised to address any concerns.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> This figure was adapted from the work of C. Perry and L. Coote, "Processes of a Case Study Research Methodology; Tool for Management Development," in *Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management Annual Conference* (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand2006).

<sup>122</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p.3.

It is important to note the following limitations:

1. Interviewees in Phase Two report their ongoing involvement with China. In order to overcome any self-reporting bias this study addresses this limitation by using proven scales in the survey data analysis to measure their influence. Follow-up interviews using probing questions allowed me to better understand each participant's personal circumstances.
2. The NCP scholarship is a relatively recent initiative and therefore there is no way for me to investigate the longitudinal achievements of the opinion leaders. This was addressed by focusing on the scholar's personality traits and current involvement with China since the completion of their program to identify their potential to develop into an opinion leader.
3. This thesis limited the student questionnaire to recipients of the NCP who undertook their program in China. This program is the only government-funded undergraduate scholarship for outgoing Australian citizens mentioned in the *PD Strategy*. Future work is required to analyse feedback from postgraduate students receiving other awards and fellowships.
4. Because the ASC network is mentioned in the *PD Strategy*, this thesis limits its sample to the ASCs in China. Further research is required to investigate other leading research collaborations between Australia and other important relationships in the region.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This opening chapter has discussed the significance of the research, the limitations and provided the justification for the research problem, three research questions, and the research methodology. How the data was collected and measured is described in the two-phase approach. This thesis consists of two government-funded education programs: the NCP and

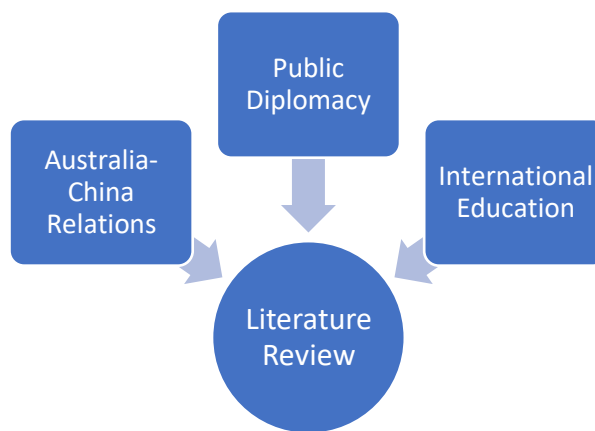
the network of ASCs in China. This chapter shows that through a mixed method approach, I will investigate why the Australian Government funds international education as public diplomacy to answer research question 1. The contact hypothesis is used in the development of intercultural understanding, and the two-step hypothesis is used to gain further knowledge on building a network of opinion leaders, to answer research questions two and three. To inform the thesis the next chapter will review Australia-China relations since 1972, public diplomacy and international education literature.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Of all the important relationships that Australia has with other countries none has been more greatly transformed over the last ten years than our relationship with China.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the three parent literatures within this thesis that cover Australia-China relations, public diplomacy, and international education. Firstly, the importance to Australia of a strong bilateral relationship with China will be discussed. Secondly, the transformation of diplomacy since 9/11, including the rise in the field of public diplomacy from governments, think-tanks and academics, will be reviewed. Finally, the literature on international education as a tool of public diplomacy will be discussed. Figure 7 indicates how the material in this chapter supports, informs and assists with the development of the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Four.



*Figure 7 Literature review concept map*

### 2.1 Australia-China bilateral relationship

The history of the Australia-China relationship goes beyond trade and state-to-state relations. In the early years in particular, the story is about individuals, families and

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<sup>1</sup> Then Australian Prime Minister John Howard on Australia's relationship with China as quoted in "China to Buy Australian Uranium," BBC, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4871000.stm>.

communities; and the flow of people, ideas and capital that have bound the two nations.<sup>2</sup> Between 1949 and 1972, unlike the current trade situation, it was not coal, iron ore, tourism or international education that represented Australia's prime exports, but rather wheat and wool that accounted for most of Australia's trade with China.<sup>3</sup> Since Whitlam formally established diplomatic relations on 21 December 1972, the bilateral trade relationship between Australia and China has gone from strength to strength, but the diplomatic relationship between the two nations has been more of a challenge.<sup>4</sup> Given the overwhelming contemporary significance of China to the Australian economy, it is easy to forget that bilateral relations are comparatively young.<sup>5</sup> Jan Adams, the Australian Ambassador to China, in recognising the 45th Anniversary of Australia-China relations, stated:

In 1973, then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam instructed Stephen Fitzgerald, the first Australian Ambassador to China, that Australia seeks a relationship with China based on friendship, cooperation, mutual trust, comparable with that which we have, or seek, with other major powers. A visionary aspiration then—one which maintains its relevance today.<sup>6</sup>

The rise of China is transforming Australia's economic and strategic environment. This may not be a novel observation, but what is less commonly acknowledged is how integrated the economic and geopolitical consequences of China's rise actually are.<sup>7</sup> Australia continues to perceive China through conflict lenses. Economically, the linkages continue to deepen Australia's dependence on China as its number one trade partner; but, strategically, Australia's anxiety about China persists and shapes its Defence White Papers. Further, Australia's strong security ties with the US remain the defining feature of Australia's foreign policy.

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Centre on China in the World, "The Australia-China Story," <https://www.thechinastory.org/the-australia-china-story/>.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government: Treasury, "Australia-China: Not Just 40 Years," <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/economic-roundup-issue-4-2012/australia-china-not-just-40-years/>.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Grattan, *Australian Prime Ministers* (Australia: New Holland, 2016); Wang, *Australia-China Relations Post 1949*.

<sup>5</sup> Beeson and Wilson, "Coming to Terms with China: Managing Complications in the Sino-Australian Economic Relationship," p.28.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Speeches: Australia-China 45th Anniversary Lunch," <http://dfat.gov.au/news/speeches/Pages/australia-china-45th-anniversary-lunch.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> Beeson and Wilson, "Coming to Terms with China: Managing Complications in the Sino-Australian Economic Relationship."

As China continues its economic liberalisation and as the bilateral relationship grows, opportunities for Australian businesses to engage with the Chinese market will continue to expand. However, differences in political systems will continue to create tension between the governments as Xi Jinping continues to push a nationalistic economic agenda. Strong relations are required to ensure Australia can navigate times of disagreement and focus on mutually beneficial elements of the partnership. The nature of the Australian and Chinese economies has been complimentary, with extraordinary growth in bilateral trade over the past forty years.

There is no doubt that the economic relationship between Australia and China is important for both countries, not just Australia, when ‘twenty-five per cent of Australia’s manufactured imports come from China; 13 per cent of its exports are thermal coal to China’.<sup>8</sup> The Australia-China Relations Institute and the National Australia Bank conducted a poll of the Australia-China business engagement index to identify confidence in Australian and Chinese business community regarding the economic relationship. Overall, 73 per cent of Australian respondents’ impressions of doing business in China were positive (7 per cent very favourable and 66 per cent favourable). Australian businesses reported issues such as business being domestically focused, lack of transparency in the legal system, and protection of intellectual property as reasons for concern.<sup>9</sup> Approximately one in four Australians surveyed in the poll were sceptical about doing business with China. In contrast, more than 94 per cent of Chinese businesses were favourable regarding cooperation with Australian businesses. Around one in two Australian businesses reported having dealings with China, and nine out of ten Chinese businesses reported having dealings with Australia.<sup>10</sup> Engagement between both

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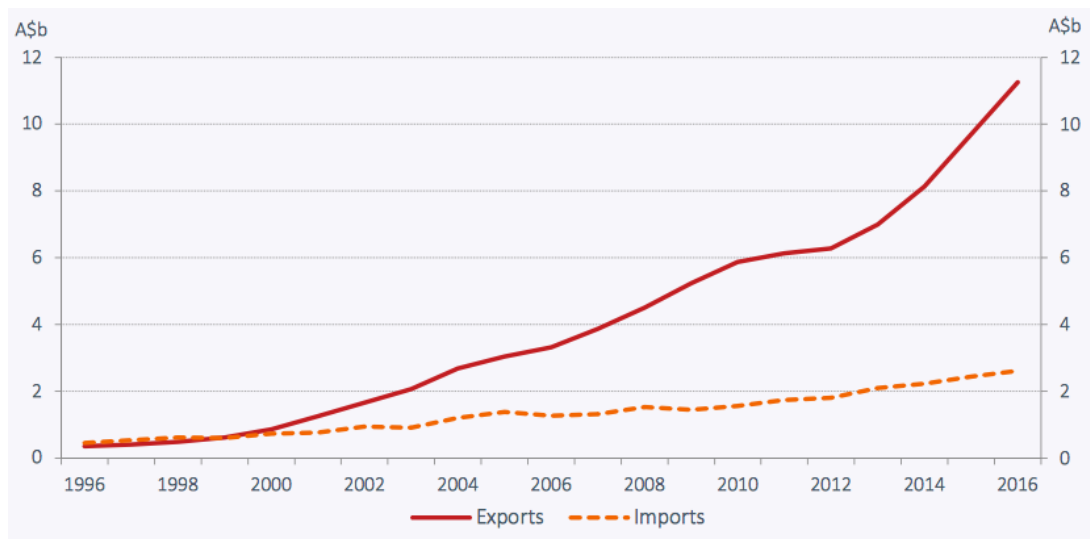
<sup>8</sup> Anne Holmes, "Australia’s Economic Relationships with China," [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/China](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/China).

<sup>9</sup> Australia-China Relations Institute and National Australia Bank, "Key Bilateral Insights from the Inaugural Australia-China Business Engagement Index," (2015).

<sup>10</sup> Australia-China Relations Institute and National Australia Bank, "Key Bilateral Insights from the Inaugural Australia-China Business Engagement Index."

countries is high, but it would seem a lack of trust and cultural difference have fueled concerns for Australian businesses in relation to doing business with China.

One of the greatest areas of economic development between Australia and China (especially for Australia) was in trade services. As highlighted in Figure 8, in 2016 China became Australia's second largest two-way trade partner in services valued at \$13.9 billion.<sup>11</sup> Growth in services has primarily been around travel and education exports.



*Figure 8 Australia's trade in services with China*

Figure 9 shows that over half of Australia's service exports with China were accounted for by education-related travel services (which cover education fees and living expenditure of Chinese students in Australia).<sup>12</sup> Imports of services from China were also dominated by travel services; however this was mainly related to personal travel.

<sup>11</sup> "Australia's Trade in Services with China," ed. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> "Australia's Trade in Services with China."

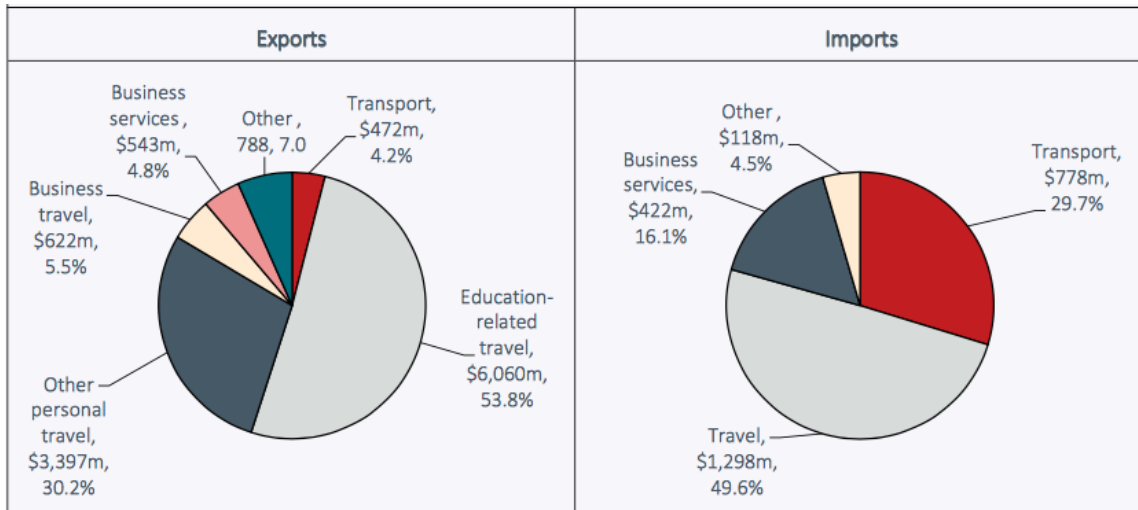


Figure 9 Australia trade in services with China by major type

International education has become an essential part of the Australian economy, with Chinese students making up the largest source of education-related services exports. Figure 10 shows strong growth in education services between 2006 and 2010, up from \$2.3 billion to \$4 billion in 2010; However student numbers did decline from 123,234 to 110,700 between 2010 and 2013.<sup>13</sup>

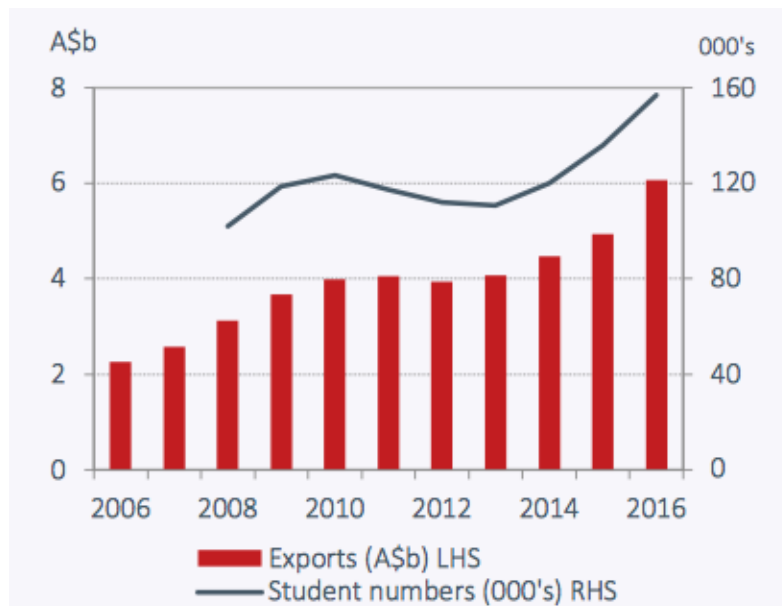


Figure 10 Exports of education-related travel services

<sup>13</sup> "Australia's Trade in Services with China."

Student numbers from China are expected to continue to grow, with visa grants increasing 14.1 per cent to 80,423 in 2016-17, with the higher education sector accounting for 83.8 per cent of all grants.<sup>14</sup> While many might agree that Australia's trade partnership with Australia, and Whitlam's vision of cooperation, mutual trust and friendship are important, the difference lies in how both might be achieved.

## **2.2 Prime Ministerial leadership of Australia-China relations post 1972**

Australia's establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1972, by the Whitlam Government, together with Australia's One China policy, has underpinned Australia-China relations for more than 40 years.<sup>15</sup> Managing the bilateral relationship has been a priority for successive Australian Governments, both Labor and Liberal since the Whitlam era. For these reasons, to understand contemporary Australia-China relations, it is useful to review some historical context of leadership by Australian Prime Ministers since the Whitlam era.<sup>16</sup>

Malcolm Fraser, the Australian Prime Minister elected after Whitlam, despite years of reluctance to engage with China, did not seek to return to the previous level of misunderstandings and instead continued to build on the foundation set by the previous government.<sup>17</sup> However, the Fraser Government not only inherited some of the issues faced by the Whitlam Government, such as China's trade imbalance and nuclear testing, but also had to contend with new challenges including the bilateral differences on international questions, particularly the Indo-China situation.<sup>18</sup>

Prime Minister Hawke, as the next elected Australian leader, also recognised the importance of the bilateral relationship after his election in 1983, but the 1989 political unrest

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<sup>14</sup>"Student Visa and Temporary Graduate Visa Programme Bi-Annual Report," ed. Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2017).

<sup>15</sup> The Diplomat 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009

<sup>16</sup> Jain and McCarthy p.245 Jain and McCarthy, "Between Centrality and Anxiety: China in Australia."

<sup>17</sup> Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simmons, (Australia: Melbourne University Publishing, Malcom Fraser The Political Memoirs).

<sup>18</sup> Wang, *Australia-China Relations Post 1949*, pp.60-62.

in China caused a dramatic downturn in Sino-Australian relations.<sup>19</sup> In 1984, Premier Zhao Ziyang was the first Chinese Premier to visit Canberra and, although invited by Fraser, was welcomed by Australia's new Prime Minister Hawke. At the time, this was the strongest indication yet of the bipartisan support for Australia's engagement with China. After the Premier's visit, the Hawke Government sought to take advantage of the Asian markets and quickly established the China Action Plan to boost trade and investment.<sup>20</sup> Along with economic reform, perceptions began to shift within society as the government used strategies that have become known as public diplomacy to raise awareness and literacy of Asia among the Australian people.<sup>21</sup>

However, there was a strong setback in relations during 1989 with political unrest in China, resulting in the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4th in Beijing. At a press conference, Bob Hawke was emotional as he informed the Australian people of the number of unarmed rioting Chinese students killed by the tanks. The Hawke Government announced the decision that any Chinese students who wished to remain in Australia longer than their current visa would have their approval extended and they could apply for permanency in later years.<sup>22</sup> This not only changed Australia's immigration policy but also the cultural face of the nation. From these beginnings, immigration from China has been steadily on the increase with 866,001 people living in Australia who identify themselves as Chinese (going back two generations) out of an Asian population of 2.4 million.<sup>23</sup>

With the growing public backlash in Australia, due to China's human rights abuses, the Australian Government responded by placing political and economic restrictions on China.

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<sup>19</sup> Grattan, *Australian Prime Ministers*.

<sup>20</sup> Grattan, *Australian Prime Ministers*.

<sup>21</sup> Colin Mackerras, "Australia-China at the End of the Twentieth Century," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>22</sup> Hou Minyue, "The Post-Tiananmen Human Rights Issue in China-Australia Relations," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 3 (2007): p.347.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald, *Comrade Abassador: Whitlam's Beijing Envoy* (Melbourne, Australia: MUP, 2015).

This was a relatively moderate reaction compared to sanctions placed by the US. The Australian Government took a measured response due to the multilateral collaborations and vested interests in a bilateral relationship that included politicians, businesses, academics, students, and Chinese tourism and diaspora in Australia. As a result, the restrictions put in place by the Hawke Government were short-lived and were lifted by 1991, followed by several rounds of senior visits to help re-establish the momentum of bilateral relations.

By 1991, Paul Keating was in power and, as Prime Minister, visited China as a way of showing continued support and to increase trade and investment between the two countries. During Keating's tenure as Prime Minister, China was considered likely to continue its strategic objectives through a combination of diplomatic, political and economic means, underpinned by its military strength.<sup>24</sup> The 1994 White Paper, *Defending Australia* correctly forecasted that within 15 years China's economy would be the largest in Asia and the second largest in the world. This White Paper predicted that 'China was likely, over the next decade, to become the most powerful influence on the strategic affairs of the wider region. This will affect global power relationships and become a dominant factor in the strategic framework in Asia and the Pacific.'<sup>25</sup> Paul Keating's opinion on the importance of Australia's positive relations with China has remained constant, exemplified in his recent statement that, 'Australia must head once more in the direction of finding our security in, not from, Asia'.<sup>26</sup>

In 1996, Howard was elected Prime Minister and, as can be seen from the opening quote in this chapter, his vision following his predecessors included building positive relations with China. Human rights continued to negatively impact the bilateral relationship. As a way of mending the relationship, and considering that 'confrontation with China would risk Australia's trade and diplomatic influence and that it was pointless given Australia's lack of

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<sup>24</sup> Edna Carew, *Paul Keating Prime Minister* (Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper."

<sup>26</sup> "Prime Ministers Series: Keating and China," (Australia: Australia-China Relations Institute, 2016).

diplomatic weight, the Howard Government in 1997 did not co-sponsor the annual UN resolution on China's human rights'.<sup>27</sup> In addition, John Howard visited China in 1997 as a way to improve relations. Sometime later, in 2003, Australia's strategic priorities were symbolised when President Bush and President Jintao visited Australia and jointly spoke to parliament, an honour only afforded to US leaders in the past.<sup>28</sup> At this time, questions began to arise, and continue to this day, as to how Australia can protect its interests in the Asian region while maintaining a strong alliance with the US. John Howard is quoted as saying, 'dealing with China is simple: you set aside the areas of difference and work on the things you have in common'.<sup>29</sup>

Many people within Australia and China believed that when Kevin Rudd, as a Mandarin speaker, came into power in 2007, his leadership would strengthen the bilateral relationship built by previous governments, through an increased respect shown towards China. However, with geopolitical shifts at the time and disputes in the South China Sea, relations were not as cordial as some expected.<sup>30</sup> Rudd was Prime Minister in 2009, the year the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement negotiations were paused, arguably the lowest point in mutual sentiment and trust between Australia and China since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. A series of events led to a virtual freeze in bilateral relations between the two governments: China reacted angrily to the Rudd Government's Defence White Paper, which suggested the modernisation of Chinese military was cause for concern. At the same time, Australian Rio Tinto executive Stern Hu was arrested in Shanghai on bribery and espionage charges after Rio Tinto backed out of a controversial US\$19.5 billion deal with a Chinese state-owned enterprise. Eventually,

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<sup>27</sup> Wesley, "Australia's Poisoned Alumni: International Education and the Costs to Australia."

<sup>28</sup> Peter Van Onselen and Wayne Errington, *John Winston Howard, the Definitive Biography* (Australia: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> White, "Power Shift: Rethinking Australia's Place in the Asian Century."

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Weller, *Kevin Rudd* (Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2012); Fujian Li, "The Sino-Australian Relationship: Towards a Brighter Future," *Future Directions International*, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/the-sino-australian-relationship-towards-a-brighter-future/>.

in October 2009, then Vice-Premier Li Keqiang was dispatched to Australia to negotiate an unusual Australia–China Joint Statement affirming mutual commitment to improving ties.

The *Strategic Partnership* was signed during Prime Minister Gillard’s visit to China in 2013. A prime-ministerial level dialogue between the two countries was established, making Australia one of only a few countries to have had such a dialogue.<sup>31</sup> Gillard created a more formal and structured approach so that the political relationship was as important as the economic in Australia-China relations<sup>32</sup>.

During the time of Prime Minister Abbott’s leadership, the Australian Government showed it was concerned about Chinese leadership in the region and the potential effect on rules-based international order.<sup>33</sup> Abbott was quoted in a private conversation as saying, ‘Australia's policies towards China are driven by two emotions: fear and greed’.<sup>34</sup> Prior to Abbott’s statement, Kerry Brown stated that: ‘if Australia is greedy and fearful, then precisely what is the object of its greed and what does it fear? Oddly, the basis of the answer to both of these questions might be the same – Chinese money.’<sup>35</sup>

Scott Morrison was sworn in as Australia’s thirtieth Prime Minister on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018 so it is too early to comment on his leadership within Sino-Australian relations. However, he was in the Turnbull government as one of the supporters for the Foreign Interference Laws and as Treasurer in 2016 he blocked the sale of New South Wales electricity provider Ausgrid to Beijing-run Grid Corp and Hong Kong-Listed Cheung Kong Infrastructure for unspecified national security reasons. Recently as the Acting Home Affairs Minister, Scott Morrison effectively announced the ban of Huawei and ZTE’s participation in Australia’s 5G network

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<sup>31</sup>Linda Jakobson, "Australia-China Strategic Partnership: Two Years of Fits and Starts," <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/australia-china-strategic-partnership-two-years-fits-and-starts>.

<sup>32</sup> Australian centre on China in the World, "Kevin Rudd and Australia-China Relations," <http://aus.thechinastory.org/archive/kevin-rudd-and-australia-china-relations/>.

<sup>33</sup> Medcalf, "In Defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's New Strategic Map."

<sup>34</sup> Kerry Brown, "'Fear and Greed': A Closer Look at Australia's China Policy," *The Diplomat* 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*.

tender process. His support for these decisions shows that the somewhat tumultuous bilateral relationship during the Turnbull Government can be expected to continue under Scott Morrison's leadership, as he deals with the recent credible reports of cyber threats and the allegations of a Chinese agenda to weaken Australia's alliance with the US.<sup>36</sup> One of the many challenges facing the current government, under Prime Minister Scott Morrison, is managing the Australian media's negative coverage regarding China. Many issues have been reported that have raised the Australian public's anxiety level about China's perceived involvement in Australia's domestic affairs, such as Chinese-derived funds supporting student organisations, individual politicians, political parties and activities in higher education.<sup>37</sup>

It is evident from Australia's foreign policy history that Australian Prime Ministers have continued to face the challenge of simultaneously managing economic and strategic priorities, as well as the fallout from a continued reliance on what Robert Menzies called 'great and powerful friends.'<sup>38</sup> Dependency on a foreign power endures and continues to form the foundation and strategic rationale for Australia's current defence policy and, by extension, much of the recent foreign policy.<sup>39</sup> Plainly, Australia's relationship with China does not enjoy any of this political heritage. Australia's anxiety about its geographical location has been reinforced by China's rise in assertiveness in the region. Therefore, strategic dependence is hardwired into Australian policy.<sup>40</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald stated in his address 'Australian Foreign Policy in a Chinese World', at the Whitlam Centre in 2017, that:

No one pretends the countries have shared values – certainly not the values of the ruling political order or the party state. However, because of Australia's economic dependency on China and security alliance with the US, the government must now rethink the orientation of foreign policy

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<sup>36</sup> Medcalf, "In Defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's New Strategic Map."

<sup>37</sup> John Garnaut, "How China Interferes in Australia and How Democracies Can Push Back," The Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-03-09/how-china-interferes-australia>.

<sup>38</sup> Mark Beeson and Jinghan Zeng, "Realistic Relations? How the Evolving Bilateral Relationship Is Understood in China and Australia," *Inha Journal of International Studies* 32, no. 2 (2017): p.165.

<sup>39</sup> Beeson and Zeng, "Realistic Relations? How the Evolving Bilateral Relationship Is Understood in China and Australia," p.165.

<sup>40</sup> Beeson and Zeng, "Realistic Relations? How the Evolving Bilateral Relationship Is Understood in China and Australia," p.177.

and the focus given to China, Asia and the US.<sup>41</sup>

There have been examples, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the signing of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), where the Australian Government has not followed the US in international affairs. Tony Abbott ignored a request from Barack Obama and led Australia into the Chinese-sponsored AIIB.<sup>42</sup> When Australia was invited to become a founding member of the AIIB, with an opportunity to be involved in establishing its rules, the US sought to prevent this from occurring. The rules concerning the AIIB are an example of a time within international relations that, along with many other US allies, exposed Australia's discomfort at having to choose between the US and China. The Australian Government tried to stall its decision but eventually aligned with China. The Australian Government reported that it was an economic based decision. This is an example that Howard asserts, shows that, when dealing with global issues, the Australian Government will choose what is best for the nation, which economically means partnering with China over the US.<sup>43</sup>

Upon his electoral victory in 1972, Whitlam recognised the PRC and its position in the United Nations.<sup>44</sup> Much of the thinking within international relations has changed since Whitlam's time, with successive Australian Governments seeking to address China through the prism of trade and security rather than race.<sup>45</sup> The complexity of the bilateral relationship elevates the importance of diplomacy between the two nations, particularly as at the heart of diplomacy the method adopted to carry out such conduct needs to be by peaceful means.<sup>46</sup>

However, while China is the centre of policy discussion in Australia, Australia has

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<sup>41</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

<sup>42</sup> White, "Power Shift: Rethinking Australia's Place in the Asian Century."

<sup>43</sup> White, "Power Shift: Rethinking Australia's Place in the Asian Century."

<sup>44</sup> Fitzgerald, *Comrade Ambassador: Whitlam's Beijing Envoy*, p.78.

<sup>45</sup> Jain and McCarthy, "Between Centrality and Anxiety: China in Australia."

<sup>46</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*; Adam Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue between States* (London, England: Eyre Methuen, 1982).

never attracted the same level of interest in China. The primary focus for Chinese scholars and policymakers is the US, with middle powers such as Australia less important. However, in the case of Sino-Australian ties and perceptions, Australia's relatively marginal position is reinforced by the fact that it is stereotyped as a rather predictable and subordinate extension of US defence and foreign policies. Given the importance of the economic core-periphery relationship, historical perceptions and stereotypes will need to be managed by current and future governments.<sup>47</sup> Maintaining the balance in the trilateral Australia-China-US relationship is discussed further in section 3.2.4, Australia's *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017*.

### **2.3 Australian public opinion on Sino-Australian relations**

The difficulty in achieving the vision promulgated by Whitlam, of building trust, co-operation and friendship within Australia-China relations, is understandable and, as recent as the early 1990's, the literature shows that Australia was still fearful of instability and uncertainty in Asia.<sup>48</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, which initiated the Australian Government's shift towards a policy of engagement with Asia, conflicting reports in the media have left the Australian public confused about the reality of Australia's relations in the region. The nation's willingness to seek security in Asia, rather than from Asia, represented a fundamental shift in the nation's attitude towards defence.<sup>49</sup> Previously, the Australian Governments focused on regional stability and China's concurrent rise in power. Barriers to achieving Whitlam's vision were to be expected as the region was synonymous in Australia with being considered a strategic threat and, only more recently, has it been viewed as a major economic opportunity.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Beeson and Zeng, "Realistic Relations? How the Evolving Bilateral Relationship Is Understood in China and Australia," p.177.

<sup>48</sup> Anthony Burke, *In Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety* (Sydney, Australia: Pluto Press, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Burke, *In Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety*, p.68.

<sup>50</sup> Burke, *In Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety*, p.68.

The Lowy Poll is an important annual survey conducted by the Lowy Institute that ‘incorporates questions about our most important relationships, including those with the United States and China, and asks Australians to consider how much they trust various global powers, as well as the degree of confidence they have in some of the world’s political leaders’.<sup>51</sup> Australians’ attitudes toward China have been tracked for fourteen years using the Lowy Institute Poll, highlighting a complicated relationship. Australians recognise the numerous opportunities that a close relationship with the region’s greatest economic power provides; however, the Australian public feels threatened by the sheer size and growing assertiveness of China.<sup>52</sup> The Institute’s 2018 Poll reveals that 63 per cent of the population expressed concern over Chinese influence in Australian politics. Interestingly, this is not much higher than the perceived threat from Australia’s security ally, the US (58 per cent).<sup>53</sup> Although concerns about China’s influence in Australian politics may seem low, other areas of concern for Australians, such as Chinese investment, have seen a sharp rise. As highlighted in Figure 11, almost three-quarters (72 per cent, up from 56 per cent in 2014) say the Australian Government ‘is allowing too much investment from China’.<sup>54</sup>

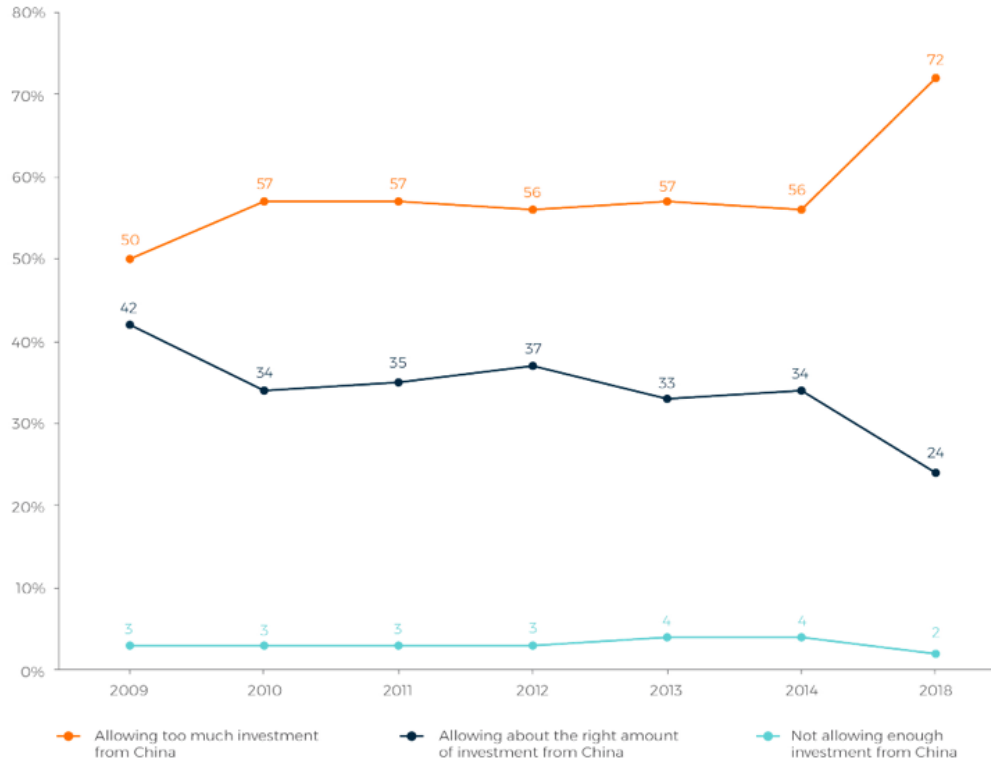
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<sup>51</sup> Alex Oliver, "2018 Lowy Institute Poll," The Lowy Institute, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/2018-lowy-institute-poll>.

<sup>52</sup> Fullilove and Oliver, "Terrorism Trumps China, Us Fears for Australians".

<sup>53</sup> Fullilove and Oliver, "Terrorism Trumps China, Us Fears for Australians".

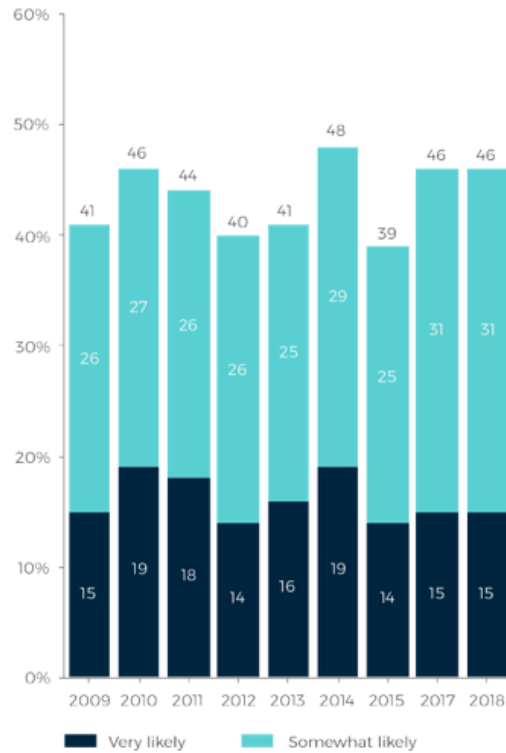
<sup>54</sup> Oliver, "2018 Lowy Institute Poll".



*Figure 11 Australian public opinion regarding Chinese investment in Australia*

Another area of concern for Australians is China's military intentions in the region, with 46 per cent believing China will become a military threat to Australia within 20 years (although, as shown in Figure 12, these figures are at the same level as 2009).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Oliver, "2018 Lowy Institute Poll".



*Figure 12 Do you think it is likely or unlikely that China will become a military threat to Australia in the next 20 years?*

This was based on the belief that the US and China would inevitably become involved in conflict, and that the Australian Government would be forced to decide which country to support. Figure 13 outlines the level of trust respondents had that major powers would act responsibly in the world. Less than half (48 per cent) responded ‘not very much’ to ‘not at all’ regarding China, only 4 per cent less confidence than respondents had in the US (44 per cent).

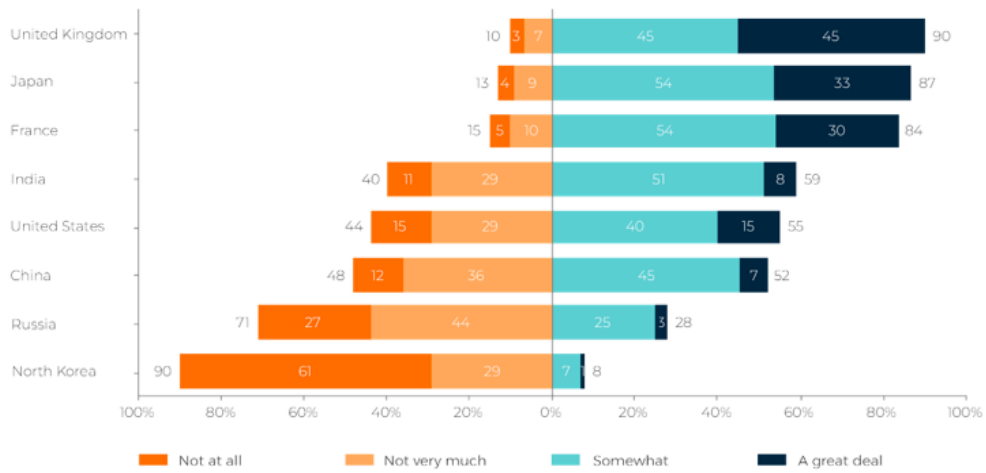


Figure 13 How much do you trust the following countries to act responsibly in the world?

It is important to note, as shown in Figure 14, 82 per cent of Australians still see China as ‘more of an economic partner’ than a ‘military threat’.

Fig 11: China – economic partner or military threat?

In your own view, is China more of an economic partner to Australia or more of a military threat to Australia?

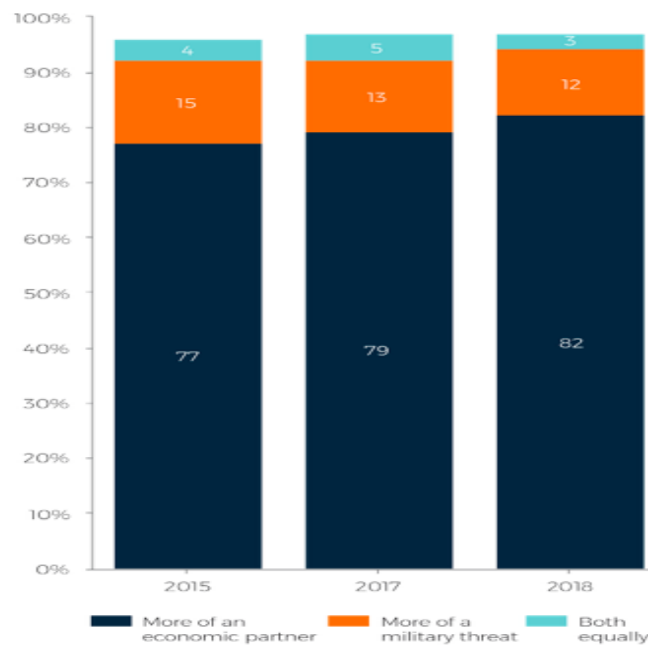


Figure 14 In your own view, is China more of an economic partner to Australia or more of a military threat to Australia?

Approximately 81 per cent of respondents said it was possible for Australia to have a good relationship with China and the US at the same time.<sup>56</sup>

Given Australia's history of turning to allies in Europe and the US, to the exclusion of the Asian region, its immigration policies, racism toward Chinese during the gold rush, and a long-standing concern regarding the communist threat, it is somewhat understandable how media reporting can raise the level of anxiety. As an example, recent media reports covering Clive Hamilton's controversial book *Silent Invasion* led to an increase in negative dialogue regarding the possible threat to the region from China's economic rise.<sup>57</sup> These negative images are not solely from Australia; public opinion in China also contains negativity, but it is predominantly targeted at the nation's government.<sup>58</sup>

Andrew Podger argues in his review of *Silent Invasion* that 'it is increasingly difficult for those in the US and China, who are knowledgeable about each other's policies, to clearly explain to their domestic audiences that the other side does not necessarily harbour 'evil' strategic intentions.'<sup>59</sup> He does not dispute many of the points Clive Hamilton makes, as he agrees that some of China's views are not benign and, under President Xi, some actions do risk conflict with Australia's interests and values. In his review, Podger asserts that one of the most positive aspects of the opening-up reforms of recent decades, has been the opportunities provided to Chinese scholars and students to travel outside China for further education, and for Western scholars to visit Chinese universities to teach and participate in academic forums.<sup>60</sup> Overcoming negative stereotypes or imagery formed within public opinion is challenging. In response to negative Australian media reports a Chinese representative stated that, 'Australia's reputation in China is entrenched as greedy, untrustworthy and as a US

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<sup>56</sup> Oliver, "2018 Lowy Institute Poll".

<sup>57</sup> Clive Hamilton, *Silent Invasion* (Australia: Hardie Grant Books, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Minyue, "The Post-Tiananmen Human Rights Issue in China-Australia Relations," p.359.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew Podger, "Book Review – Clive Hamilton's *Silent Invasion*: China's Influence in Australia," *The Conversation* 2018.

<sup>60</sup> Podger, "Book Review – Clive Hamilton's *Silent Invasion*: China's Influence in Australia."

lapdog.<sup>61</sup> Former World Bank President, Robert Zoellick presents a more balanced view, opening the door for constructive dialogue, stating that ‘we should engage more, not less. It does not help informed dialogue in Australia to trash the many people with whom Hamilton disagrees.’<sup>62</sup>

Cross-cultural sensitivity can have positive and negative effects if it leads to reliance on cultural stereotypes. Emma Buchtell explains that ‘stereotypes are typically perceived as inaccurate, prejudiced perceptions of groups that are misused to describe all individuals within the group.’<sup>63</sup> Dialogue should be regarded as the primary goal of all diplomacy initiatives with a focus on young people, as they will make the difference in the long run.<sup>64</sup>

It is difficult for a medium-sized country like Australia to change stereotypes that are based on historically negative imagery. One of the contributors to Australia’s *PD Senate Inquiry*, advised that Australia needed to work hard to remove itself from images and stereotypes from a by-gone era.<sup>65</sup> The White Australia Policy, as an example, sullied Australia’s reputation in Asian countries at that time, leaving the ‘stigma of having raised a migration bar based on colour which many Asians found deeply insulting.’<sup>66</sup> The magnitude of Chinese backlash after an Australian Olympian accused a Chinese swimmer of being a drug cheat, is an example of how the actions of one individual can impact negatively on the broader bilateral relationship. The resulting negativity triggered inflammatory comments on Chinese social media towards Australia. The issue escalated when Chinese media referred to Australia ‘in many ways as a country at the fringes of civilisation’.<sup>67</sup> The article’s negativity towards

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<sup>61</sup> Varrall, "Australia's Reputation in China Entrenched as Greedy, Untrustworthy and a U.S. Lapdog."

<sup>62</sup> Podger, "Book Review – Clive Hamilton’s Silent Invasion: China’s Influence in Australia."

<sup>63</sup> Emma E. Buchtell, "Cultural Sensitivity or Cultural Stereotyping? Positive and Negative Effects of a Cultural Psychology Class," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 39 (2014): p.42.

<sup>64</sup> Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice*, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.52.

<sup>66</sup> Kate Darian-Smith and James Waghorne, "Australian-Asian Sociability, Student Activism, and the University Challenge to White Australia in the 1950s," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 62, no. 2 (2016).

<sup>67</sup> Bill Birtles, "China's Anti-Australian Vitriol over Mack Horton Reflects an Increasingly Strained Relationship," *ABC News*, 8 August 2018 2016.

Australia went further to reference the country's early history as Britain's offshore prison, suggesting that, 'no one should be surprised at uncivilised acts emanating from the country.'<sup>68</sup>

Based on the cultural and political differences, Beeson and Zeng describe the Australia-China relationship 'as novel and unlikely'. They clarified their description explaining that for most of its history China's principal relations were with its immediate neighbours in Asia while, equally important, Australian policymakers subscribed to a strategic outlook that saw China as a potential threat.<sup>69</sup>

Over a decade ago, in 2007, Australian international relations specialist Coral Bell coined the phrase 'the end of the Vasco de Gama era', meaning that the world had come to 'the end of Western ascendancy over the non-Western world', and the end to the unchallenged supremacy of the US. Bell stated that this was not only the fact of China's wealth and power, but also Chinese political and social influence.<sup>70</sup> She said 'it appears to be difficult for people in Australia to accept the end of the era of Vasco da Gama and face the fact that the flow of influence might now be from China.'<sup>71</sup>

China's influence may not be threatening or malign, but, as Fitzgerald states, it does not matter how a country views China's rise, concern about change is what happens when the world has a new sphere of influence.<sup>72</sup> To increase understanding of how the Australian public's anxiety, combined with the country's economic dependence on China, continues to shape domestic policies, the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* and the government's public diplomacy documents are discussed in Chapter Three.

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<sup>68</sup> Birtles, "China's Anti-Australian Vitriol over Mack Horton Reflects an Increasingly Strained Relationship."

<sup>69</sup> Beeson and Zeng, "Realistic Relations? How the Evolving Bilateral Relationship Is Understood in China and Australia," p.166.

<sup>70</sup> Coral Bell, "The End of the Vaso Da Gama Era," (Lowy Institute for International Policy 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Bell, "The End of the Vaso Da Gama Era."

<sup>72</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

## 2.4 Soft Power

Soft power is not being investigated in this thesis. However, because of the relationship between soft power and public diplomacy, I considered it important to include a brief discussion on this concept. Much has been written on soft power and public diplomacy.<sup>73</sup> One important point is that soft power resources can be ‘channeled through public diplomacy’.<sup>74</sup> The notions of hard and soft power have been introduced by Joseph Nye in his book *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, where the former refers to military force, and the latter to diplomatic approaches.<sup>75</sup> Nye considers that soft power is closely related to public diplomacy in the sense that soft power resources, a nation’s attractive qualities, are communicated to foreign publics through public diplomacy efforts. Nye’s definition for soft power used in this thesis is, ‘the ability to get others to want the outcome you want because of your cultural or ideological appeal’.<sup>76</sup> He extended Dahl’s 1957 work in that ‘soft power is the ability of A to get B to do what B would otherwise not want to do’.<sup>77</sup>

Goldsmith and Horiuchi discuss the link between soft power and foreign policy,

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<sup>73</sup> Craig Hayden, "Scope, Mechanism and Outcome: Arguing Soft Power in the Context of Public Diplomacy," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 20, no. 2 (2017); J.S. Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy," *The Academy of Political Science* 119, no. 2 (2004); J.S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 616, no. 1 (2008); J.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in the World of Politics* (New York, U.S.A.: Public Affairs, 2005); J.S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century. What Factors Need to Be Considered to Explain U.S. Policy to Audiences Abroad?," (2004); Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."; B.E. Goldsmith and Y Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for Us Foreign Policy?," *World Politics* 64, no. 3 (2012); Matthew Kroenig, Melissa McAdam, and Steven Webber, "Taking Soft Power Seriously," *Comparative Strategy* 29, no. 5 (2010); J Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York, U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); J Melissen, "Public Diplomacy between Theory and Practice," in *The Present and Future of Public Diplomacy, the 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy* (Madrid, Spain 2007); Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy."; J Melissen, "Beyond the New Public Diplomacy," in *Clingendael Papers No. 3* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations ("Clingendael"), 2011); J. Melissen, "Introduction," in *Understanding Public Diplomacy in East Asia: Middle Powers in a Troubled Region*, ed. J. Melissen and Y. Sohn (U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); James Pamment, *New Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century: A Comparative Study of Policy and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Philip Seib, *Real-Time Diplomacy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in the World of Politics*.

<sup>76</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy," p.1.

<sup>77</sup> Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): pp.202-03.

explaining that only if country B perceives the benefits to outweigh the costs will soft power lead to a change in policy.<sup>78</sup> Nye also warns, 'if the content of a country's culture, values, and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that broadcasts them cannot produce soft power.'<sup>79</sup> Szczudlik-Tatar agrees that public diplomacy practices cannot create soft power where there is none.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the use of public diplomacy can only raise awareness of soft power where it already exists.

In the past decade, several academics have found that most major states have a soft power strategy, in practice if not in name.<sup>81</sup> However, soft power is not without its critics.

Roselle et al. state:

Soft power in its current, widely understood form has become a straitjacket for those trying to understand power and communication in international affairs. Analyses of soft power overwhelmingly focus on soft power 'assets' or capabilities and how to wield them, not how influence does or does not take place.<sup>82</sup>

Critics point out that claims of soft power associated with a country's possession of hard power capabilities may be underpinned by coercive phenomena.<sup>83</sup> Jan Melissen states that the broader context of hard and soft power is relevant to discussing public diplomacy, and that 'public diplomacy is a practical manifestation of the use of soft power as it revolves around a country using non-military force to attract rather than coerce in order to influence the views and behaviours of others'.<sup>84</sup> There is an argument to be made that soft power can only be successfully wielded by countries like the US, which also have a great deal of hard power that

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<sup>78</sup> Goldsmith and Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for Us Foreign Policy?," p.556-57.

<sup>79</sup> Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," p.95.

<sup>80</sup> Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, "Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy," *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 19, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>81</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."; Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon, and Alister O'Loughlin, "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power," *Media, War and Conflict* 7, no. 1 (2014); Ian Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (2012); J Kurlantzik, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>82</sup> Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin, "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power."

<sup>83</sup> J.B. Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction," *Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005).

<sup>84</sup> Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy," p.169.

include both military and economic.<sup>85</sup> The realisation that it is impossible to analyse or understand soft power without its interaction with hard power led Nye to coin a new terminology 'smart power', which he uses to describe the mix of hard and soft power.<sup>86</sup>

In addition, the policy mechanisms by which governments seek to influence the opinions of others so they pass this influence on to their networks is unclear. There has been a proliferation of possibilities for soft power.<sup>87</sup> Some critics view the concept as more a 'category of practice' than a 'category of analysis', one that is intuitively useful in policy debates but collapses under more experience-distant analysis.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, some suggest that political activism risks backfiring when governments explicitly outline their soft power strategies, as this has the capacity to undermine any potential benefits. It is concluded that the more distance between the government and a nation's soft power capacity the greater the potential benefits.<sup>89</sup> One of the major dilemmas confronting policymakers is when they are eager to cultivate and wield soft power they are finding the tools of government rather ineffective.

Slaughter discusses the notion of collaborative power as she asserts that soft power is more effective when policymakers in countries outside the US and China focus on initiatives that are within the capacities of a non-superpower.<sup>90</sup> There is a need to assess the strategic objectives required from soft power and how the outcomes are linked to particular geo-strategic circumstances. For example, the soft power wielded by middle powers is different from the systematic ambitions of countries such as China and the US. According to Patience, how states

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<sup>85</sup> Tom Healy, "As Much Power as a Word: Fulbright and Soft Power," Fulbright Symposium, <https://www.fulbright.org.au/news-and-events/2015/09/mr-tom-healy-soft-power-speech-from-symposium/>.

<sup>86</sup> J.S Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009).

<sup>87</sup> Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy," p.814.

<sup>88</sup> Todd Hall, "An Unclear Attraction: A Critical Examination of Soft Power as an Analytical Category," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>89</sup> Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy."

<sup>90</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, "A New Theory for the Foreign Policy Frontier."

imagine themselves as great, small or middle powers influences their foreign policy. Great and small powers take their standing for granted. On the other hand, middle powers are more likely to spend time and energy on this subject as they have much to gain or lose<sup>91</sup>. The bilateral relationship between China and the US will test Australia into the future, as the soft power strategies to boost Australia's capabilities in China will, at times, be at odds with the influence of the US.

Soft power is the ability to influence others through the attraction of culture, values and policies – which are viewed as soft power resources.<sup>92</sup> Bially Mattern argues that attraction can be, and often is, coercive.<sup>93</sup> Using the work of Laifer and Kitchen, attraction is therefore out of the hands of Australians and they caution that any government seeking favour is likely to be met with ambivalence at best, or worse, disdain.<sup>94</sup> In short, when it comes to Australian foreign policies having the desired impact for the nation's future capabilities in China, it is the Chinese public who decide whether they find Australia attractive or not. Therefore, if soft power is more about who you are than what you do, agents face particular challenges when attempting to operationalise programs that achieve desired outcomes. As a result, any analysis of soft power that focuses on the agents cannot determine whether soft power works: it can only explicate the strategies by which agents seek to make it work.<sup>95</sup>

It is important to reiterate that public diplomacy does not necessarily directly impact the policies of another government. Improved mass public perceptions of one country toward another country may increase pressure on a government to act and, as a result, these actions

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<sup>91</sup> A. Patience, "Imagining Middle Power," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>92</sup> Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power."

<sup>93</sup> Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction."

<sup>94</sup> Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy."

<sup>95</sup> Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy."

may in turn affect foreign policies.<sup>96</sup> Page and Shapiro found that instances where an issue is of great importance to a foreign public, the congruence between popular sentiment and foreign policy is almost as strong as between public opinion and domestic policy.<sup>97</sup> Rather than selling the Australian brand to win over ‘hearts and minds’, most important for Australia is that the Chinese public see Australia as a strong, reliable business and trading partner with a desirable culture in which to live, work, study and visit. It is the protection of this image where Australia’s soft power manifests in tangible outcomes.

Critique of the soft power concept has arisen in relation to China’s appropriation of the term. On the one hand, Chinese scholars and officials subscribe to Nye’s definition while differing on resources and tools. On the other hand, some writers assert that the Chinese government uses the term ‘soft power’ to describe what some argue should be more accurately labelled traditional propaganda activities.<sup>98</sup> Hartig offers an example where it is proposed that China uses forms of public diplomacy aimed at ‘transforming political and economic systems of the target country, or even to subvert the target country’s government and social system.’<sup>99</sup> In contrast, others state that China has adopted the concept of soft power in a systematic attempt to show its peaceful rise in the region.<sup>100</sup>

Soft power is central to an understanding of international relations today. Roselle et al. state:

While many may accept this general statement, it remains difficult to identify soft power resources, the processes through which soft power operates and under what conditions soft power resources can be used to support foreign policy. The weakness in the study of soft power is IR’s inability thus

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<sup>96</sup> Laura Merickova, "Alternative Approaches to Public Diplomacy," *Polish Sociological Review* 3, no. 187 (2014).

<sup>97</sup> B.I. Page and R.Y. Shapiro, "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy," *American Political Science Review* 77, no. 1 (1983): p.176.

<sup>98</sup> Bates Gill and Huang Yanzhong, "Sources and Limits of Chinese ‘Soft Power’," *Survival* 48, no. 2 (2006); Hongying Wang and Yeh-Chung Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power and Its Policy Implications: a Comparative Study of China and Taiwan," *Journal of Contemporary China* 17, no. 56 (2008).

<sup>99</sup> Falk Hartig, "Deterrence by Public Diplomacy: The Negative Dimension of International Political Communication," *Journal of Communication Management* 21, no. 4 (2017): p.61.

<sup>100</sup> Gill and Yanzhong, "Sources and Limits of Chinese ‘Soft Power’."; Wang and Lu, "The Conception of Soft Power and Its Policy Implications: a Comparative Study of China and Taiwan."

far to effectively trace or measure its impact.

Finnemore argues that ‘creating desired social outcomes even with great material power, is not simple, as the US is discovering’.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, Nye asserts that there is a need to identify not just the effect of a country’s soft power attractiveness on public opinion overseas, but also to identify behavioural changes that occur as a result. However, he admits that whilst this may be needed for IR scholars, performing such an analysis would be expensive and cumbersome.<sup>102</sup> Melissen states, ‘There has lately been a resurgence of interest in the art of diplomacy, fueled by the popularity of the idea of soft power.’<sup>103</sup> However, many writers believe that rigorous and defensible research investigating the impact of public diplomacy as soft power, or within a country’s foreign policy, is not occurring at the same level.<sup>104</sup>

Scepticism remains as to whether governments can be effective agents of soft power activities. Any suspicions about the motivations or method of exercising soft power will negate the potential benefits.<sup>105</sup> The reason the Australian Government is funding international education programs may be to reduce any potential risk of being viewed as complacent in the region. Furthermore, Hall and Smith question whether the Australian Government could be hedging against the risk that other countries are successfully using these strategies to enhance their place on the world stage.<sup>106</sup> Laifer and Kitchen support this proposition by stating that it is those who are not prepared to play the game that will ultimately lose out.<sup>107</sup> In seeking to cultivate soft power, through the use of the NCP and the ASCs, Australia assumes that the risk

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<sup>101</sup> M. Finnemore, "Legitimacy Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All Its Cracked up to Be," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>102</sup> J.S Nye, "Soft Power and the UK's Influence," ed. House of Lords (2013).

<sup>103</sup> Melissen, "Public Diplomacy between Theory and Practice."; I. Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations," *International Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2010); Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy."; N. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles, USA: Figueroa Press, 2009).

<sup>104</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and the UK's Influence."

<sup>105</sup> Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, *Persuasion and Power and in the Modern World* (London, United Kingdom: House of Lords, 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."

<sup>107</sup> Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy," p.833.

of negativity through suspicion about their motives or motivations will not transpire.

The purpose of this thesis is not to deny the role of the state in diplomatic aspects of international relations, but rather to demonstrate that the tasks of diplomacy are pursued through official and unofficial channels. Traditional diplomacy continues to play a key role as negotiations and intelligence gathering remain indispensable tools. In international relations, diplomacy has evolved out of the interdependence of states and a realisation that there are links between domestic policy and the external environment. To quote Adam Watson,

States which are affected by everything that happens outside are not content to merely observe one another at a distance. They feel the need to enter into a dialogue with one another. This dialogue between independent states – the machinery by which their governments conduct it, and the networks of promises, contracts, institutions and codes of conduct which develop out of it – is the substance of diplomacy.<sup>108</sup>

In 1963, prior to the rise of China challenging the US as the global hegemon, J.D.B. Miller was prophetic when he stated, ‘if anything, changes in the global environment continue to enhance the state’s role as protector of the people’s interests and mouthpiece of their wishes.’<sup>109</sup> Writers agree that the increased academic and government interest in public diplomacy is largely driven in response to 9/11 and the anti-American or Western agenda.<sup>110</sup> However, there are shortfalls when dealing with the current global environment, as diplomacy has failed to address the underlying cause of anti-Western sentiment. Ambassador Mohamed Al-Orabi<sup>111</sup>, in a speech to the Senate Inquiry into Australia’s use of public diplomacy, addressed this point:

All these [public diplomacy] tools assure continued linkages between countries of the international community, even when government-to-government relations are disrupted. Public diplomacy and inter-cultural diplomacy, not only help traditional diplomacy to succeed by creating opportunities for person-to-person contacts that can lead to better official ties, but they also make up for the failures of traditional diplomacy by allowing human interaction to continue, when formal negotiations are suspended or terminated.<sup>112</sup>

Today, diplomacy is no longer limited to the confines of an embassy or carried out simply by

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<sup>108</sup> Watson, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue between States*

<sup>109</sup> Derek Drinkwater, *Sir Harold Nicholson and International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>110</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*; Melissen, "Public Diplomacy between Theory and Practice."

<sup>111</sup> Mohamed Al-Orabi at the time was the Ambassador to Egypt and made these remarks in a speech regarding education’s role in diplomacy.

<sup>112</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.19.

official state-elected representatives. According to Ian Hall, nearly a decade ago:

There have been signs of a resurgence of interest in matters diplomatic. Long thought in decline and relatively unimportant, diplomacy is now thought by some to be on the cusp of a transformation that will see its relevance to contemporary international politics restored.<sup>113</sup>

Key diplomatic practices such as negotiating, information gathering and communicating are being undertaken in different contexts by different people. Accordingly, to observe that the private, not-for-profit and international education sectors are making diplomatic contributions today is not new. Yet, to deny the contribution made by the people within these sectors is not only to deny the complex nature of contemporary international relations but also the necessity of adapting diplomatic practices to changing circumstances. Using Nye's work, there are three dimensions of public diplomacy. All three are important and they require different relative proportions of direct government information and long-term cultural relationships. The element most relevant to this thesis is the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences and access to media channels. When policymakers deal with the primary global issues of the twenty-first century they are, by extension and definition, engaging in public diplomacy.<sup>114</sup>

Public diplomacy in its state-based strategic guise is similar to a well-established idea, namely that publics matter to governments as tools of national foreign policy. Governments are aware now more than ever of the power an effective public diplomacy strategy can have on advancing the country's national interests, as Leonard from the US Foreign Policy Centre explained:

Public diplomacy is based on the premise that the image and reputation of a country are public goods which can create either an enabling or a disabling environment for individual transitions. Work on particular issues will feed off the general image of the country and reflect back on to it – in both positive and negative directions.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations."

<sup>114</sup> Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*.

<sup>115</sup> M. Leonard, C. Stead, and C. Smewing, "Public Diplomacy," (England: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002), p.9.

Governments are reworking their public diplomacy strategies in a changing milieu of world politics, within which access to modes of communication with publics around the world have become of prime importance to all categories of international actors. In short, public diplomacy is now part of the fabric of world politics where non-state actors seek to project their message in the pursuit of policy goals. Image creation and management is a key resource and one where non-state actors may have an advantage, helping to explain why the more traditional, hierarchical concept of strategic public diplomacy often fails to achieve its goals.<sup>116</sup>

However, public diplomacy is not an altruistic exercise, and the concept is facing new challenges due to the opposing images it aims to communicate. Evans and Steven raise the unavoidable question: 'Is public diplomacy a sinister communicative practice just like propaganda or not?'<sup>117</sup> Public diplomacy essentially and eventually is about promoting national interests, and therefore it is no altruistic affair, nor is it a soft instrument.<sup>118</sup> Perhaps these cautionary concerns are best summed up by Ian Hall's work, in which he asserts that, 'public diplomacy might often be benign and well intentioned, fostering dialogue and understanding, but it might equally be malign and ill-meant.'<sup>119</sup>

Whilst in agreement that traditional diplomacy continues to play an important role, writers such as Goldsmith and Horiuchi, and Jan Melissen argue that public diplomacy is increasingly playing an important diplomatic role as it involves managing and sometimes influencing foreign public's views on foreign policies as these views are directly relevant in shaping future policy outcomes.<sup>120</sup> Ian Hall urges that 'stronger, better, even transformed diplomacy, and the replacement of 'hard power' by 'soft' are welcome, but not at the cost of

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<sup>116</sup> Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy," p.68.

<sup>117</sup> A Evans and D Steven, "Towards a Theory of Influence for Twenty-First Century Foreign Policy: The New Public Diplomacy in a Globalized World," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 6, no. 18-26 (2010): p.57.

<sup>118</sup> Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy," p.14.

<sup>119</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations."

<sup>120</sup> Goldsmith and Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for Us Foreign Policy?."; Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*.

undermining the legitimacy of every system that allows diplomacy to be practiced.’<sup>121</sup>

#### 2.4.1 In search of an agreed definition for public diplomacy

In an attempt to gain consensus on a definition for ‘diplomacy’, Melissen states that the ‘discourse about public diplomacy extends much beyond the world of diplomacy: not only diplomats but also academics, university students in international relations and even those who are targeted by the public diplomacy of states take an interest in this subject matter.’<sup>122</sup> In the digital age there has been a fundamental shift in how nations manage their international relations as many countries increase their emphasis on public diplomacy.<sup>123</sup> Signitzer and Coombs also acknowledged non-government wielders of public diplomacy stating ‘it is the way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government’s foreign policy decisions.’<sup>124</sup> Gregory is another writer who allows for non-state actors but also emphasises political actors in his work.<sup>125</sup> His description of public diplomacy is useful for its focus on understanding the consequences of policy choices:

Ways and means by which states, associations of states, and non-state actors understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relations; and influence opinions and actions to advance their interests and values. Public Diplomacy is used by political actors to understand the consequences of policy choices, set public agendas, influence discourse in civil society, and build consent for strategies that require tradeoffs among costs, risks and benefits.<sup>126</sup>

Melissen describes Sharp’s definition of public diplomacy as ‘the most succinct’ when he writes that ‘the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented’.<sup>127</sup> Gilboa describes this definition as ‘innovative’ in its ability to ‘redefine the landscape of international relations

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<sup>121</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations," p.20.

<sup>122</sup> Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*.

<sup>123</sup> Melissen, "Introduction."

<sup>124</sup> Signitzer and Coombs, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (1992): pp.5-6.

<sup>125</sup> Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field."

<sup>126</sup> Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field."

<sup>127</sup> Melissen, "Introduction."

by adding non-state actors'.<sup>128</sup>

Two of the seminal writers in the field, Eytan Gilboa and Jan Melissen, agree that the array of terms has led to confusion in the public diplomacy field.<sup>129</sup> To add to the confusion surrounding the nomenclature, Gilboa attempts to form a working definition, which he claims is made increasingly difficult due to the emergence of another term in the field, 'new public diplomacy'. He rejects the idea of a 'new public diplomacy', stating that existing definitions can be adapted to encompass emerging influences and channels, including the information age, and the rise of extremism, terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Gilboa is a defining voice in the world of public diplomacy, which possibly explains the frequency with which he cites his own work in *Search for a Theory of Public Diplomacy*.<sup>130</sup> This thesis accepts the work of Gilboa as a seminal writer and does not use the term 'new public diplomacy', preferring not to add to the confusion over nomenclature, instead using the broader term 'public diplomacy'. Public diplomacy is also the term used in the Australian Government documents that have informed this thesis.

Perhaps the most beneficial part of Gilboa's writing is a summary of the various changes in the way public diplomacy is being defined.<sup>131</sup> He begins with Malone, who describes public diplomacy 'as direct communication with foreign people, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments.'<sup>132</sup> He states that Malone's definition fails to identify the actors of this exchange, which perhaps is indicative of the time period. In the 1980s, public diplomacy was very much the domain of the state and a tool utilised by governments. In his work, he then moves on to Frederick, who added information about

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<sup>128</sup> Signitzer and Coombs, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects."

<sup>129</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."; Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy."

<sup>130</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."

<sup>131</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."

<sup>132</sup> Gifford Malone, "Managing Public Diplomacy," *The Washington Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1985): p.2.

specific content: ‘activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government, by influencing its citizens’. Like Malone, Frederick’s conception of public diplomacy is so implicitly tied to the sphere of government that it does not have to be expanded on.

Table 1 summarises some of the public diplomacy definitions used in the literature.

*Table 1 Public Diplomacy definitions*

The means by which governments, private groups and individuals influence the attitudes of other people and governments in such a way as to exercise influence over their foreign policy decisions. <sup>133</sup>
Direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments. <sup>134</sup>
A government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies. <sup>135</sup>
The way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government's foreign policy decision. <sup>136</sup>
Activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government, by influencing its citizen. <sup>137</sup>
Distinguished between public diplomacy, where state and non-state actors use the media and other channels of communication to influence public opinion in foreign societies. <sup>138</sup>
Work or activities undertaken to understand, engage and inform individuals and organisations in other countries in order to shape their perceptions in ways that will promote Australia’s foreign policy goals. <sup>139</sup>

David Lowe considers that there is scope for debate on whether public diplomacy should be confined to government-initiated and government-supported activities or opened up

<sup>133</sup> Melissen, "Beyond the New Public Diplomacy."

<sup>134</sup> Malone, "Managing Public Diplomacy," p.199.

<sup>135</sup> Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas*, p.3.

<sup>136</sup> Signitzer and Coombs, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects."

<sup>137</sup> Howard H. Frederick, *Global Communication and International Relations* (Belmont, U.S.A.: Wadsworth, 1993), p.229.

<sup>138</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."

<sup>139</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.12.

to include a broader range of non-government actors.<sup>140</sup> This debate is not relevant to this study, as the focus is on the narrower view of government-led action through the NCP and ASC programs. However, the different definitions show that while some elements are agreed upon in the literature, there remains confusion around nomenclature among academics and scholars interested in the field of public diplomacy. The lack of a unified definition and methodology in this field, combined with the growing importance of this domain, calls for further research.<sup>141</sup>

#### **2.4.2 The nexus between foreign policy, public diplomacy and public opinion**

Foreign policy has not featured prominently on Australia's policy agenda, unless in times of crises. Some domestic interest was shown after the release of the *Australian Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* and during high profile events such as hosting the G20 Summit. Tony Abbott, when he was Prime Minister, increased the domestic public interest, through the provocative statement that he intended to 'shirtfront', the Russian President about the Malaysian airline tragedy. The use of an Australian football terminology was clearly aimed at a domestic audience.<sup>142</sup> The government states its intention to use public diplomacy to increase domestic understanding of DFAT's role as well as to strengthen Australia's influence, reputation and relationships internally that reflects the national interests.<sup>143</sup> In the staff resource *DFAT Public Diplomacy and Advocacy Handbook*, it states that the focus is on generating domestic and foreign publics' understanding of the country's foreign and trade policies.<sup>144</sup> The manner of Australia's engagement with the world challenges the idea of domestic politics

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<sup>140</sup> David Lowe, "Journalists and the Sitring of Australian Public Diplomacy: The Colombo Plan Towards the 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>141</sup> Merickova, "Alternative Approaches to Public Diplomacy."

<sup>142</sup> M. McDonald, "Australian Foreign Policy under the Abbott Government: Foreign Policy as Domestic Politics?," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 6 (2015).

<sup>143</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>144</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy and Advocacy Handbook."

acting as a pivot to foreign policy. The Australian Government has a tendency to prioritise domestic political considerations, in particular public opinion, in its dealings with the global community.<sup>145</sup>

Public opinion is now an integral component of foreign policy and ‘to win the hearts and the minds of people’ is the new mantra. Perhaps where the definitions for public diplomacy diverge is the different intent with which public diplomacy is utilised. However, it is reasonable to assume that most governments have an intention to utilise public diplomacy to indirectly shape a foreign country’s international policy to better suit their aims (whether these are economic, political or cultural).<sup>146</sup> In the current preoccupation with public diplomacy, there is a risk of confusing its varying manifestations.<sup>147</sup> The role that public diplomacy plays within international relations is arguably in its ability for governments to harness that country’s soft power.<sup>148</sup>

Public diplomacy is the aspect of foreign policy concerned with the psychological facet of international relations.<sup>149</sup> This means that public diplomacy is used as a core foreign policy tool. As actions speak louder than words, public diplomacy strategies cannot work if they cut against policy.<sup>150</sup> Through a set of diverse strategies such as targeted media campaigns, information dissemination strategies, cultural activities in foreign countries or educational exchange programs, all states are engaged in public diplomacy activities. Intended to project positive images of one’s country and reduce misunderstanding, these activities are meant to implicitly influence and attract foreign publics in order to gain support for a country’s foreign

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<sup>145</sup> McDonald, "Australian Foreign Policy under the Abbott Government: Foreign Policy as Domestic Politics??"

<sup>146</sup> Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*.

<sup>147</sup> Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy."

<sup>148</sup> Goldsmith and Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for Us Foreign Policy?," p.555.

<sup>149</sup> Otto Klineberg, *The Human Dimension in International Relations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

<sup>150</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy."

policies. According to Snow, ‘public diplomacy is inevitably linked to power’.<sup>151</sup> In the case of Australia’s strategy, the government has transparently stated that public diplomacy is linked to building soft power in the Indo-Pacific region.

What is required is not only investigating the link between public diplomacy, public opinion and foreign policy, but also the depth and breadth of the public’s participation in the democratic process, and how this plays a role in the direction and effectiveness of foreign policy. There are limits to what public diplomacy campaigns can achieve. While they can foster appreciation for Western values and ideals, ‘no amount of...diplomacy, however skillfully deployed, can win back world opinion in the face of policies that are resented and despised’.<sup>152</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald advised that ‘Australia must develop a durable foreign policy in this age of disruption – one with a commitment to democratic values, and a dedication to the idea and the institutions of multilateralism’.<sup>153</sup> Harking back to the Whitlam era, Fitzgerald argues that, ‘this is about building trust and influence. Only through trust and influence can we hope to tackle the issues of relationship management and the Chinese world’.<sup>154</sup> D’Hooghe states that public diplomacy ‘builds on trust and credibility, and it often works best with a long horizon’.<sup>155</sup> Therefore in the longer term ‘it is extremely important that countries align their foreign policy with their public diplomacy campaigns’.<sup>156</sup>

Discussion on the importance of public diplomacy makes it clear that it is indispensable to a government’s achievements of foreign and domestic policy objectives. Hard and soft power thus need to be adapted in order to strengthen, rather than work against, each other. To achieve this, not only will the implementation of foreign policies need to be modified, but in

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<sup>151</sup> Nancy Elizabeth Snow, "Fulbright Scholars as Cultural Mediators: An Exploratory Study" (American University, 1992).

<sup>152</sup> Bátorá, "Does the European Union Transform the Institution of Diplomacy?."

<sup>153</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

<sup>154</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

<sup>155</sup> Ingrid D’Hooghe, "The Rise of China’s Public Diplomacy," (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2007), p.13.

<sup>156</sup> Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*.

certain cases the foreign policies themselves will need to be changed.<sup>157</sup> The ability to understand, engage with and influence non-state actors is central to making progress, both economically and for peace.<sup>158</sup> It is no coincidence that public diplomacy, as a component of foreign policy, has increased significantly, with Ross outlining that ‘the public diplomacy quotient of virtually every foreign policy issued today has risen dramatically whether regarding a trade negotiation or the reconstruction of Iraq.’<sup>159</sup>

Therefore, there should be no surprise at the resurgence of interest in the art of diplomacy, and public diplomacy in particular. Hall asserted a decade ago that ‘even its most enthusiastic students would acknowledge that diplomacy is something of a backwater in the academic study of International Relations.’<sup>160</sup> However, since Hall’s work, there has been a surge in international research into public diplomacy and in the Australian Government’s discussion of such policies. On reflection, in the current digital environment, his statement ‘diplomacy is on the cusp of transformation that will see the relevancy of diplomacy restored within international politics,’ has proven to be correct.<sup>161</sup>

## 2.5 International education

International education is not a modern phenomenon but rather it is an ancient practice. In its early instances, the movement of scholars was motivated by a desire to expand knowledge. The European colonial powers used education as a means of uniting their disparate subjects under a common language and culture.<sup>162</sup> Evidence of student mobility for knowledge acquisition is documented in medieval history.<sup>163</sup> Welch and Denman extrapolate the history

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<sup>157</sup> Peter G. Peterson, "Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Evans and Steven, "Towards a Theory of Influence for Twenty-First Century Foreign Policy: The New Public Diplomacy in a Globalized World."

<sup>159</sup> Christopher Ross, 1 May 2018, 2003, pp.1-6, <http://hir.harvard.edu/article/?a=1117>.

<sup>160</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations," p.1.

<sup>161</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations," p.4.

<sup>162</sup> Nicola Cooper, "Making Indo-China French: Promoting the Empire through Education," in *Empire and Culture* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

<sup>163</sup> J. Knight and H. De Wit, "Strategies for Internationalization of Higher Education: Historical and Conceptual

of international education going further back in time and arguing that internationalisation had already begun in the time of Confucius in China and the Sophists in the West.<sup>164</sup> In the modern era, this purely academic goal has been supplemented by other political, cultural and economic motivations.

Some European countries are actively engaging in this form of diplomacy through exchange and scholarship programs like the Erasmus Mundus and Rhodes.<sup>165</sup> The recent popularity of this idea within foreign ministries is reflected by a burgeoning literature, with academics keen to embed programs underwriting student mobility within the much broader concept of public diplomacy or, in previous generations, cultural relations.<sup>166</sup> These writers champion and sometimes question the potential for student mobility to shape foreign public opinion to the sponsoring government's advantage.<sup>167</sup> It is important not to view this questioning as negative, because sponsoring foreign students is often presented as a sign of transparency and in the interest of correcting misunderstandings. In contrast with one-sided propaganda, encouraging social contact between citizens tends to be viewed as a benign activity. This relatively innocuous image should not obscure the links between education programs and diplomatic strategy.<sup>168</sup> According to Iain Wilson, it is important to remember

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Perspectives," *European Association for International Education* 5 (1995); K. James, "International Education: The Concept, and Its Relationship to Intercultural Education," *Journal of Research in International Education* 4, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>164</sup> A.R. Welch and B. Denman, "Internationalization of Higher Education: Retrospect and Prospect," *Forum of Education* 52, no. 1 (1997).

<sup>165</sup> Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in the World of Politics*.

<sup>166</sup> Leonard, Stead, and Smewing, "Public Diplomacy."; Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy."; Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."; Lowe, "Journalists and the Stirring of Australian Public Diplomacy: The Colombo Plan Towards the 1960s."; Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."; Lowe and Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy."; C. Byrne and I. Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential," *Clingendael discussion papers in diplomacy* 121, no. 27 (2011); Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."; Byrne and Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential."; Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy."

<sup>167</sup> Iain Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>168</sup> Julie Mathews-Aydinli, *International Education Exchanges and Intercultural Understanding: Promoting Peace and Global Relations* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

that what governments say publicly is not always a good guide of their actual intentions.<sup>169</sup>

Rory Medcalf's work highlights the impact that international education can have on Australia's relations with China.<sup>170</sup> Chinese students who make up more than one-third of total international enrolments in Australia with several dozen Chinese student associations with different conflicting agendas.<sup>171</sup> President Xi Jinping has been explicit in his aims, calling on all Chinese overseas, making no distinction between China and foreign citizens, to unite and work in the cause of China.<sup>172</sup> Many Australians might find President Xi's aims and goals confronting, and not in Australia's national interests; however, this is an example of the cultural differences between the two countries.

Internationalisation and technology are two of the drivers for change in the modern academic profession. This has added a new world of convergence and complexity to the role of academics who were traditionally expected to contribute to society through teaching, research and service.<sup>173</sup> The need for academics to balance their time across these three areas of academia is a global challenge and one that universities continue to look for new ways to navigate strategically, as they seek to increase academic collaboration. The stage is crowded with many other countries competing with Australia for collaborations with Chinese institutions. In addition, China, like many non-English speaking countries with large domestic audiences, is creating its own academic community, however this may lead to a higher education sector with an insular outlook. As a result, limiting opportunities for international research and teaching collaborations.<sup>174</sup>

### **2.5.1 International education as a public diplomacy tool**

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<sup>169</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

<sup>170</sup> Medcalf, "In Defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's New Strategic Map."

<sup>171</sup> "The Power of International Education," <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Project-Atlas#.WMiFIRKGN0I>.

<sup>172</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

<sup>173</sup> Peter Bentley and Svein Kyvik, "Academic Work from a Comparative Perspective: A Survey of Faculty Working Time across 13 Countries," *Higher Education* 63, no. 4 (2012).

<sup>174</sup> Bentley and Kyvik, "Academic Work from a Comparative Perspective: A Survey of Faculty Working Time across 13 Countries."

Byrne and Hall state: 'It is relatively recently that the potential for international education to contribute to foreign policy matters, through public diplomacy, has been recognised by states'.<sup>175</sup> Conversely, others believe that public diplomacy, called to promote greater understanding and trust among different cultures, has a long history of effectively utilising international education.<sup>176</sup> Wilson says, 'the exchange of the right sort of private citizens has come to be seen not only as a symptom of a healthy relationship, but also as a causal factor'.<sup>177</sup> The field of research is still evolving. As David Lowe notes, 'to incorporate students as a dimension of foreign relations is not the terrain of neat paths and well-trodden methodologies, but it seems to have dawned as a field of study'.<sup>178</sup>

Potter deems educational exchanges as one of the most important public diplomacy tools for building long-term and sustainable relationships with foreign publics.<sup>179</sup> This is due to the understanding that these programs utilise personal relationships to generate mutual understanding, to break down prejudice, to create a positive image of the host country, and to create support of the host country's foreign policy.<sup>180</sup> However, an issue for the funding government is that exchanges do not produce instant, quantifiable results in the same ways that information campaigns might. Education and culture are slow, long-term approaches that might only prove to be effective years or decades after the initial contact has been made. It will take some time for the scholars to become advocates in their country upon their return.<sup>181</sup>

When designing international education programs, it is important to note that exchange students and academics working collaboratively are not homogenous groups. Deborah Sell states that an important lesson from the existing literature is that people's experiences while

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<sup>175</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy," p.421.

<sup>176</sup> E. Kharmalova, "The Us Government-Sponsored Graduate-Level Exchange Programs" (Duquesne University, 2005).

<sup>177</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*. p.2.

<sup>178</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

<sup>179</sup> Potter, *Branding Canada : Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy*.

<sup>180</sup> Antonio Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 3, no. 3 (2007); Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>181</sup> Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in the World of Politics*.

abroad, rather than the simple fact of being in a foreign country, are likely to shape their attitude.<sup>182</sup> In addition, it is crucial to keep in mind that participation in exchange programs is not the sole variable effecting participant perceptions. Their educational, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds also shape their perceptions in curious ways.<sup>183</sup> Treating them as a homogenous group may mask systemic changes in some subgroups' attitudes that are not shared by others.

Former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, is often cited as an example of successful exchange participation, as she went to the US as a participant in the International Visitor Program (IVP) in 1967.<sup>184</sup> Her experience demonstrates the long-term nature of public diplomacy efforts, as it would be twelve years before she became Prime Minister. The IVP was arguably an effective tool in this case, as relations between the US and the UK remained warm during Thatcher's long tenure as Prime Minister. Investing in Thatcher early in her career, when she was a rising young Member of Parliament in the 1960s, paid off for the US when she maintained and strengthened the 'special relationship' throughout her time as Prime Minister. Of course, it is difficult to generalise the results of this case more broadly. For every Prime Minister Thatcher there have been thousands of less prominent scholarship alumni, as well as many world leaders who were not alumni of scholarship programs.

Joseph Nye uses support for international students as a key example of how countries can exercise soft power.<sup>185</sup> International education provides a cost-effective way to educate foreign publics about a country's culture, society and intellectual paradigms by inviting their best and brightest to get an education in the host country's universities.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, exchange

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<sup>182</sup> Deborah Sell, "Research on Us Students Who Participate in Foreign Study Experiences," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 7, no. 2 (1983): p.135.

<sup>183</sup> H. De Wit, "Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe" (UvA-DARE, 2001).

<sup>184</sup> B.H. Scott-Smith, "Academic Work from a Comparative Perspective: A Survey of Faculty Working Time across 13 Countries," *Higher Education* 8, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>185</sup> Nye, "Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century. What Factors Need to Be Considered to Explain U.S. Policy to Audiences Abroad?."

<sup>186</sup> F. Aw, "Building a 'National Civilization' at Home and Abroad: International Students and Changing Us

programs provide immersive experiences that can help to ameliorate misconceptions, stereotypes and negative perceptions about the host country, enhancing the participants' intercultural competence.<sup>187</sup> Owing to this enhanced intercultural knowledge exchange, students have the potential to be drivers of social change and world peace as they have the ability to reconcile differences.<sup>188</sup>

For decades, educational programs have been seen not only as 'by-products' of geopolitics and globalisation,<sup>189</sup> - but also as a deliberate activity undertaken with particular goals in mind.<sup>190</sup> Programs in many instances are sponsored and administered by governments as a tool of foreign policy.<sup>191</sup> The Australian Government expects that by funding the NCP, participants will gain foreign language fluency, develop an appreciation for other cultures and grow to understand other ways of life.<sup>192</sup> Iain Wilson purports that the missions of many prestigious international scholarships have changed considerably over time, but have always maintained their public diplomacy objectives.<sup>193</sup>

The use of international education as a public diplomacy tool is not without its flaws, so it is to be expected that it is not viewed as altruistic by everyone. International education is not a short-term strategy, with outcomes often not known for several decades. It also has moral and ethical considerations to consider. The idea that a government might derive national benefit from educational and cultural activities is a somewhat controversial concept. On the one hand, government spending of taxpayer funds ought to benefit the nation to promote the national

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Political Economy," (2011).

<sup>187</sup> J.S. Carlson and K.F. Widaman, "The Effect of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes toward Other Cultures," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 12 (1988); G. Bicknese, "Study Abroad Part I: A Comparative Test of Attitudes and Opinions," *Foreign Language Annals* 7 (1974).

<sup>188</sup> J. Cambridge and J. Thompson, "Internationalism and Globalization as Contexts for International Education," *A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 34, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>189</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>190</sup> C. Frankel, *The Neglected Aspect of Foreign Policy: American Educational and Cultural Policy Abroad* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1965), p.73.

<sup>191</sup> Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy."

<sup>192</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "The New Colombo Plan Scholarship".

<sup>193</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

interest in some way. On the other hand, aligning national interests with educational activities might undermine the academic integrity of such programs.

### **2.5.2 Education exchange as a public diplomacy tool**

In the context of public diplomacy, it is claimed that exchange is a way to improve the image of a country and to cast its foreign policy in a favourable light. De Wit says, ‘in this sense, exchange students are selected so that they are able to understand the host country and to develop sympathy with its political systems, culture and values’.<sup>194</sup> The belief that participation in exchange programs increases intercultural competence, leading to mutual understanding, is grounded in Allport’s contact hypothesis.<sup>195</sup> Allport’s study of inter-racial relations in the US hypothesised that increased knowledge, engendered by systemised contact between the two groups, leads to ‘tolerant and friendlier attitudes: and reduction of prejudice.’<sup>196</sup> He, however, sets down a series of necessary preconditions for the ‘contact’, which are discussed in Chapter Four.

An extensive body of literature supports the claim that exchange experiences contribute positively towards enhancing and improving intercultural competence of exchange participants.<sup>197</sup> This intercultural competence includes positive perceptions about the host culture and country,<sup>198</sup> - intercultural sensitivity,<sup>199</sup> - and tolerance and acceptance for

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<sup>194</sup> De Wit, "Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe," p.85.

<sup>195</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."; S.B. Abbas, "International Education Exchange Programs as a Modality of Public Diplomacy: An in-Depth Analysis of the Fulbright Pakistan" (American University, 2015); M.H. Salisbury, "The Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Comptence among Undergraduate College Students" (University of Iowa, 2011).

<sup>196</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1954), p.254.

<sup>197</sup> Salisbury, "The Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Comptence among Undergraduate College Students."; M.J. Stebleton, K.M. Soria, and B.T. Cherney, "The High Impact of Education Abroad: College Students’ Engagement in International Experiences and the Development of Intercultural Competencies," *Frontier: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 22 (2013).

<sup>198</sup> Carlson and Widaman, "The Effect of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes toward Other Cultures."; Bicknese, "Study Abroad Part I: A Comparative Test of Attitudes and Opinions."

<sup>199</sup> T.R. Williams, "Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad on Students’ Intercultural Communication Skills: Adaptability and Sensitivity," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 9 (2005); Salisbury, "The Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Comptence among Undergraduate College Students."; P.H. Anderson et al., "Short-Term Study Abroad and Intercultural Sensitivity: A Pilot Study," *International Journal of Intercultural*

culturally different people.<sup>200</sup> In contrast, Wesley offers the reasoning that, should the contact be unpleasant, involuntary or full of tension, it might have the reverse impact. Therefore, international education does not always result in the desired positive outcomes.<sup>201</sup> In the absence of a rigorous design some programs could have unintended negative impacts.

Cull states that Syed Qutub, a leading member of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, is often cited as an extreme case of an exchange program not having positive outcomes. Qutub was an exchange student to Colorado State University and, rather than forming a favourable opinion of the US, he returned home with negative sentiments, criticising American culture and society as immoral, selfish and consumerist.<sup>202</sup> Another complication pertaining to the impact of exchange programs stems from the personal characteristics of the exchange participants themselves. The experiences and perspectives of international students are a product of their backgrounds and personality traits, and mere contact may not necessarily translate into desirable policy outcomes.

Similarly, the argument that exchange students act as a bridge between the host and home country has its own sets of limitations. For instance, this credibility may be tarnished in the eyes of the home society if the exchange student transforms too much, therefore rejecting their home culture.<sup>203</sup> Bochner calls this phenomenon, “passing” or the “captive mind syndrome”.<sup>204</sup> In such circumstances, the home society is not able to relate to them. If the exchange students are perceived to be too defensive of their host country, or too critical of their home culture upon their return, their capacity to affect the opinions of their community

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*Relations* 30 (2006).

<sup>200</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>201</sup> Wesley, "Australia's Poisoned Alumni: International Education and the Costs to Australia."

<sup>202</sup> N. Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 616 (2008).

<sup>203</sup> N. Snow, "International Exchanges and the Us Image," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008).

<sup>204</sup> S. Bochner, *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1981).

diminishes.<sup>205</sup>

Moreover, an international experience in itself does not ensure an adequate immersion in the host society, which is needed for a deeper understanding. International students may be more interested in academic learning than getting to know their host country, leading to insufficient and superficial interactions between the participant and the host country.<sup>206</sup> For instance Yuan's study revealed that most Chinese students studying abroad befriend other Chinese students due to weak spoken English and cultural differences.<sup>207</sup> Other than the limitations pertaining to the impact of exchange programs, a set of criticisms regarding the structure and administration of these programs is also present in the literature. Marshal states that, though in theory the flow of information/culture in an educational exchange is two-way, it remains unequal and imbalanced. He explains that the student impact on his/her host country is minimal when compared to the impact of the host country on the student. As the student interacts daily with the host culture, immersing fully in it throughout the duration of the stay, they may become heavily influenced. Inequality of impact, as asserted by Marshal, is an important point to consider as it has the potential to reduce educational exchanges into one-way indoctrination.<sup>208</sup> International education is also criticised for attempting to convert the children of political and economic elites of developing countries into Westernised proxies in their countries. These opinions are then used to forward the Western political and economic agendas in their home countries.<sup>209</sup>

There are a number of research projects that have been undertaken primarily to assess scholarship recipients' satisfaction with their scholarship program, and their achievement of

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<sup>205</sup> Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories."

<sup>206</sup> Snow, "International Exchanges and the Us Image."; S. Spaulding and M.J. Flack, *The World's Students in the United States: A Review and Evaluation of Research on Foreign Students* (New York: Praeger, 1976).

<sup>207</sup> Wenli Yuan, "Academic and Cultural Experiences of Chinese Students in an American University: A Qualitative Study," *Intercultural Communication Studies* 20, no. 1 (2011): p.142.

<sup>208</sup> T. Marshal, "The Strategy of International Exchange," in *Students as links between cultures* (Oslo, Norway: UNESCO and the International Peace Research Institute, 1970).

<sup>209</sup> Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories."

learning outcomes.<sup>210</sup> More broadly, in the higher education literature, there has been a continued effort to take the participants' thoughts into account. As far back as the mid-1950s, one writer warned that 'the researcher must keep in mind the obvious gratification and gratitude of persons who have been selected for honorific, subsidised foreign travel. Appreciation of such an opportunity and adventure must colour the testimony of recent grantees.'<sup>211</sup> Lowe has also published a warning about this phenomenon.<sup>212</sup>

Eidi's work shows that images and stereotypes are an intrinsic element of international relations.<sup>213</sup> Therefore, Lima states that, 'we hear the words...[Australian or Chinese], or any other that refer to a nationality, and a whole set of (mis)conceptions come to our minds'.<sup>214</sup> It is difficult to avoid the tendency of stereotyping and, indeed stereotypes have the role of making the world more manageable.<sup>215</sup> Separating the impact of an exchange experience from other experiences in a student's life can be challenging and therefore it is difficult to categorically argue that an in-country experience will make the heart grow fonder and change stereotypical thinking.

It is also argued that exchanges create opportunities to build genuine relationships that are needed to enable governments to develop durable, stable relationships with foreign publics, and which would also work toward the successful implementation of foreign policy.<sup>216</sup> Some writers caution against the generalising of exchange students' experiences by stating that they will inevitably finish an exchange program with a more favourable, positive image of the

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<sup>210</sup> Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney, "The High Impact of Education Abroad: College Students' Engagement in International Experiences and the Development of Intercultural Competencies."; Salisbury, "The Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Competence among Undergraduate College Students."; Anderson et al., "Short-Term Study Abroad and Intercultural Sensitivity: A Pilot Study."; Williams, "Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad on Students' Intercultural Communication Skills: Adaptability and Sensitivity."; Carlson and Widaman, "The Effect of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes toward Other Cultures."; Bicknese, "Study Abroad Part I: A Comparative Test of Attitudes and Opinions."

<sup>211</sup> Riegel, "Residual Effects of Exchange-of-Persons," p.321.

<sup>212</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

<sup>213</sup> I. Eide, *Students as Links between Culture* (Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1970).

<sup>214</sup> Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy," p.239.

<sup>215</sup> Klineberg, *The Human Dimension in International Relations*.

<sup>216</sup> Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy."

host country.<sup>217</sup> Lima further argues that, ‘the successful implementation of foreign policy could be more related to either convergence or divergence of interests between nations, rather than the development of a positive image by other governments or foreign publics’.<sup>218</sup>

Although it is not widely advertised to the general public, the political rationale for supporting impressionable young students to study abroad is widespread within foreign ministries.<sup>219</sup> Many individual diplomats subscribe to this idea. Shaping the attitudes of foreign students has become a central objective of well-known scholarship programs such as the US Fulbright and British Chevening Awards.<sup>220</sup> Despite the criticisms and challenges, many countries, small and large, at the centre of the international stage, as well as those at the periphery, have taken up the education exchange project as a means of public diplomacy.<sup>221</sup>

Given the discussion concerning international education as public diplomacy, it is surprising that the impact of exchange programs on international relations is still not known. There are both gaps in the empirical evidence, particularly when it comes to the long-term impact of mobility, and epistemological challenges. Iain Wilson states that:

This is an intriguing intellectual challenge but addressing some of these gaps would have political significance. Exchanges are somewhat marginalized in foreign policy strategy, and certainly far fewer resources are devoted to exchange programs than to armaments.<sup>222</sup>

He asserted that if the opinion leader model holds, policymakers should seek to utilise exchange students who will go on to be influential opinion-shapers. In addition, if networking is the most important element, then it makes sense to select students who seem likely to be making influential decisions themselves in the future. Also, relatively obscure civil servants

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<sup>217</sup> Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy."; Wesley, "Australia's Poisoned Alumni: International Education and the Costs to Australia."

<sup>218</sup> Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy," p.236.

<sup>219</sup> Williams, "Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad on Students' Intercultural Communication Skills: Adaptability and Sensitivity."

<sup>220</sup> R.T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings* (Virginia, U.S.A.: Potomac Books, 2005); Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

<sup>221</sup> Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy."

<sup>222</sup> Iain Wilson, "Exchanges in Peacemaking: Counterfactuals and Possibilities," *All Azimuth: Ankar* 4, no. 2 (2007): p.18.

might play important roles as policy entrepreneurs, if they are exposed to new ideas in their youth. Wilson concluded by stating, 'we now think about the impact of exchange programs quite differently than we did 65 years ago'.<sup>223</sup>

### **2.5.3 International higher education scholarships as public diplomacy**

According to Wilson, the opinion leader model often seems to rest on the premise that studying in a foreign country affects scholars' attitudes to that country for the better. It would be tempting to assume that student mobility changes attitudes and that those changes would be to the benefit of the sponsor. If this is true, international relations theorists and practitioners should be fixated on scholarships. Bochner et al. supports this statement:

The sponsors of international education have repeatedly justified the huge cost of the enterprise by claiming that exchange programs self-evidently contribute to mutual understanding and international peace...the evidence all too often reveals a gap between promise and reality.<sup>224</sup>

However, evidence that the programs have any impact on international relations is weak.<sup>225</sup>

International mobility, it is claimed, influences the beliefs and political behavior of the students. People who have spent time in a foreign country are expected to become 'sympathetic' to that country. They might go on to positions of power where they can directly influence the relationship between the two countries, but more commonly they are expected to become socially influential. That enables changes in their views to become infectious, as returnees help shape their networks' views of the country they studied. These networks can in turn exert pressure on their governments.<sup>226</sup> Giles Scott-Smith, in his analysis of a US State Department program bringing non-academic foreign elites to the US, calls this the opinion leader model.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*. p.195.

<sup>224</sup> S. Bochner, B. McLeod, and A. Lyn, "Friendship Patterns of Overseas Students," *International Journal of Psychology* 12, no. 4 (1977): p.278.

<sup>225</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

<sup>226</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

<sup>227</sup> G. Scott-Smith, "Her Rather Ambitious Washington Program: Margaret Thatcher's International Visitor Program Visit to the United States in 1967," *Contemporary British History* 17, no. 4 (2003).

International scholarship programs are thought to be effective as the personal networks established within host countries are seen as a highly credible means of communication. While information from a government's mass media may be criticised by audiences, discussions with individual representatives is more credible and offers an opportunity for follow-up questions and responses. Individuals are better equipped than government media sources to develop a genuine two-way flow of communication. An implicit objective of state-sponsored international education programs is that when participants return home they will become decision-makers in their home countries; and, they will remember their experiences in the host countries with gratitude. This gratitude and favourable opinion will then translate into a favoured treatment for the host country in the economic as well as the political realm.<sup>228</sup>

In addition to the benign and apolitical impact theorised by the contact hypothesis (reduction in prejudice and increase in tolerance), international education exchanges also act as a means to export and promulgate the host countries' cultures, politico-economic ideologies and values. Based on the study of international students in the context of the US, Aw puts forward a similar argument.<sup>229</sup> She asserts that international students are an important conduit for building a national civilisation abroad. The aspect of reciprocity associated with these programs gives them a sense of mutuality, rendering them more palatable than practices like international broadcasting, which has often been criticised for its propagandistic overtures.

Before the idea that offering scholarships was a political strategy became so widespread, advocates for international education claimed that their activities brought a range of other social benefits, not least educating people about other cultures and polities. There is a risk that instrumentalising support for foreign visitors as a diplomatic tool might lead to a neglect of other benefits that international education might bring.

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<sup>228</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

<sup>229</sup> Aw, "Building a 'National Civilization' at Home and Abroad: International Students and Changing US Political Economy."

Despite increasing investments in international higher education scholarships, and although they have the potential to facilitate international development, leadership, diplomacy and trade,<sup>230</sup> - there are limited evaluations that rigorously explore the process through which intended outcomes are achieved.<sup>231</sup> This is particularly important at a time when scholarships have become a pillar for foreign policy action.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, a major critique of scholarship programs has been the lack of 'comprehensive, longitudinal and publicly available tracer studies'.<sup>233</sup> Research has yet to prove the links between the private benefits of higher education scholarships and the public good.<sup>234</sup> Given that causality is hard to track, assessing the impact of scholarships as public diplomacy over time has proven to be challenging.<sup>235</sup> The assumption of a trickle-down impact of scholarships on public opinion and diplomacy is therefore difficult to substantiate.<sup>236</sup> Evaluations of international scholarship programs have not adopted an approach that takes into account their complex nature, even though assessing multifaceted development interventions, by incorporating such complexities, has been demonstrated to be appropriate and effective.<sup>237</sup> David Lowe cautions that people who respond to surveys and remain engaged in alumni groups are the students who have enjoyed their studies; those who have translated their studies overseas into their working lives at home, for those the experience was a success.<sup>238</sup> He asserts that those who failed or who were unhappy with the study abroad experiences are less likely to respond. This presents a challenge to scholarship designers,

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<sup>230</sup> S. Abimbola et al., "Australian Higher Education Scholarships as Tools for International Development and Diplomacy in Africa," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70, no. 2 (2016).

<sup>231</sup> L.W. Perna et al., "Promoting Human Capital: A Typology of International Scholarship Programs in Higher Education," *Educational Researcher* 43, no. 2 (2014).

<sup>232</sup> Perna et al., "Promoting Human Capital: A Typology of International Scholarship Programs in Higher Education."

<sup>233</sup> E. Cassity, "Is It Really Aid? Bilateral Aid in the Tertiary Sector in Australia," in *The Geopolitics of Overseas Scholarships and Awards: Old and New Providers* (Geneva: East and West, North and South, 2011), p.30.

<sup>234</sup> D. Cuthbert, W. Smith, and J. Boey, "What Do We Really Know About the Outcomes of Australian International Education? A Critical Review and Prospectus for Future Research," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 12, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>235</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and the UK's Influence."

<sup>236</sup> J.M. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations* (London, United Kingdom: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p.160.

<sup>237</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."

<sup>238</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

funding bodies, and those who assume positive outcomes from international education.<sup>239</sup>

The opinion leader model is also based on alumni contributing to political change. All diplomats involved in Iain Wilson's research expressed a belief that mobility programs impact on international relations through their alumni.<sup>240</sup> In this research, Wilson discussed how important it is to be aware of the distinction between making people understand their host country better, even if they come away disapproving of it. The alternative is to hope that visitors will fall in love with the host country or at least that they will have more positive than negative attitudes. The increasingly influential soft power agenda strongly emphasises attraction to a country, not just a deeper understanding of it.<sup>241</sup> The possibilities for tension between supporting foreign policy by nurturing friendly audiences abroad and educating potential critics are clear. Many academics have seen the development of positive attitudes and the adoption of cultural values as something we should expect if scholarship programs are to fulfill their political aspirations.<sup>242</sup>

Mawer has undertaken considerable work reviewing the methods that have been used in the evaluation of international scholarship programs for higher education.<sup>243</sup> Mawer identifies current areas of focus in the literature, among them are the implementation factors that may impact on achieving goals, such as the socio-demographic characteristics of candidates; post-scholarship employment trajectories; the contribution to the sector, profession or country; and ongoing networks with scholarship hosts.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Lowe and Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy."

<sup>240</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*; Wilson, "Exchanges in Peacemaking: Counterfactuals and Possibilities."

<sup>241</sup> Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts* (Washington, U.S.A: Lexington Books, 2011).

<sup>242</sup> C. Atkinson, "Does Soft Power Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Student Exchange Programs 1980–2006," 6 (2010).

<sup>243</sup> Matt Mawer, "A Study of Research Methodology Used in Evaluations of International Scholarship Schemes for Higher Education," (Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom, 2014).

<sup>244</sup> Mawer, "A Study of Research Methodology Used in Evaluations of International Scholarship Schemes for Higher Education."

The framing of international scholarships as public diplomacy not only impacts design and evaluation but also policymaking. Dassin, Marsh and Mawer contend that this should encourage scholarship and international education practitioners to recognise the limitations of planning and idealised trajectory.<sup>245</sup> They also write that researchers should not see international scholarship recipients as a homogenous group with similar ambitions and learning priorities. Scholars will also return to different employment environments in the dynamic nature of socially meaningful work, which is open to highly skilled and committed graduates. According to Lowe and Kent, the expectation that alumni, and especially those who have studied under a scholarship, will perform a positive, influential role for both their host and home countries is a significant impost.<sup>246</sup> Gregory and Fitzpatrick believe that some of these challenges may be addressed through the inclusion of mutual understanding, intellectual capital and increased mobility, when writing about higher education as public diplomacy.<sup>247</sup> According to Lowe this will go some way towards seeing international education more realistically as life-long experiences rather than life-long education.<sup>248</sup>

Wilson states that it is unsurprising that diplomats do take some effort to enhance the symbolic value of creating scholarships, seeking favourable media coverage and tying them to state visits and international summits. The opinion leader model is intimately tied to the idea that exchanges and scholarships secure soft power and contribute to public diplomacy, increasing popular slogans with many foreign ministries. This makes it doubly important to understand whether the model corresponds to social reality. Wilson found surprising weaknesses in the empirical evidence available. His work did not support the idea that going

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<sup>245</sup> Joan Dassin, Robin Marsh, and Matt Mawer, "Introduction: Pathways for Social Change?," in *International Scholarships and Higher Education: Pathways for Social Change* (New York, U.S.A.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>246</sup> Lowe and Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy."

<sup>247</sup> Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field.," K.R. Fitzpatrick, "U.S. Public Diplomacy's Neglected Domestic Mandate," (Los Angeles: USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2010).

<sup>248</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

abroad causes net change in the political attitudes of large groups of students. Changes in one student's attitudes were generally cancelled out by other students in the opposite direction. Not only were student's broader political views apparently unaffected but they did not seem to become more positively disposed towards the host country. The students who went abroad that had more positive attitudes to the host country had so because they were more positive before they left. His findings contradict those of other authors, such as Carlson and Wildaman, who claim to have found that students who go abroad tend to become more favourably disposed to their home country.<sup>249</sup>

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the parent fields of Australia-China relations, public diplomacy and international education. The importance of the bilateral relationship to Australia's trade and the impact this has on the country's foreign policy is established. The recognition that governments are adapting diplomatic practices to the global environment was discussed, establishing the reasoning behind using the field of public diplomacy in this thesis. The international education literature was reviewed to gain a deeper understanding of why the Australian Government funds education programs as a tool of public diplomacy.

The next chapter will determine the Australian public diplomacy context through a review of the literature and relevant policies of Australia's use of public diplomacy in higher education. This will focus on four relevant Australian Government documents and the NCP evaluation, as well as alumni feedback, which has been used as key background in this thesis.

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<sup>249</sup> Carlson and Widaman, "The Effect of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes toward Other Cultures."

## CHAPTER THREE: CONTEXT OF AUSTRALIA'S USE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

In the world of diplomacy, unnecessary surprises and impulsive changes in policy will almost always lead to poorer outcomes for Australia.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter extends on the literature review in Chapter Two to provide the context of Australia's use of international education as a tool of public diplomacy, opening with a discussion on Australian higher education and international education. This is followed by a review of four government documents relevant to Australia's use of international education as public diplomacy. The initial document, the first Senate Inquiry into public diplomacy *Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image (PD Senate Inquiry)* indicates the importance of public diplomacy to the Australian Government, however with limited extension on this since and experts failing to see the recommendations implemented it is important to review this formative work in section 3.2.1. Following the *Senate Inquiry*, the Australian Government published the *Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-2016 (PD Strategy)* and *Australia's Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016-2020 (Alumni Strategy)*, discussed in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. The literature reveals that, to be effective, a country's public diplomacy must be aligned to its foreign policy,<sup>2</sup> - therefore the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* is reviewed in section 3.2.4. Finally the *New Colombo Plan Final Evaluation Report 2017* and the *Alumni Feedback Report* are reviewed in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

This chapter evaluates why, in the current global environment, the Australian Government funds international education programs as a tool of public diplomacy in China.

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<sup>1</sup> Julie Bishop, "Australia's International Affairs: The Coalition Approach," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (2016): p.456.

<sup>2</sup> Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy."; Ross Pillars of Public Diplomacy Grappling with International Public Opinion; Klineberg, *The Human Dimension in International Relations*; Lowe and Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy."; Signitzer and Coombs, "Diplomacy in the Media Age: Three Models of Uses and Effects."; Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

Gaining an understanding of the government's vision and goals for public diplomacy is important to this research, as the former Foreign Minister states, '...unnecessary surprises and impulsive changes in policy will almost always lead to poorer outcomes for Australia'.<sup>3</sup>

### **3.1 Continuous change in Australia's higher education**

The Australian higher education sector is an international model for structural change, policy innovation and export success, but this is not matched by its ability to win government support and budget security.<sup>4</sup> This proposition is embodied in the phrase 'there are no votes in higher education', which is commonly used by university leaders to suggest politicians do not perceive the sector to have wide community support.<sup>5</sup> The funding situation is not likely to change in the near future, as shown by the recent university funding freeze as part of the \$2.2 billion budget saving measures announced by the Government in the 2018 mid-year budget update.<sup>6</sup> Gaining recognition for their contribution to public diplomacy and policy in the Asian region will be difficult for universities because traditionally they do not frame their messaging to align with government strategies, maintaining education as their primary product.<sup>7</sup>

The application of competition policy, reduction in government funding and commodification of knowledge continue to place considerable pressure on the identity of universities as places of light, liberty, learning and debate.<sup>8</sup> Since the implementation of the Colombo Plan in the 1950's, higher education has moved from the fringe to the centre of society, accumulating a long list of functions. Universities cannot drive prosperity on their own

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<sup>3</sup> Bishop, "Australia's International Affairs: The Coalition Approach," p.456.

<sup>4</sup> P. Coaldrake, "Unis Must Play Politics," *The Australian*, 17 May 2006; G. Davis, "The Quiet Revolution in Higher Education," news release, 7 March, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Coaldrake, "Unis Must Play Politics."

<sup>6</sup> Mick Tsikas, "Federal Budget 2017: What's Changing in Education?," <https://theconversation.com/federal-budget-2017-whats-changing-in-education-77177>.

<sup>7</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential.," Coaldrake, "Unis Must Play Politics."

<sup>8</sup> I. Reid, "The Contradictory Managerialism of University Quality Assurance," *Journal of Education Policy* 24, no. 5 (2014); A. Patience, *Beyond the Silencing of the Academy* (North Carlton: Association for the Public University in Association with Arena Publications, 2000).

and can do little to stop rising income inequality. Worse, the growing emphasis on the private benefits of higher education, without regard for its public benefits, has positioned the sector as elite forming and as a reason for increased social inequality rather than a solution.<sup>9</sup> Currently, to demonstrate their contribution to the public good, Australian universities purport to have a broader vision to complement their traditional role of teaching and research. Universities Australia, the premier voice for Australian universities, records that:

Australian universities are critical to our national economic infrastructure. They deliver excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and innovation; support regional economies and communities; transform lives through educational opportunity and research; and have been at the forefront of Australia's soft diplomacy agenda through the delivery of international education and research collaboration. As well as advancing conventional diplomacy and trade, international education is a significant driver of public diplomacy, through creating a positive image for Australia and providing means to exert influence. Public diplomacy, or soft power, is essential to achieving an effective foreign policy and universities are the natural medium through which to exercise that soft power.<sup>10</sup>

To gain an understanding of change in Australia's higher education policy landscape over time, the major transformational waves post-World War II are reviewed. The literature chronicles a number of watershed moments in higher education policy that have altered the character and management structures of the nation's universities, in particular the use of international education to balance university budgets. Therefore, tracing some of the major transformations is helpful to understand the drivers behind the emergence of international education within the sector. These are summarised in Table 2 and, although not comprehensive, provide a taste of a sector that is constantly responding to change both from society and governments.<sup>11</sup> Australian tertiary education institutions are not alone in needing to respond to the speed of change affecting universities across the globe.

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<sup>9</sup> Simon Marginson, *Higher Education and the Common Good* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press 2016 ).

<sup>10</sup> Universities Australia, "2016-17 Pre-Budget Submission," <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/Media-and-Events/submissions-and-reports/2016-17-Pre-Budget-Submission#.W5dCeS1L0dU>.

<sup>11</sup> This table was compiled from the reviewing the work of: Australian Government, "The Budget Papers 2014-2015," (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Services, 2014); D. Bradley et al., "Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report," ed. Commonwealth of Australia (Canberra, Australia 2008); "Review of Higher Education Regulation," ed. Department of Industry (Canberra, Australia: Australia Government Publishing Service, 2013); R. West, "Learning for Life: Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy: Final Report," (Canberra, Australia: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1998).

*Table 2 A brief history of reform in Australian higher education since World War II*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
1945	At the commencement of World War II there were six universities with a total enrolment of 14,000 students. Elite institutions.
1950's	Increased demand through government offering scholarships to returned servicemen marked the beginning of a modern university system - no longer socially elitist. Murray Report investigated how best the universities could serve
1950	Colombo Plan and commencement of Australia's internationalisation of higher education.
1960's-1970's	Binary System consisting of Universities and CAE's.
1974	Whitlam Government abolished tertiary fees. New institutions established.
1977	Increasing fiscal constraints during next two decades stifled expansion. The turn to neoliberalism, or economic rationalism, evident by moves to privatise public assets and decrease public funding for universities.
1981	Fraser Government's 'Razor Gang' (Committee of Review of Commonwealth Functions) amalgamated small colleges to reduce costs.
1974-1986	Increased government expenditure transformed universities into mass institutions central to training and production of highly skilled workers.
1987-1994	Dawkins' reforms (1989) championing the user-pays. Hawke Government brought an end to the Binary System and developed the Unified National System (UNS). Direct fee charging for international students. The Higher Education Contribution Scheme commenced in 1989. UNS consisted of 36 universities.
1996	Howard Government reforms saw an increase in HECS fees. Government funding reduced to approximately 57% of operating budgets.
1998	Higher Education Funding Act 1998, Abolition of Tertiary Education Commission. West Review (Learning for Life) recommended increased tuition fee flexibility and demand-driven funding (not adopted).
1999	Workplace Reform Program. Increased funding in return for institutional changes. Funding increased but not in line with 49% growth in students.
2003	Major reform to the sector was proposed by Nelson. At the start of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century higher education entered mainstream politics with the focus being on: access and equity, national economic needs, and financial constraints and economic rationalism.
2008	Bradley Review of Higher Education focused on social inclusion. Bradley argued for significant increase in public funding for universities (not adopted).
2011	MyUniversity website, TEQSA Act 2011. Lomax-Smith Base Funding Review recommended increased funding (not adopted).
2012	Phillips KPA Review of Universities Reporting Requirements.
2013	Review of Higher Education Standards, National VET Standards and the launch of MySkills website.
2014	Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding extended to non-university providers. Reduction in the indexation rate of all Commonwealth grants to universities.
2016	Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education. 2016-2017 Budget Papers – Higher Education Reform.
2017	Higher Education Reform Package.
2017/18	The 2017–18 Budget removed the unlegislated proposed changes to higher education funding arrangements contained in the 2014–15 Budget. An estimated \$3.8 billion over five years, representing the largest savings measure in the Budget.

International engagement has become a fundamental hallmark of a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. It is no longer possible for countries to operate according to isolationist policies, making it essential for Australia to take its place as an engaged, innovative partner within the Indo-Pacific region and across the world. Higher education and research are critical components of that engagement.<sup>12</sup> International education is seen as a way for Australia to engage, as this service industry continues to be one of the major strategies used by Australian universities to supplement reduced government funding. Regardless of politicians asserting their interest in the higher education sector, universities continue to struggle to gain the Australian public's appreciation for their contribution to the public good.<sup>13</sup>

### **3.1.1 Australia's international higher education**

Universities are making a strong contribution to Australia's policy objectives and public diplomacy through educating the nation's future leaders, helping to educate an increasingly international workforce, and contributing to global research. Australia's international education serves as public diplomacy, essentially engaging and influencing public audiences in ways that progress Australian foreign and domestic policy priorities.<sup>14</sup> The country's universities are well placed to address the many social, political and economic challenges that Australia will face in the future; both through deep collaborative networks, which contribute to our soft diplomacy efforts; and expertise in research, academia and policy advice on issues relating to higher education.<sup>15</sup> The nexus between Australia's international education, and its foreign relations, including within that broad concept, its international reputation is in need of further research.<sup>16</sup> While this field is not ignored entirely, Brown states

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<sup>12</sup> Vicki Thomson, "Go8 Submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper," (The Group of Eight, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential."

<sup>14</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."

<sup>15</sup> Thomson, "Go8 Submission to the Foreign Policy White Paper."

<sup>16</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

that it lacks in a substantive way the element of student experience and student voice.<sup>17</sup>

Oakman states that for most of their history, Australians have seen themselves as a beleaguered white outpost of the British Empire, perched precariously between the hordes of Asia and the edge of the world. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the turmoil of World War II, communism and de-colonisation ended any possibility that Australia could ignore its region. Threats and opportunities that seemed to emanate from Asia compelled Australia to take some actions and to reassess its place in the region. In the early 1950s, Australia embarked on its most ambitious public diplomacy attempt - to engage with Asia through the Colombo Plan.<sup>18</sup> More recently, with the vision of increasing Australia's influence in the Indo-Pacific region, the Abbott Government launched the NCP, leveraging off the success of its predecessor. The initial Colombo Plan was devised as a way for Australia to project itself into the region by engaging with Asia strategically, economically and culturally,<sup>19</sup> - and as a way to battle communism in the region.<sup>20</sup> It was grounded in liberal internationalist assumptions, which continue to resonate in the current NCP program. During the 1950s and 1960s, policymakers held an optimistic view in which they 'genuinely believed that the plan would go some way to building cooperation in the region'.<sup>21</sup>

Several decades later, after the implementation of the Colombo Plan, similar government rhetoric can be found in sources such as the first *National Strategy for International Education 2025*, which highlights the importance of international education to Australia.<sup>22</sup> Since the early days of international education being used as aid, it is now recognised as one of the five super growth sectors contributing to Australia's transition from a

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Brown, "Student, Expert, Peacekeeper: Three Versions of International Engagement," *Australian journal of politics and history* 57 (2011).

<sup>18</sup> Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan*.

<sup>19</sup> Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan*, pp.1-4.

<sup>20</sup> Alex Auletta, "A Retrospective View of the Colombo Plan: Government Policy, Departmental Administration and Overseas Students," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 22, no. 1 (2000): p.49.

<sup>21</sup> Oakman, *Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan*, p.275.

<sup>22</sup> Australian Government, "National Strategy for International Education 2025," (Canberra: Australian Government, 2016).

resources-based to a modern services-based economy. The strategy reports that international education, for many decades, has been a vital part of Australia’s economy. Indeed, Australia has a long history of international higher education, including a high-profile recruitment and marketing drive that led to a 2,000% growth in international students from 1986 to 2006.<sup>23</sup> The policy imperatives driving Australia’s international education engagement have shifted during this time, primarily from an early focus on development through technical skills and education exchange scholarships to a commercialised full-fee approach from the mid-1980s to present day.<sup>24</sup>

China continues to be one of Australia’s largest sources of international students. In 2016, more than 157,000 Chinese students studied in Australia, a growth of more than 15 per cent from the previous year. As highlighted in Figure 15, Chinese students studying in Australia continue to make a considerable contribution to Australia’s economy.

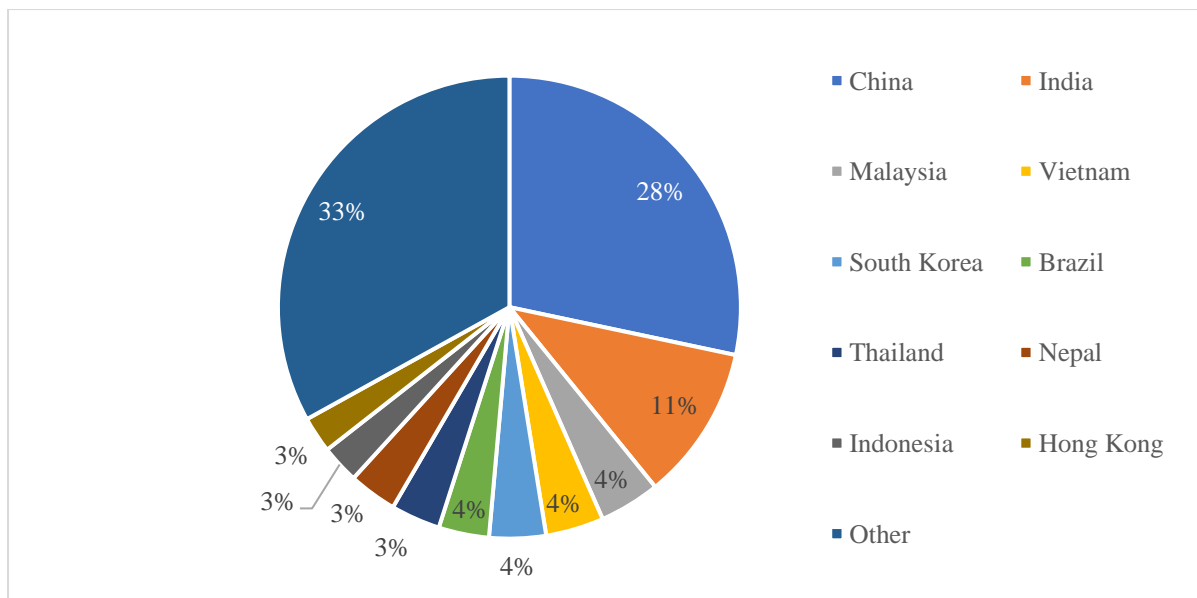


Figure 15 International students studying in Australia 2016<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Alison Moodie, "Australia: Long History of International Higher Education," <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20110305121304874>.

<sup>24</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential."

<sup>25</sup> The figures in this chart were provided by the Department of Education and Training in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper."

The Australian international student sector has continued to grow exponentially since a drop in the value of the Australian dollar and changes to visa requirements in 2013-14. After previously peaking at \$16.2bn in 2009, the sector sunk to a low of \$14.5bn in 2012-13 before staging a recovery.<sup>26</sup> However, in 2016, attacks on Chinese students in Melbourne had the potential to pose a serious reputation threat, presenting an almost re-run of similar attacks in 2008-2009 on Indian students, also in Melbourne. The 2008-09 attacks triggered a backlash from Indian media, through their references to Australians as racist and xenophobic. It also saw the number of Indian students, previously one of the largest demographics, drop by 85%. Cull noted that Indian perceptions of social equality in Australia declined, having significant implications for Australia's broader regional interests and positioning.<sup>27</sup> The response to the Indian crisis was swift and far-reaching as it revealed international education's public diplomacy potential. Poor international education experiences can tarnish Australia's reputation as a destination, not just for students but also tourists and investors, and can hamper broader economic and, therefore, foreign policy ambitions.

The practice of actively reaching out to domestic publics to build or consolidate public support for a policy position is increasingly accepted within the scope of public diplomacy. However, within the Australian environment, this was not the case with the Colombo Plan, as the involvement and understanding of the domestic community was limited.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the approach to commercialise Australian international education served to alienate domestic audiences, leading to a sense of unease within communities regarding the place of international students and subsequent concerns about student well-being and safety. Public opinion, and in part to quell concerns about attacks on Indian students, forced the higher education sector to dismantle its original internationalisation strategy, which was heavily focused on international

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<sup>26</sup> Julie Hare, "Overseas Students Contribute Record \$19.7bn to Economy," *The Australian*, 6 May 2016 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Cull to CPD Blog, 2010, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/advance-australia-where-nation-brands-and-soft-power-down-under>.

<sup>28</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

student recruitment, and take on a more multi-faceted approach to emphasise quality and diversity. The interest shown in changing the approach to international education by the higher education sector and government is not surprising. Even the most ardent supporters of public diplomacy would admit it takes time and influence to change the 'hearts and minds' of the public, and minimising the negative experiences of international students while in-country.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.2 Australian Government reports used to inform this thesis**

To deepen the understanding of Australia's use of international education as public diplomacy, this section will discuss four government reports used to inform this thesis. The *PD Senate Inquiry*, as the first government inquiry into public diplomacy; followed by the government's *PD Strategy*; the *Alumni Engagement Strategy* and the *Foreign Policy White Paper*.

#### **3.2.1 Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image 2007**

The Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's – *Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image 2007 (PD Senate Inquiry)* was the first Senate Inquiry into Australia's public diplomacy. To increase the understanding of why the Australian Government funds international education programs as public diplomacy, this thesis will align the findings with relevant recommendations from the *PD Senate Inquiry* to show any actions regarding Australia's public diplomacy, since the Inquiry.

The *PD Senate Inquiry* provided positive commentary on the higher education sector's international work that conveyed a positive image of Australia to the world. In contrast, the Inquiry expressed concern about the low level of interest in Australia's public diplomacy, and the lack of research into attitudes toward Australia by countries that are significant to the

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<sup>29</sup> Nye, "Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century. What Factors Need to Be Considered to Explain U.S. Policy to Audiences Abroad?."

nation. The lack of interest in public diplomacy concerned the Standing Committee as it was recognised that Australia has been in intense competition with other countries seeking to be heard on matters of importance to them. To ensure that Australia's public diplomacy efforts are not overshadowed in the highly contested international space, the committee identified some areas where it believed Australia could improve its public diplomacy achievements.

It was shown at the *PD Senate Inquiry* that Australians are not well-informed about public diplomacy initiatives that promote the nation's international reputation. The contribution made through student exchange was acknowledged and the Standing Committee expressed support for increased opportunities for inbound students and outbound Australian students to study abroad. It was considered that education programs were important building blocks for Australia's public diplomacy. The ability of the international education sector to build networks and people-to-people links was acknowledged.

As Rainer Schlageter noted, it is important that public diplomacy strategies go beyond a one-way information building approach and that they create dialogue within society.<sup>30</sup> For example, in regards to Australia's relationship with China, the committee recognised the benefits that are derived from building lasting networks '...any relationship between two nations cannot be viewed purely in economic terms. The bilateral relationship comprises a complex web of interrelationships between a diverse range of actors'.<sup>31</sup>

Chris Freeman, a public affairs practitioner with extensive experience in Australia's public policy programs, stated:

On the broader question of the selling of our views, our philosophies, our governance and the way we approach things in Australia, I agree that the key really is having people-to-people links and bringing people out to have a look for themselves or sending people over there to talk to people. It is not something that can be sold by putting out publications and hammering away at people.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

<sup>31</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

<sup>32</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

Alison Broinowski, agreed with the importance of building people-to-people links but expanded on this recommendation and stressed the benefits of Australians spending ‘more time in our region – if necessary, with the support of a public diplomacy program – going, learning and coming back’.<sup>33</sup> RMIT, in its submission, also supported an increase in support for students to study within the Asian region:

This need not simply be a matter of more funded scholarships, although they would be welcome: such a strategy might also involve tax incentives for individuals or employers sponsoring staff studying overseas or international students studying in Australia. The committee noted the immediate benefits of students and professionals spending time in the Asian region including tapping into relationships built of alumni Chinese students after they have returned to China. It is important to consolidate these relationships and ensure they are nurtured after the programs have been completed. Submitters identified missed opportunities with alumni as the biggest opportunity for Australia’s public diplomacy.<sup>34</sup>

On this note, the *PD Senate Inquiry* recognised the level at which Australia’s relationship with China had the possibility to gain improved stability. It was reported that the standing of the bilateral relationship heightens the priority to identify those who contribute to this relationship and to support them in their activities. This includes supporting Australian students and professionals to study or train in the Asian region. Many witnesses to the *PD Senate Inquiry* cited the dire need for further support of Australian students to undertake studies in Asian languages. Australia is struggling to maintain its existing capacity to teach future generations of specialists, politicians and business leaders. It was recommended that the government consider introducing additional incentives for Australian students not only to study an Asian language but to combine their academic studies with cultural studies.<sup>35</sup> On a broader scale, there were similar concerns raised about Asian studies in general as, ‘it is always easier to influence people if you speak their language and understand their culture.’<sup>36</sup>

The *Senate Inquiry* made special mention of the foundations, councils and institutes

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<sup>33</sup> Broinowski, "Public Diplomacy and Australian Practice."

<sup>34</sup> Ms Jennifer McGregor, Asialink in Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image," p.7.

<sup>35</sup> This has been addressed, in part, through the NCP support of \$1,000 to each scholarship recipient for language studies.

<sup>36</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

(FCI), recommending that DFAT undertake a review of these organisations with a view to assessing their effectiveness in contributing to the conduct of Australia's public diplomacy. The review should, among other matters, include whether FCIs receive an increase in funding. The committee suggested that for increased accountability, FCIs be required to produce an annual report for the Minister to table in Parliament. This requirement would not alter the current arrangements of DFAT's annual report, which contains a summary of FCI reports.

The *PD Senate Inquiry's* findings included that there had been an absence of appropriate performance indicators, suggesting that DFAT did not have mechanisms in place to adequately monitor and assess outcomes. It was noted that although evaluating the effects of public diplomacy can be difficult, it is still a worthwhile endeavour. Freeman, in his submission, stated that although he was not aware of any foolproof way to evaluate public diplomacy programs, however their value for money could still be evaluated:

That does not mean that there are not plenty of signposts and plenty of ways that we can make various assessments...you could certainly use size of audience, the kind of media coverage you might have been able to influence, the number of third-party influences you might have brought on-board and convinced to support your point of view in the host country, and so on. A lot of this tends to be statistical and anecdotal.

The real dilemma comes when you try to measure the extent to which you have changed behaviour or thoughts or attitudes. Frankly, even when you can demonstrate that an attitude has been changed, it is not always easy to make a direct causal link between what you have been doing and the actual change. There are often lots of factors at play.<sup>37</sup>

There are several recommendations from the *PD Senate Inquiry* that are directly relevant to this research. First, the committee recommended that the government's public diplomacy strategy attach greater importance to creating an awareness of public diplomacy domestically. It recommended that the government formulate a public communication strategy and put in place explicit programs designed to increase the level of interest in, or awareness of, Australia's public diplomacy by Australians. In addition, it was recommended that the many, and varied, organisations and groups involved in international activities be encouraged to take

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<sup>37</sup> Christopher Freeman was directly involved in Australia's international public diplomacy and advocacy programs for a period of 35 years (1970-2005).

a constructive role in actively supporting Australia's public diplomacy objectives.

The second recommendation was that DFAT ensure all government sponsored or funded visitors, or training programs, have clearly identified public diplomacy objectives. These programs should adopt a longer-term perspective that include measures or plans intended to consolidate and build on the immediate public diplomacy benefits that accrue from such activities. As an accountability measure, the organisers or sponsors of a visitor or training program should report on how the program has contributed to Australia's public diplomacy.

The third relevant recommendation was that public diplomacy strategies be formulated and implemented to enable DFAT to take advantage of the significant diaspora resource, and to encourage Australian expatriates to engage more constructively in Australia's future capabilities.

Finally, the recommendation that the nine bilateral FCIs be evaluated to assess their effectiveness in contributing to the conduct of Australia's public diplomacy, with consideration given to a review on an increase in funding, is relevant to this thesis.

In summary, the *PD Senate Inquiry* noted the immense contribution the international education sector makes to Australia's public diplomacy and that, as alumni return home more informed about their host country's culture, these institutions are well placed to generate good will. At the time, the *PD Senate Inquiry* noted that lack of community interest aligned with the lack of interest from Australian academics and think-tanks to undertake research in the field of diplomacy. There was also concern about the lack of methodical and long-term research into attitudes toward Australia by countries of significance to Australia, and the return on investment from public diplomacy activities. Aligning the findings in this thesis to relevant recommendations from the *PD Senate Inquiry* is justified, as very few academics have researched Australia's use of higher education in public diplomacy since the release of the *PD Senate Inquiry*. Although a decade old, the *PD Senate Inquiry* remains the largest government

led investigation of public diplomacy in Australia, providing a relevant analysis of public diplomacy in Australia.

### 3.2.2 Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16

The *Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-2016 (PD Strategy)* is the second government document used to inform this thesis. Under the current Coalition Government, DFAT released the *PD Strategy*, outlining initiatives to ‘promote...economic, artistic and cultural, sporting, scientific and education assets to underline Australia’s credentials as a destination for business, investment, tourism and study, and to emphasise Australia’s engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.’<sup>38</sup> The mission of the *PD Strategy* is to:

Strengthen Australia’s influence, reputation and relationships internationally by promoting a clear, creative and confident vision for Australia’s international policy agenda that reflects our national interests and improves domestic understanding of DFAT’s role. One of the key priorities of the *PD Strategy* is to deliver public diplomacy programs that promote Australia as an education, tourism and investment destination. In addition, it is the intention of the government to leverage networks of influence in Australia and overseas, including alumni, Australia diaspora, diaspora communities in Australia and expatriate networks.<sup>39</sup>

Two goals of the *PD Strategy* specifically relate to the research in this thesis. Firstly, Goal Two highlights the nation’s commitment to building deeper and broader links through the NCP. Secondly, Goal Five relates to the international education sector’s efforts in, ‘promot[ing] Australia’s culture of resourcefulness, entrepreneurship and ingenuity; and our creative industries, scientific research, organisations and education system.’

Similar to the *Senate Inquiry*, the *PD Strategy* notes the international education sector’s contribution to Australia’s public diplomacy. Also included is that education institutions are well placed to generate goodwill. Conversations started through conferences and seminars, between academics and students, are referred to as positive ways to create useful networks. The document states that it is a common problem within public diplomacy strategies to

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<sup>38</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

<sup>39</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

effectively connect appropriate people with government agencies, private sector companies and individuals making daily contributions to Australia’s image and influence abroad. Within the *PD Strategy*, the government states that there will be a systematic approach for gathering qualitative evidence to demonstrate outcomes as they become visible over time.

### 3.2.3 Australia’s Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016-2020

The third government document informing this thesis is the *Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016-2020* (the *Alumni Strategy*), which is a public diplomacy initiative to build on the success of Australia’s past international education programs and seeks to unlock the full potential of Australia’s global alumni community. The mission embedded in the *Alumni Strategy* is to foster a global alumni community that actively engages and promotes Australia and advances its national interests, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. Figure 16 shows how the government will enable meaningful engagement with its global alumni so that they contribute to Australia’s national interest.

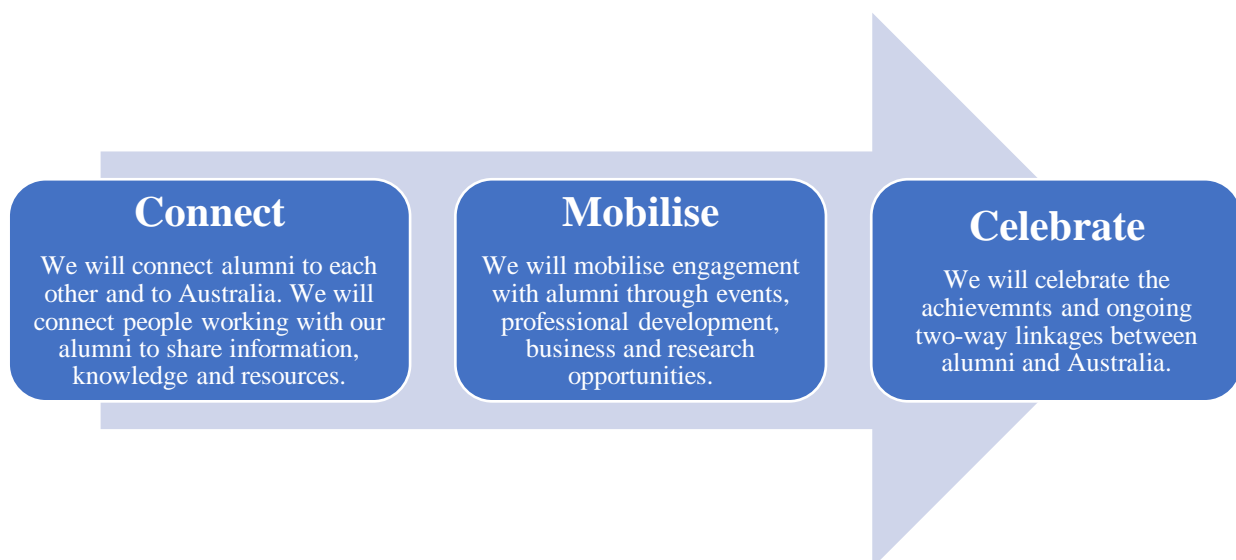


Figure 16 The Australian Government’s blueprint for the Global Alumni Engagement Strategy

The government asserts that the NCP will develop a more regionally aware Australian workforce for the future, and support a genuine two-way flow of students within the region, to complement the thousands of students coming to Australia each year. Over time, it is envisaged that the NCP alumni network will establish itself as an influential cohort, with direct experience of living, studying and working in the region. In the *Alumni Strategy*, former Foreign Minister Bishop states that,

International students and the talented Australians who study overseas, including through the New Colombo Plan, make up Australia's global alumni community. Australia's global alumni are highly talented, globally mobile and empowered by a world class Australian education. They are current and future leaders, influencers and change-makers. Individually and collectively, Australia's global alumni are helping to shape the world around them.<sup>40</sup>

The Australian Government has been working in partnership with Australian universities and other education institutions to develop the *Alumni Strategy*. Julie Bishop explains that she has long believed in the transformative power of international student exchange, which is why the current government is committed to the NCP.

It is not just the individual student who benefits from the new insights and skills that they acquire - these experiences also help shape the way countries and their citizens engage with, and understand, each other.<sup>41</sup>

DFAT has acknowledged their inability to maintain a record of Colombo Plan alumni from 1950 to 1985, as it predated the era of computer databases, but that they are currently doing more to review and evaluate networks of scholarship alumni.<sup>42</sup> In addition, expatriate communities appreciate the opportunity to be involved in public diplomacy activities with the proviso that activities do not place them in areas of policy discomfort.

Table 3 itemises the government's planned strategic actions, which are informed by the broad experiences, challenges and aspirations of its diplomatic network, global alumni and other stakeholders.

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<sup>40</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy," ed. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia: Commonwealth Government, 2016-2020).

<sup>41</sup> Julie Bishop, "Speech at New Colombo Plan Presentation Dinner," <https://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>42</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

Table 3 DFAT's Global Alumni Strategy Strategic Actions

<b>Connect</b>	<b>Mobilise</b>	<b>Celebrate</b>
We will connect alumni to Australia and each other across disciplines, educational institutions and the globe. We will connect people who work with alumni across the diplomatic network and universities to improve coordination, share good practice and create opportunities for collaboration.	We will mobilise engagement by stimulating productive dialogue and partnerships between alumni, the Australian Government, business and research communities. In turn, alumni will have access to professional development opportunities and networks.	We will celebrate the achievements of Australia's alumni and ongoing linkages between alumni and Australia, especially in the areas of education, science, research and innovation.
<b>Our offer</b> Develop and roll out the Australia Global Alumni interactive website. Establish and resource an online community of practice for people working with alumni. Develop solutions to manage data for highly influential alumni. Identify avenues to facilitate alumni outreach, including through digital engagement.	<b>Our offer</b> Mobilise alumni ambassadors. Engage alumni in policy and trade dialogues and business missions. Foster alumni research connections through research, science and innovation seminars. Establish mentoring linkages between alumni, and foster women's leadership development. Support business linkages.	<b>Our offer</b> Collect and curate a library of digital profiles of Australia's global alumni and of Australians who have studied in the Indo-Pacific region. Profile alumni business connections online and through publications such as Business Envoy, Invite alumni to deliver keynote speeches and join in high-profile regional speaker tours.

This strategy makes several references to alumni influencing their host and home communities. The public diplomacy benefits gained from high-profile alumni, from mobility programs such as Rhodes and Fulbright, are well documented; however, there has been limited interest in investigating the alumni of Australian prestigious international education programs.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.2.4 Foreign Policy White Paper 2017

The fourth document, the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* (the *White Paper*), is used to show how public diplomacy has become an integral part of Australia's foreign affairs. The *White Paper* mentions the need for Australia to have determined diplomacy and strong partnerships to help advance a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.<sup>44</sup> The government

<sup>43</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."; Adam LeAnne, "The Rhodes Scholarship in the Current Era of Student Activism: What Do We Consider "Prestigious" and Who Benefits?," *Journal of College and Character* 17, no. 3 (2016).

<sup>44</sup> This research uses the term Indo-Pacific when referring to Australia's relations with the region. It is defined in the Foreign Policy White Paper as the region ranging from the eastern Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean connected by Southeast Asia, including India, North Asia and the United States.

asserts that, as a nation, Australia is a regional power with global interests making an effort to strengthen the rules-based international order. In the *White Paper's* Introduction, former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull comments:

More than ever, Australia must be sovereign, not reliant. We must take responsibility for our own security and prosperity while recognising we are stronger when sharing the burden of leadership with trusted partners and friends.<sup>45</sup>

The foreword includes: 'While national interests are enduring, the international environment in which we pursue them has changed significantly, and so too has Australia as a nation'.

The Australian Government's intention to continue to balance its alliance with the US against its strong and constructive ties with China is discussed in the *White Paper*. Since the signing of the first Sino-Australian Trade Agreement in 1973, maintaining positive relations has become an integral part of building Australia's economic prosperity and, to a lesser extent, China's. Tensions between the two nations continue and, as the *White Paper* states, Australia will not back down from its existing foreign policy values and alliances, despite the challenges posed by the rise of China. This document contains strong statements asserting that Australia recognises the importance of its alliance with the US because without sustained US support, the effectiveness and liberal character of the rules-based order will decline. It is difficult for Australia, even with strong partnerships, to influence an international system that is predominantly shaped by the actions of much larger nations. In parts of the Indo-Pacific, China's power and influence is growing to match, and in some instances exceed, that of the US. Figure 17 shows the Treasury (Australian projections consistent with the 2015 Intergenerational Report) demonstrating the compounding effect of China's growth, which is accelerating shifts in relative economic and strategic weight. The magnitude of China's economic progress will have flow-on effects in the global economy, creating strategic advantages and challenges, as middle powers such as Australia seek to establish their role in

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<sup>45</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper."

the Asian region while not cutting ties with longstanding allies such as the US.

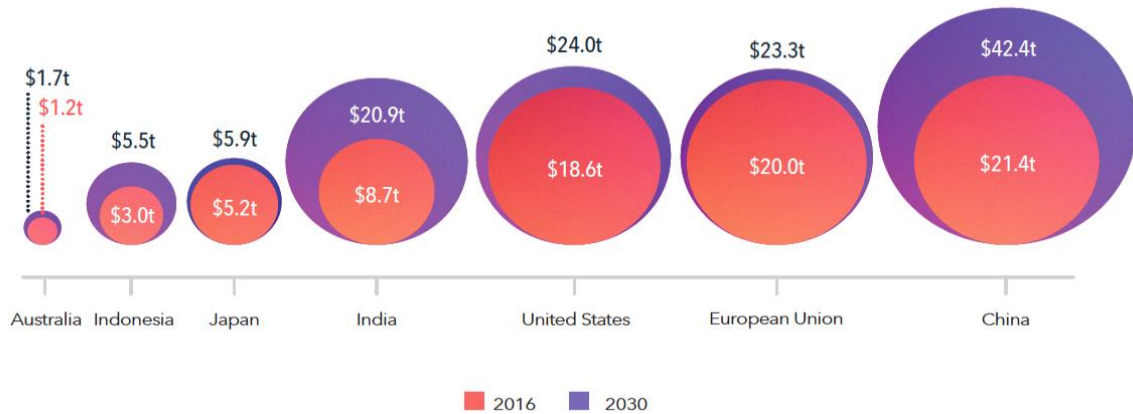


Figure 17 GDP forecasts to 2030<sup>46</sup>

The NCP is highlighted in the *White Paper* as a program designed to support young Australians to embrace study, work and travel in the region as a rite of passage. It is asserted that this will build a generation of Australians with a greater understanding of the Indo-Pacific region. Australia, as one of the most multi-cultural countries in the world, has the ability to persuade and influence others because its enduring strengths are underpinned by democracy, a multicultural society, and a strong economy. Figure 18 shows the percentage of population born overseas.

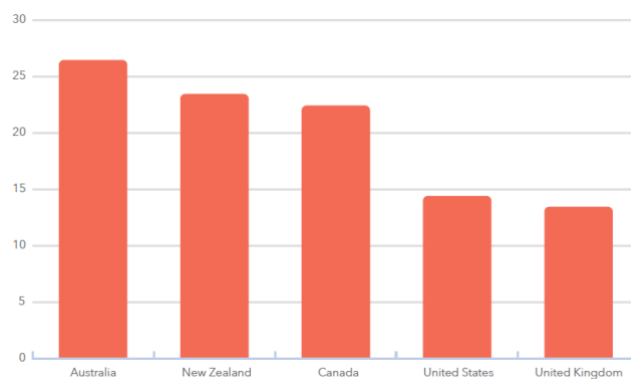


Figure 18 Percentage of population born overseas (select countries)

<sup>46</sup> Figures are in 2016 US\$ trillion, converted on a PPP basis; Australian forecasts are for 2015–16 and 2029–30.

The *White Paper* goes on to outline Australia as one of the top countries in global surveys of soft power. It is argued that Australia's democracy, rule of law, strong economy, quality education, investments in science and innovation, multiculturalism and environmental protections are all sources of positive image and resulting influence. These facets of modern Australia continue to promote a positive image abroad and enable Australia's citizens, and its institutions, to speak with confidence and credibility on the world stage. The *White Paper*, on the one hand, highlights the government's intention to use public diplomacy to influence the region. On the other hand, former Foreign Minister Bishop's international speeches, since the release of the *White Paper*, show a hardening of Australia's position in the region on issues relating to Chinese power (such as the South China Sea). This is currently creating tensions within the Australia-China relationship. The literature shows that to be effective, a country's public diplomacy strategy must be aligned to its foreign policy because any actions by a government will be louder than words. The approach taken in the recently released *White Paper* was the cause of some angst within Australia-China bilateral relations.

### **3.3 The external evaluation of the NCP and analysis of feedback from alumni**

There has been one government-funded *Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan (Evaluation of the NCP)* since its implementation in 2014 which is reviewed in this section. The analysis of the feedback from alumni is also reviewed.

#### **3.3.1 Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan**

One of the challenges for any public diplomacy program is the difficult but not insurmountable question of evaluating the outcomes:

How the outcomes will be identified and measured, not just in terms of exchange activity, but translating the individual and cumulative experiences, exchanges, and interactions generated by

young Australians into soft power outcomes at the programmatic, state and regional levels.<sup>47</sup>

There has been considerable rhetoric around the NCP contributing to Australia's public diplomacy. The *Evaluation of the NCP* focused on six operational objectives and three strategic objectives.<sup>48</sup> The survey of scholarship recipients had a response rate of 70%. The *Evaluation of the NCP* found that operational objective one, to expand the NCP, was exceeded. Between 2014-2018, the NCP scholarship program expanded from 40 scholarships awarded and four host locations to 105 scholarships awarded and 40 host locations in the 2017 round. Operational objective two is not relevant to this research.<sup>49</sup>

Operational objective three, undertaking internships and mentorships, presented some challenges to participants, universities and program administrators. However, on return to Australia, scholars who undertook the internship or mentorship experience reported high levels of satisfaction. Operational objective four is focused on the bilateral relationships facilitated by the NCP. It was noted in the evaluation that bilateral arrangements are difficult without established relationships. It was identified that the NCP has achieved positive impact on the relationships between Australian universities and institutes in the Indo-Pacific region. Operational objective five is focused on the alumni community. It was found, that at this early stage, alumni are motivated to promote the program, but it is less of a priority to scholars than their personal development opportunities.

Operational objective six focuses on the necessity of evaluation and future development. The government ensured that evaluation was embedded in the design of NCP. However, longitudinal evaluation will be difficult as the findings show that universities are currently doing little to track the longer-term impact of NCP on participants' education, research, professional and social achievements. In addition, the contact details on students'

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<sup>47</sup> Byrne and Hall, "Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Potential," p.128.

<sup>48</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting, "Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan."

<sup>49</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting, "Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan."

applications is their university email, which many do not update once they graduate.

Even though the *Evaluation of the NCP* was formative, in that it focuses specifically on questions of design, administration and implementation, nevertheless the authors purport to provide evidence to suggest that the NCP is achieving, or is on track to achieve, its strategic objectives. There is limited discussion on the abilities and willingness of NCP alumni to contribute to Australia's public diplomacy through continued involvement with their host country in the future.

In summary, the findings in the *Evaluation of the NCP* not only highlight the growth of student mobility in the Indo-Pacific region, they also support the claim of universities and government that the NCP has promoted outbound mobility as a pathway for students. The NCP outcomes, and the program's high profile, have firmly positioned it into the planning and strategic hierarchy of Australian higher education institutions. It is unlikely this would have been achieved in the absence of the NCP or a similar program.<sup>50</sup>

### **3.3.2 New Colombo Plan Alumni Survey Year One**

The final document used to inform this thesis was the *New Colombo Plan Alumni Survey – Year One* (the *NCP Alumni Survey*). DFAT implemented the New Colombo Plan Alumni Program to support alumni to maintain connections with each other, the NCP and the Indo-Pacific region as they progress in their lives and careers. In 2016, the Australian Survey Research Group was commissioned by DFAT to develop a survey for NCP Alumni. The online survey was sent to 1,324 NCP alumni with 197 completing the survey and 97 emails bounced back – a response rate of 16 per cent.

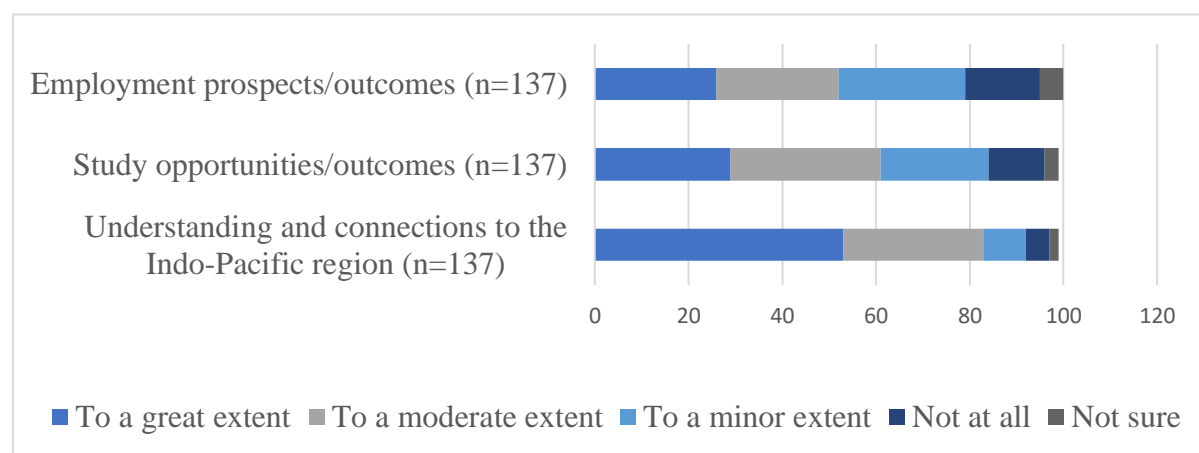
The *NCP Alumni Survey* does not measure participants' contribution to Australia's public diplomacy; however, similar to the evaluation discussed in section 3.3.1, it may be

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<sup>50</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting, "Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan," p.15.

useful for providing broad comments for the planning of future scholarships. While feedback is informative, and may contribute to program developments and improvements, Caitlin Byrne notes that ‘quantitative, activity-based evaluation conducted in the short-term will provide insufficient measure of outcomes.’<sup>51</sup> Instead, a longer-term approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative measures, is needed to allow for the on-going assessment of personal experiences and the future intentions of the NCP scholars when they return to Australia.

From the analysis of the *NCP Alumni Survey*, Figure 19 shows that the majority (83 per cent) of respondents reported that their NCP contacts enhanced their understanding and connections in the Indo-Pacific region greatly (53 per cent) or moderately (30 per cent). Just over half of the respondents reported their employment prospects/outcomes were enhanced by their contacts either to a great or moderate extent.

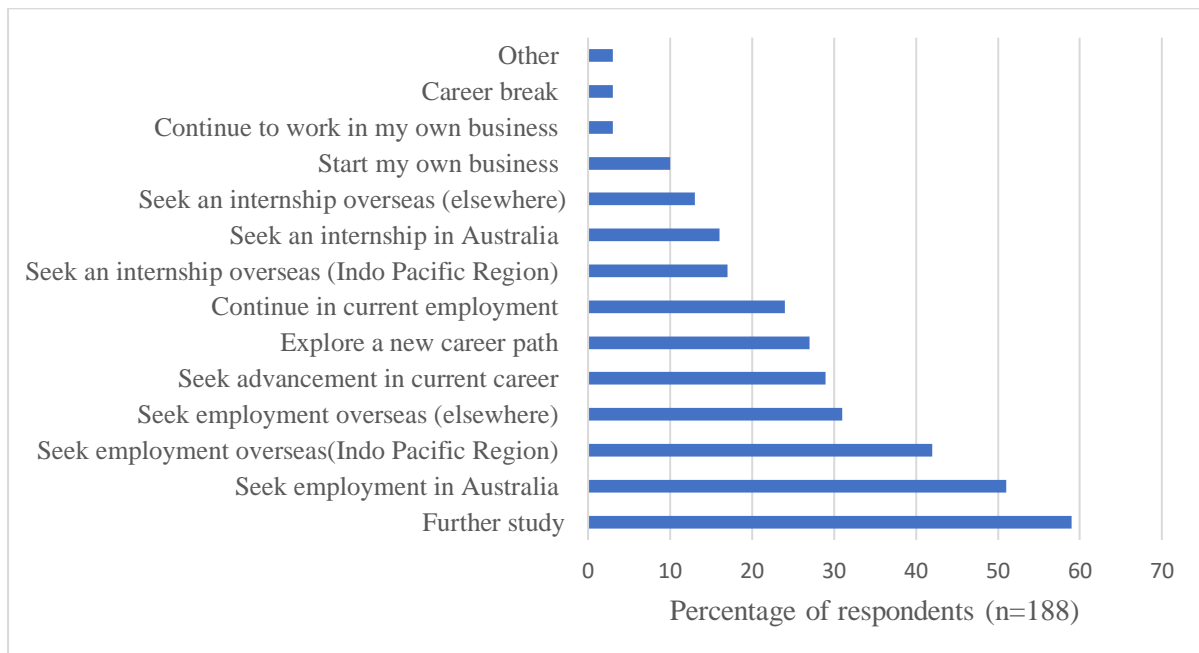


*Figure 19 Contacts and links enhanced employment and understanding of the Indo-Pacific*

The *NCP Alumni Survey* also shows, in Figure 20, that a large proportion of recipients have an interest in finding employment in the Indo-Pacific region. When asked about their plans for the next five years, 3 in 5 respondents (59 per cent) indicated their intent to take on

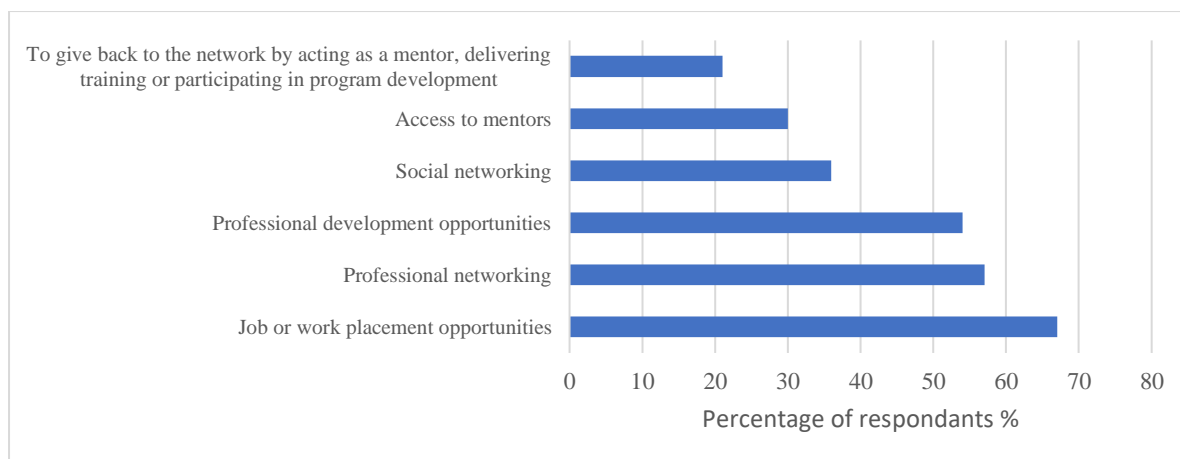
<sup>51</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy in an Australian Context : A Policy-Based Framework to Enhance Understanding and Practice."

further study, just over half (51 per cent) were interested in seeking work in Australia, and 41 per cent seeking work in the Indo-Pacific region.



*Figure 20 Future plans for next five years*

Perhaps not surprisingly, Figure 21 shows that two thirds (67 per cent) of alumni considered job or work placement opportunities as the most useful experience from the NCP Alumni Program. Professional networking (57 per cent) and professional development opportunities (54 per cent) were also popular elements. The NCP administration may be disappointed to see that Figure 21 shows only one in five (20 per cent) were willing to act as a mentor, deliver training or participate in program development.



*Figure 21 Useful elements of the alumni program*

It would seem from the feedback survey that engagement with the alumni network has not been strong, with only 16 per cent of alumni responding to the survey and, of that number, only 29% of respondents had attended an alumni event. In addition, only 4% had participated in NCP alumni online events such as Facebook Live sessions or webinars.

There are several benefits outlined in the evaluation that align with the NCP’s strategic objectives to strengthen understanding, connections and work-readiness of NCP alumni to business and institutions within the Indo-Pacific region. They believed they benefited most from gaining knowledge and understanding of their host country (56 per cent), cross-cultural skills that have helped in their career (49 per cent), confidence in their ability to engage with people in the Indo-Pacific region (55 per cent) and, as a result, 53 per cent were more likely to seek work relating to the Indo-Pacific region.

Figure 22 shows the degree to which the respondents agree with the statements in the graph. It is encouraging that a large percentage reported they had gained cross-cultural skills as part of the NCP experience.

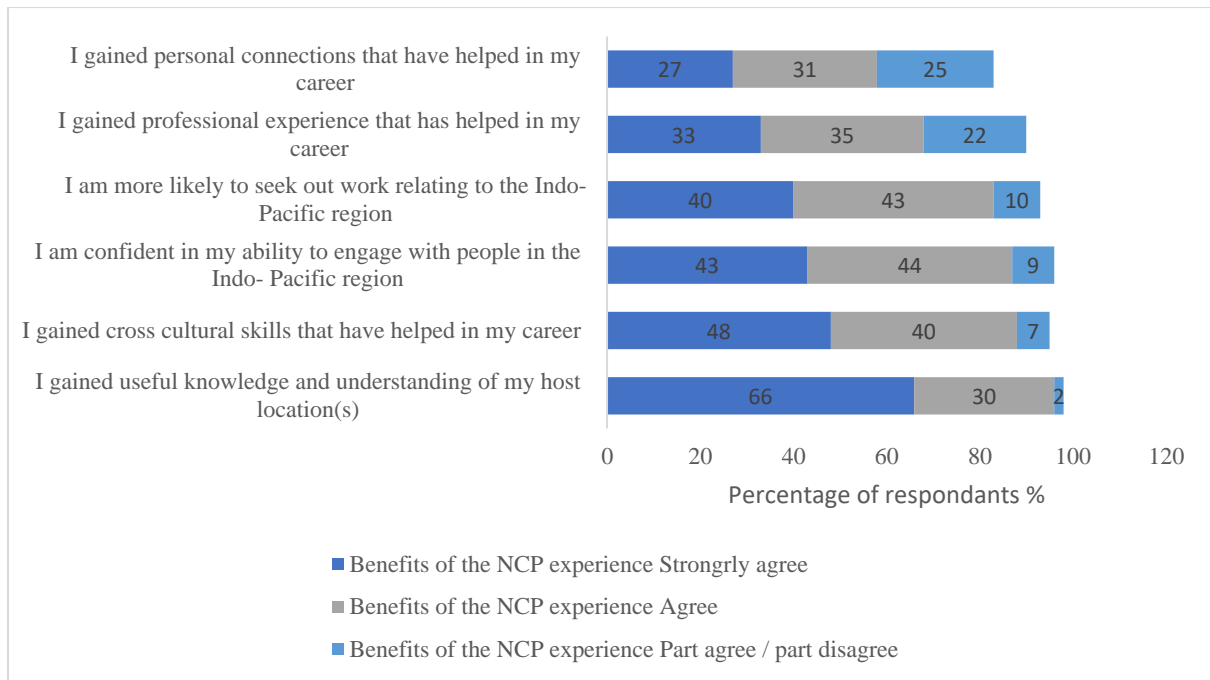


Figure 22 Student perceptions of what they gained on their NCP

In addition, alumni were asked what they valued most about their NCP experience. Figure 23 shows that building networks and gaining an understanding of the host country’s culture were the most valuable elements. This was followed by obtaining a global view and becoming more open minded. Gaining work and practical skills in their host country was selected by 23 per cent of respondents.

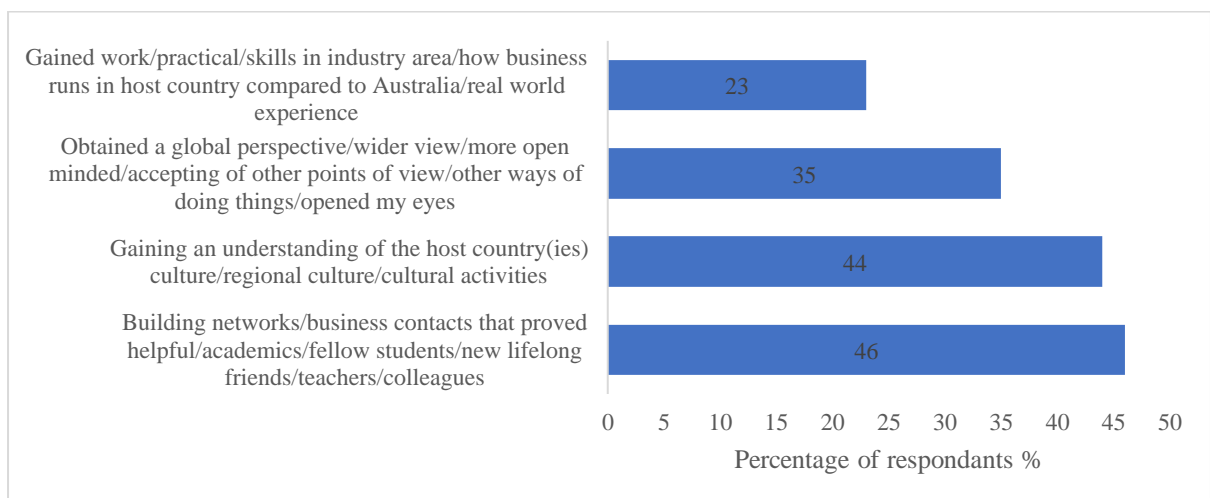


Figure 23 Most valuable experience on NCP program

Over 50 per cent of respondents indicated they were willing to speak at schools, universities, and conferences to promote the NCP. Conversely, this means that many were not willing to give back to the NCP program in return for their funded experience.

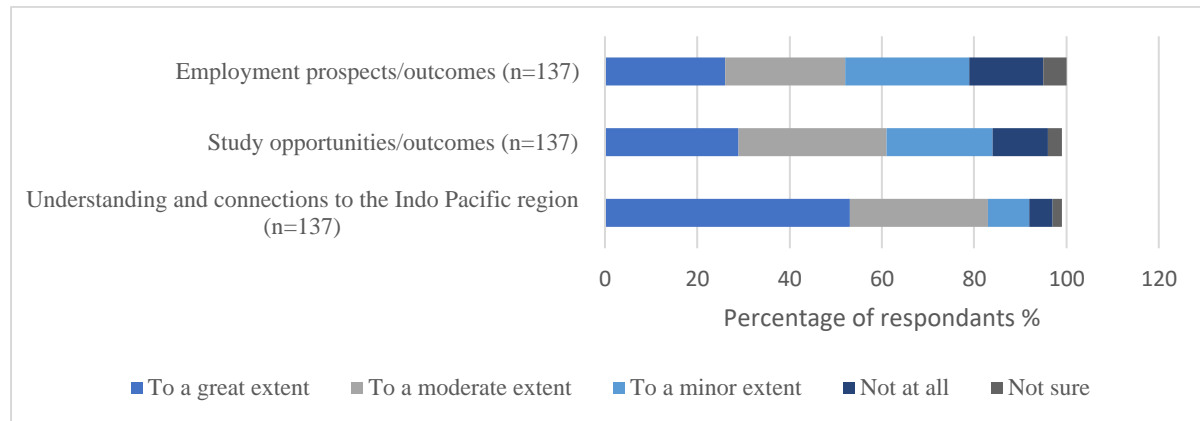


Figure 24 Contacts/networks abilities to enhance job prospects and outcomes

There were a number of positive benefits, as shown in Table 4, alumni gained from their NCP program that align with the strategic objectives of the program. These objectives relate to strengthening understanding, connections and work readiness of NCP alumni for business and institutions within the Indo-Pacific region.

Table 4 Benefits of the NCP program mapped to the program’s objectives

Objective	Measure	(Strongly agree or agree)
Lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia.	I gained useful knowledge and understanding of my host location(s).	97%
Deepen Australia’s people-to-people and institutional relationships with the region.	I gained personal connections that have helped in my career.	59%
	I gained cross cultural skills that have helped in my career.	88%
Increase the number of work-ready Australian graduates with regional experience.	I am confident in my ability to engage with people in the Indo- Pacific region.	87%
	I gained professional experience that has helped in my career.	68%
	I am more likely to seek out work relating to the Indo-Pacific region.	83%

When asked what the most valuable elements of their NCP program were, only 95 alumni responded with less than 50 per cent of respondents identifying any of the elements as valuable. Although only 46 per cent and 44 per cent of alumni responded that building networks and gaining cultural understanding were valuable elements at least this highlights the two key areas in which international education is believed to contribute to public diplomacy.

*Table 5 Most valuable elements of their NCP program*

	<b>% Total mentions (n=95)</b>
Building networks/business contacts that proved helpful/academics/fellow students/new lifelong friends/teachers/colleagues	46
Gaining an understanding of the host country(ies) culture/regional culture/cultural activities	44
Obtained a global perspective/wider view/more open minded/accepting of other points of view/other ways of doing things/opened my eyes	35
Gained work/practical/skills in industry area/how business runs in host country compared to Australia/real world experience	23
Improving host country language skills/immersion/Travelling through the Indo- Pacific region/host country(ies)	20
Inspired me to work/want to work in the Indo-Pacific region/host country/seek opportunities abroad	17
Helped focus/define/future career goals/helped self-reflection and reassessment	16
Built confidence/independence/feel more relaxed/in control/able to step out of comfort zone/pursue my field/confirmed my career or study direction	16
Improving social skills/learning how to approach people differently/interacting culturally/professionally	15
Inspired/prepared me for future study in my chosen field/career	15
Contributed to my degree/thesis/study area/expanded my knowledge in field of study	12
Improving academic skills/adapting to different learning environments/different teaching styles/study practices	9
The program helped me get employment/more professional work/gave me an edge	7
I could not have had the experience without NCP funding/maximised exchange	4
Enhanced research skills/fieldwork skills/opened academic doors	4
Other	5

The findings in *the NCP Alumni Report* show that results were positive overall. The majority of alumni who responded, stated that their NCP experience was worthwhile and will

have a lasting impact on their personal, professional and academic lives but as Lowe states these results should be treated with caution as students who receive funding for an overseas experience are likely to respond positively to a sponsor's evaluation.<sup>52</sup> In addition, with less than 100 responses to certain questions from a sample of 1,324 alumni this low response rate cannot be easily generalised.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter described the context of Australia's use of international education as a tool of public diplomacy. The discussion of four Australian Government documents concerning public diplomacy, the *PD Senate Inquiry*, DFAT's *PD Strategy*, *Foreign Policy White Paper* and the *Alumni Engagement Strategy* identified the level of importance the NCP and ASCs have in Sino-Australian relations. The *Evaluation of the NCP* and the *Alumni Feedback Survey Report*, focused on the six operational and administrative outcomes and with limited response rates caution should be taken in making assertions regarding the effectiveness of these programs. The NCP alumni's satisfaction with their experience and future plans were also discussed.

The next chapter reduces ambiguity about the reasoning behind the thesis research framework and methodology. An explanation of the two theories from the parent fields of psychology and communication studies is given. Chapter Four, will also explain and justify the use of mixed methodology in this study.

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<sup>52</sup> Riegel, "Residual Effects of Exchange-of-Persons."; Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The 'bottom line' is not the only measure of effectiveness - what else should be used?<sup>1</sup>

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter will outline how two theories from the parent fields of psychology and communication studies are used to investigate the effectiveness of international education programs as public diplomacy. By using these two theories as a framework, I aimed to demonstrate how public diplomacy can apply the ideas of other fields to better understand the theoretical underpinnings of public diplomacy practices, such as government-funded education programs. Finally, this chapter will explain and justify the use of interpretative inquiry and mixed methodology, through the use of content analysis, interviews and questionnaires, to investigate the three research questions that align with the hypotheses.

The three research questions are:

1. Why does the Australian Government fund international education programs in China?
2. Do Australian Government-funded international education programs in China result in students and academics building sustainable, personal and professional networks of influence?
3. What conditions of contact are necessary within Australian Government-funded international education programs in China to build mutual understanding and positively influence the participants' views of each other's nations?

The three hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1: The Australian Government funds international education programs in China as it believes participants will contribute to the government's public diplomacy through building positive relationships and mutual understanding between the people of Australia and China.

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<sup>1</sup> D.L. Blenkhorn, "The Use of 'Warm Fuzzies' to Assess Organizational Effectiveness," *Journal of General Management* 21, no. 2 (1995): p.41.

Hypothesis 2: Engaged opinion leaders shape elite opinion and positively influence public opinion within Australia's bilateral relationship with China. This hypothesis is based on the understanding that individuals will share their knowledge with peers and act as 'influencers' in their communities.

Hypothesis 3: The NCP and ASCs provide the necessary conditions of contact for Australian and Chinese individuals to contribute towards the goal of mutual understanding, positively influencing views of each other's nations.

#### **4.1 Research theoretical framework**

The research framework is based on two theories of how international education is thought to work as a tool of public diplomacy, addressing Patton's challenge in which he asserts that the central issue is to do research that will actually be used.<sup>2</sup> Much of the literature on public diplomacy has been written by former practitioners investigating the US, based on their observations.<sup>3</sup> Few studies have applied the theories of the parent fields: psychology, communications studies and international relations.

With their explorations of exchange and public diplomacy theory, notable exceptions are Giles Scott-Smith and Bettie.<sup>4</sup> Their approach demonstrates how public diplomacy researchers can apply the ideas of other fields to better understand the theoretical underpinnings behind public diplomacy practices. Rather than invent new theoretical constructs for the study of public diplomacy, this research will build on Scott-Smith's and Bettie's work using

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<sup>2</sup> Patton, *Utilization-Focussed Evaluation*, p.xiv.

<sup>3</sup> W.P. Kiehl, "America's Dialogue with the World" (Washington, U.S.A.: Public Diplomacy Council, George Washington University, 2006); Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings*; Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas*; W.P. Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth* (New York, U.S.A.: Public Affairs Press, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy," pp.50-56; Scott-Smith, "Academic Work from a Comparative Perspective: A Survey of Faculty Working Time across 13 Countries."; Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2009); Scott-Smith, "Academic Work from a Comparative Perspective: A Survey of Faculty Working Time across 13 Countries."; Scott-Smith, "Her Rather Ambitious Washington Program: Margaret Thatcher's International Visitor Program Visit to the United States in 1967."

interdisciplinary relevant concepts from other fields. The two theories being used are the contact hypothesis, and the development of intercultural understanding; and the two-step hypothesis, and the development of a network of opinion leaders. This will enable the thesis to benefit from existing research and apply it in new ways to public diplomacy practices.

#### **4.1.1 The contact hypothesis in the development of intercultural understanding**

The intergroup contact hypothesis gained notoriety after World War II when group prejudice was seen as the cause of negative stereotyping for outsider groups, and was largely the product of ignorance. The most effective way to dispel such negative stereotypes was to increase the contact between people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>5</sup> The basic premise of the contact hypothesis is that prejudice is based on generalisations of a group based on a lack of and/or misinformation, which can be reduced as they learn more about the other group.<sup>6</sup>

The primary assumption behind international education programs is the idea that contact between individuals of different groups will lead to increased mutual understanding.<sup>7</sup> The reduction of stereotypes and prejudice is one of the most frequently expressed objectives of these programs.

At a time when tensions were high between black and white Americans, sociologists were interested in two scenarios in which direct contact had led to positive intergroup relations. Contact between black and white Americans through military service and professional baseball had proven to reduce prejudice between the two groups. Although these two examples seemed to support the contact hypothesis, racial relations between black and white Americans in the

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<sup>5</sup> R.K. Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded," *Academic Questions* 21, no. 4 (2008): p.412.

<sup>6</sup> E. Schiappa, M. Allen, and P.B. Gregg, "Parasocial Relationships and Television: A Meta-Analysis of the Effects," *Communication Monographs* 72, no. 1 (2007): p.93.

<sup>7</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

South at this time was a clear counter example.<sup>8</sup> Neili researched reasons why at the same time, in the same country, with the same diverse groups there was one situation in which black baseball players and military personnel were celebrated, while enhanced contact between the two groups in the South did not reduce prejudice. Through his work it became clear that there were conditions under which the contact hypothesis could be successful in reducing prejudice and increasing cooperation, and critics sought to better understand these differences.

Interpretations of Allport's original work since 1954 resulted in social science researchers discrediting the contact hypothesis based on a misunderstanding that contact alone led to a reduction in prejudice. Allport and others made the distinction that contact alone can actually lead to an increase in stereotyping and prejudice; therefore key conditions under which contact led to a reduction in prejudice were identified. As research into the contact hypothesis evolved, social scientists, in an attempt to refine the theory, created what was later referred to as an 'ever-expanding laundry list' of conditions of contact, which in reality was difficult to implement.<sup>9</sup> This process created a situation in which the theory itself was becoming redundant because real life situations that ensured contact would consist of a dozen specific criteria were rare. It became essential to better understand the quality, as well as quantity, of contact that most effectively led to conditions for change.<sup>10</sup> A consensus among contact specialists led to the fine-tuning of conditions, which Brown categorised into four conditions.<sup>11</sup> Equal status contact, common goals and co-operation, social and institutional support, and high acquaintance potential are used as conditions of contact and these form the basis of the research framework in this thesis.

The first condition, equal status contact, means that existing inequalities must be

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<sup>8</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded," p.413.

<sup>9</sup> T.F. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," *Annual review of psychology* 49, no. 1 (1998): p.67.

<sup>10</sup> A. Tomovska, "Contact as a Tool for Peace Education? Reconsidering the Contact Hypothesis from the Children's Perspectives," *Journal of Peace Education* 7, no. 2 (2010): p.122.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*.

removed as much as possible to enable participating groups to interact on a basis of equal status within the situation. Contact relationships during internships, lecturer-student, interactions between Australian and Chinese students and research collaborations may not be equal and, as a result, not fulfil the contact conditions for prejudice reduction. Secondly, the condition of common goals and co-operation means that a lack of co-operation or the promotion of competition between two groups can often lead to prejudice increasing, as negative stereotypes are used to compete against each other. Common goals are not always the case for exchange participants, internees and research collaborations.

As well as common goals, when using the contact hypothesis as a theory there must be an element of intergroup cooperation. As with the idea of common goals, the degree of co-operation depends upon the project in which each participant is engaged. Without intervention, the element of intergroup cooperation cannot be relied upon as a feature of exchange programs or academics' professional roles.

Thirdly, social and institutional support means that there must be top-down support for positive change between two groups leading to an increase in normative behaviours. It is likely that the NCP scholarship and ASC programs would meet this condition, because the contact is supported and facilitated by the government, funding bodies, and the host and home universities.

Finally, high acquaintance potential means that contact must be at a sufficient frequency and duration. It is likely that the NCP scholarship recipients and academics undertaking research would fulfil this final condition due to contact being encouraged and promoted through diverse influential sources.

Overall, the importance of the presence of these conditions means it is necessary to investigate whether the NCP and ASC programs fulfil the conditions for effective prejudice reduction as set out by the contact hypothesis. Universities are considered the ideal

environment to promote positive intergroup relations; however, even though the majority of universities have identified positive intergroup interactions as a priority, they often fail to capitalise on student and staff diversity.<sup>12</sup> Research has shown that without programmed intervention, such contact offers few gains. Yet, when staff do program positive intergroup interactions, students engage in significantly more intercultural relations.<sup>13</sup> Others go on to say that unscaffolded interactions can actually lead to an increase in prejudice or intergroup anxiety. Brown and Sherif argue that scaffolded environments, with curriculum alignment, task management, and targeted professional development, yield more positive change than programs that do not have any intervention.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, cultural exchanges between students must have clearly defined goals and opportunities for cooperation that may include field trips with a cultural focus and a corresponding assessment and/or exchanges, culminating with reflective reports around an intercultural theme, in order to create conditions that are necessary for a reduction in prejudice or any other change to occur.<sup>15</sup> Although international education programs are based on the notion that these experiences will lead to a more interculturally competent workforce, more needs to be done to optimise the relational benefits of these programs between the home and host countries.<sup>16</sup>

A recent study conducted in 2018 used the contact hypothesis to explore news consumption as a form of parasocial contact with Muslims and how it related to attitudes toward already formed negative stereotypes.<sup>17</sup> It was found that those with negative attitudes

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<sup>12</sup> Lodewijk Van Oord, "After Culture: Intergroup Encounters in Education," *Journal of Research in International Education* 7, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>13</sup> C. Hughes, "How Can International Education Help Reduce Students' Prejudice?," 44 3, no. pp.395-410 (2014): p.398.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*; M. Sherif, *In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation* (Boston, U.S.A.: Houton Mifflin, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*; Sherif, *In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation*.

<sup>16</sup> J. Jackson, "Preparing Students for the Global Workplace: The Impact of a Semester Abroad," *Language and Intercultural Communication* 15, no. 1 (2015): p.77.

<sup>17</sup> Jessica R. Abrams, Karen J. McGaughey, and Hannah Haghighat, "Attitudes toward Muslims: A Test of the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis and Contact Theory," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 47, no. 4 (2018).

toward the Muslim population were more likely to watch news that aligned with their views with limited to no real world contact. This heightens the importance of intermediaries in media consumption to ensure varied opinions that result in a more realistic representation. Recently, the Chinese Government has requested Australian media cease publishing negative news stories about China. At this particular time having Australians that have lived in China and have a more realistic view of the culture would help shift public opinion to be less exaggerated as reported in the media.

Universities are considered the ideal environment for people of different cultures to learn from one another but, without the right conditions of contact, simply being at the same university does not lead to improved cultural awareness. It is not difficult for any staff member within a university setting to identify cultural groupings in which university campuses are divided into ethnocentric social groups that come naturally to their students. An ongoing longitudinal study supervised by Princeton sociologist Douglas Massey tracked freshmen college students at more than two dozen colleges in 1999. In his work he found that colleges were quickly divided into two subpopulations, and that students quickly came to understand their university as being divided into the perceived academically “superior” white and Asian students, versus “inferior” Latinos and Blacks.<sup>18</sup>

Simply positioning culturally diverse students together on campus does not guarantee a more valuable educational and culturally enriching experience but rather, under the wrong circumstances, these interactions can lead to the opposite result.<sup>19</sup> Within each of the programs investigated in this study, Australian students and Chinese academics may interact academically and coexist harmoniously but, in reality, these intergroup relations may not be any deeper than in-class pleasantries. As an example, Australia has the largest intake of Chinese

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<sup>18</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded," p.424.

<sup>19</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded," p.417.

international students, yet Australian students are still considered to be monocultural. Heyward identifies this difference as the distinction between international education and intercultural literacy. He found that the interculturally literate student will possess the understandings, competencies and attitudes necessary to successfully study and work in a cross-cultural or pluralist manner.

For this reason, researchers have begun to identify the process of students moving from their initial monocultural state to a more integrated pluralism, framing culture shock as a phase of learning and personal growth rather than as an illness.<sup>20</sup> Bennett suggests pairing students with a cultural mediator as a way of negotiating common goals and opportunities for cooperation.<sup>21</sup> It is argued that it is the social context in which these interactions occur that makes the most difference, meaning students should be encouraged to develop friendships through out-of-class interactions that are voluntary.<sup>22</sup>

Extending Brislin's work, in which he built on Allport's original research regarding the use of the contact hypothesis in the reduction of prejudice, I will ascertain how well the contact hypothesis fits the intergroup contact scenario within my research.<sup>23</sup> As with most case studies, the NCP scholarships and ASC collaborations do not take place in a vacuum. External factors can and do influence contact outcomes.<sup>24</sup> Some people may be so rigid in their prejudices that any group behavior outside their comfort zone may be interpreted as supporting their initial attitude. Brislin states that researchers must realise the possibilities of previous experiences as well as some background factors that participants bring to the contact situation.<sup>25</sup> Based on

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<sup>20</sup> M. Heyward, "From International to Intercultural Redefining the International School for a Globalized World," *Journal of Research in International Education* (2002).

<sup>21</sup> M. Bennett, *Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (Yarmouth, U.K.: Intercultural Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Heyward, "From International to Intercultural Redefining the International School for a Globalized World."

<sup>23</sup> Richard Brislin, *Understanding Culture's Influence on Behaviour* (Fort Worth, U.S.A.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1945).

<sup>24</sup> Neil Macrae, Charles Stangor, and Miles Hewstone, *Stereotypes and Stereotyping* (New York, U.S.A.: Guilford Press, 1996), pp.327-28.

<sup>25</sup> Brislin, *Understanding Culture's Influence on Behaviour*, p.197.

Peterson's work, Australia will never change the opinions of people who are deeply entrenched in their anti-China beliefs, and it would be a waste of resources to try.<sup>26</sup> Resources are more efficiently used engaging with moderates, who might be persuaded to change their thinking.

Although the origins of intergroup contact hypothesis were focused on a majority group's negative attitudes toward a minority group, an important shift in literature has been to refocus on bidirectional relationships.<sup>27</sup> The origins of the contact hypothesis were based on highly prejudiced individuals with less research focusing on changing stereotypes and assisting with the development of more genuine in-depth interactions between groups. Currently it would seem that funding international education programs is done on the assumption of a Utopian environment, in which promoting contact will lead to a better understanding. The likelihood that this environment exists is not high, which may lead to government officials and university executives implementing programs based simply on generic assumptions that are almost devoid of meaning.<sup>28</sup>

The qualitative approach used in this research will enable an analysis of how and when certain conditions lead to improvements in breaking down stereotypes. Lowe asserted the importance of hearing students' voices when undertaking research into their professional or personal outcomes achieved living abroad.<sup>29</sup> It is pointless making a list of desired conditions of contact without explaining how such conditions might be made relevant to the experiences of ordinary scholars in ordinary university environments, or without explaining how they might be implemented in particular contexts.<sup>30</sup> By surveying and interviewing NCP scholars, interviewing experts in the field, and undertaking a desktop audit of research funding outcomes

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<sup>26</sup> Peterson, "Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism."

<sup>27</sup> Nielsen and Smyth, "The Contact Hypothesis in Urban China: The Perspective of Minority Status Migrant Workers," p.471.

<sup>28</sup> J. Dixon, K. Durrheim, and C. Tredoux, "Beyond the Optimal Contact Strategy: A Reality Check for the Contact Hypothesis," *American Psychologist* 60, no. 7 (2005): p.698.

<sup>29</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

<sup>30</sup> Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux, "Beyond the Optimal Contact Strategy: A Reality Check for the Contact Hypothesis."

for academics within the ASCs, this thesis will identify the examples of contact and code them under the prescribed conditions of the contact hypothesis and other conditions identified by the participants as important for success.

#### **4.1.2 Two-step hypothesis and the development of a network of opinion leaders**

Another common assumption of how higher education exchanges and collaborations operate is focused on the ability to influence individuals, particularly those in leadership positions, who might go on to persuade others. It is expected that participants of the NCP and ASCs are the leaders, or future leaders, of a target society. Their views will be shared with others in their society and, it is assumed, will influence and shape public opinion. One participant will influence many others, multiplying the influence across the society, hence it is known as the ‘multiplier effect’ or ‘the opinion leader concept’.

Prime Ministers such as Abbott and Hawke talk about their time as Rhodes scholars studying at Oxford: ‘By occupying high offices in public life, they are able to translate their personal experience into policies and programs which benefit both their host and home countries. It is thought that over the years this will contribute to the good relations between the two countries’.<sup>31</sup> It was this experience that influenced Abbott to introduce the NCP scholarships in 2015. Abbott, throughout the consultation process, often expressed his belief that this program would assist his vision for Australians to become more Asian literate and that participants would contribute to Australia’s public diplomacy efforts in the region.<sup>32</sup>

Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet first studied opinion leaders in *The Erie County Study*, the results of which were published in a book titled *The People’s Choice*.<sup>33</sup> This study

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<sup>31</sup> H. Kellermann, *Cultural Relations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Educational Exchange Program between the United States and Germany, 1945-1954* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 1978).

<sup>32</sup> Expert Roundtable for the NCP, "Expert Input at Policy Round Table on New Colombo Plan".

<sup>33</sup> P.F. Lazarsfeld, B. Berelson, and H. Gaudet, *The People's Choice* (Columbia University Press: New York, U.S.A., 1948).

investigated the 1948 US presidential campaign and voting behaviours, assessing vote formation during the six months leading up to the election. It found that although the media was influential most people were persuaded by the people around them who were identified as opinion leaders (colleagues, friends, etc.). As part of the data gathering process for the book, opinion leaders were identified by asking: have you tried to convince anyone of your political ideas lately; and, has anyone asked your advice on a political question recently? Anderson and Melen describe these intermediaries as playing one of four roles: national leader (i.e. ministers), community leaders (i.e. heads of local organisations), opinion leaders who are in touch with an important informal group in which they exert influence, or opinion leaders who discuss topical problems within a limited circle such as friends and colleagues.<sup>34</sup> Abbott, in a speech at Queen's College Oxford, stated:

There's no doubt that the Rhodes Scholarship has been a remarkable vehicle for building international understanding and for helping individuals and the countries they might lead to come closer to being their best selves. Similar thinking was responsible for the Colombo Plan which has thus far been Australia's most effective exercise in the projection of soft power.<sup>35</sup>

In a study by Van Den Ban, farmers were asked three questions to identify the opinion leaders within a local farming area.<sup>36</sup> They were asked: Which two farmers do you (1) ask for advice when you are not sure of the merits of new farming methods; (2) consider to be good farmers; and, (3) talk to most frequently? The answers to these questions allowed the researcher to quantify how often each farmer was mentioned in the replies to each of these questions. This study found that opinion leaders are often in the same primary group as those they influence. However, for situations very important to them (e.g. their livelihood as farmers in this study) people preferred to seek advice from someone with a higher social status.

Valente and Pumpuang documented the manner in which opinion leaders can be

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<sup>34</sup> Anderson and Melén, "Lazarsfeld's Two-Step Hypothesis: Data from Some Swedish Surveys."

<sup>35</sup> Tony Abbott, "Tony Abbott at Oxford: On Tradition, a Revived Colombo Plan, and Decision-Making," <http://australianpolitics.com/2012/12/14/tony-abbott-speech-to-queens-college-oxford.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Everett M. Rogers and David G. Cartano, "Methods of Measuring Opinion Leadership," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1962).

identified, recruited and trained in a public health setting.<sup>37</sup> The study is relevant to long-term public diplomacy strategies, such as exchanges, as it raises the question: can an individual be identified, recruited and trained to be an opinion leader? Valente and Pumpugang were particularly interested in how opinion leaders can affect behaviour change.<sup>38</sup> They found that opinion leaders tend to monitor the climate of opinion and exercise their influence once benefits are obvious and its apparent that norms are establishing.

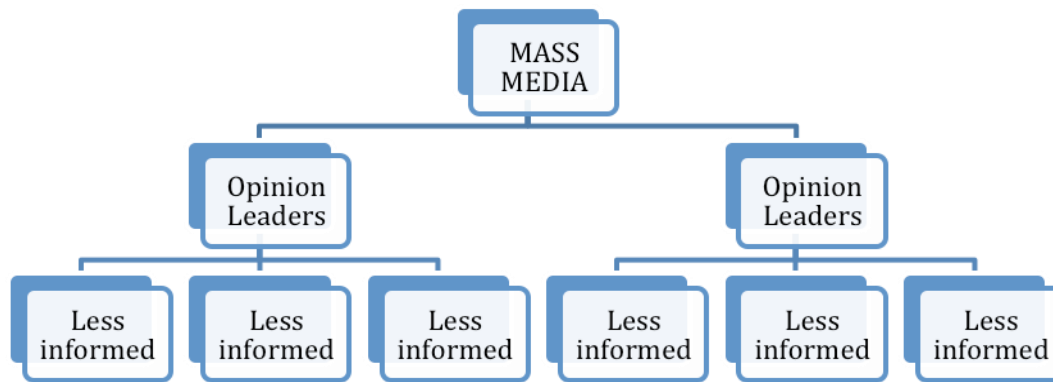
Much of the research conducted into opinion leadership is quantitative, using metrics to establish networks of influence that identify opinion leaders as parent nodes and the people they influence as child nodes. In the case of NCP scholarship recipients and ASC academics, however, they are already nominated as potential leaders by the government or within the university. Therefore, this thesis is focused on the students' and academics' perception of themselves as opinion leaders and whether they believe their time working and studying in China allowed them to establish sustainable networks. In order to examine the effectiveness of these students and academics as opinion leaders in China, it is necessary to use the participants' voices through a qualitative approach. Robinson depicted the original two-step flow of ideas from mass media through to opinion leaders, and down to the less interested, as represented in Figure 25 in its basic form.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas W. Valente and Patchareeya Pumpuang, "Identifying Opinion Leaders to Promote Behavior Change," *Health Education & Behavior* 34, no. 6 (2007).

<sup>38</sup> Valente and Pumpuang, "Identifying Opinion Leaders to Promote Behavior Change."

<sup>39</sup> J.P. Robinson, "Interpersonal Influence in Election Campaigns Two Step-Flow Hypotheses," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1976).



*Figure 25 Original two-step hypothesis*

This vertical depiction of flows was deemed too simplistic as it did not consider interactions with others (e.g. friendship, networks, etc.) and therefore the flow of communication was far more horizontal than as depicted in Figure 25. Robinson revised this two-step model to include the horizontal influence that occurs between opinion leaders.<sup>40</sup> Although the origin of the two-step hypothesis is the diffusion of information from mass media, the same principles have been applied to other initial sources of information, such as a study of the 1968 election in which information filtered down from other sources. These sources included bumper stickers, attendance at meetings and badges and other forms of advertising.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, "Interpersonal Influence in Election Campaigns Two Step-Flow Hypotheses."

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, "Interpersonal Influence in Election Campaigns Two Step-Flow Hypotheses."

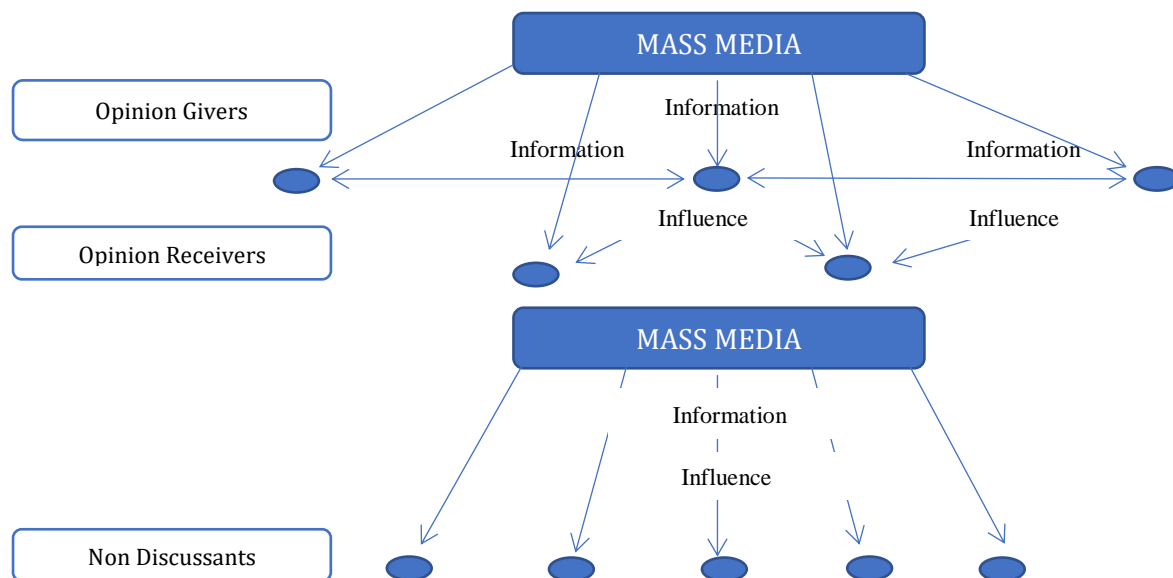


Figure 26 Robinson's (1976) adapted version of the two-step flow of communication

Troldahl revised the two-step process again by adding the concept of balance theory, and considering two cycles rather than two steps.<sup>42</sup> Imbalance occurs when a person (opinion leader or follower) receives a message that is inconsistent with their current beliefs. The first cycle is the opinion leader seeking advice from an intermediary and being influenced to change behaviour. The second cycle involves the follower going through the same process with the opinion leader.

NCP exchange programs and ASC research collaborations are offered as examples of the revised two-step flow of communication. A student returning from a government-funded scholarship studying and interning in China would be considered by some members of the community as knowledgeable or even an 'expert' on Sino-Australian relations. This third model predicts that when followers receive information that is inconsistent with their views (i.e. news relating to China that is contrary to their current beliefs) they will initiate the second cycle of communication to clarify this inconsistency with an opinion leader. In a case where

<sup>42</sup> V.C. Troldahl, "A Field Test of a Modified "Two-Step Flow of Communication" Model," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1966): p.612.

the student is also unsure or confused by a message received, they will seek advice from a higher level (professional) opinion leader (ie. Chinese lecturers, mentors or Chinese friends from their exchange experience). Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller, in an investigation of opinion leaders in agenda setting, found that people make sense of messages they receive in the media by consulting with their personal networks.<sup>43</sup> These interpersonal interactions were found to act like a bridging function in agenda setting.

Recent additions to the opinion leadership literature have placed more emphasis on a person's connections with their wider community rather than with the position they hold.<sup>44</sup> Watts and Dodds updated opinion leadership in their study into 'a series of computer simulations of interpersonal influence processes'.<sup>45</sup> They argued that influence was not driven by opinion leaders but rather by a critical mass of easily influenced individuals.<sup>46</sup> Opinion leadership advocates would argue that a student is just as capable of exerting influence in a network as a CEO would be, given they are exposed to the right people and empowered to take on that role.

## **4.2 Research strategy**

The purpose, rather than the technique, should determine the appropriate research strategy for a study.<sup>47</sup> Zikmund further identifies three major types of research projects as exploratory, descriptive and causal research. The most appropriate research type is decided by the clarity with which the research problem can be defined.

1. Exploratory research is chosen when only the general problem is known. It is not

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<sup>43</sup> L. Erbring, E.N. Goldenberg, and A.H. Miller, "Front-Page News and Real-World Cues: A New Look at Agenda-Setting by the Media," *American Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 1 (1980): p.18.

<sup>44</sup> E. Dubois and D. Gaffney, "The Multiple Facets of Influence Identifying Political Influentials and Opinion Leaders on Twitter," *American Behavioral Scientist* 58, no. 10 (2014): p.1262.

<sup>45</sup> D.J. Watts and P.S. Dodds, "Influentials, Networks, and Public Opinion Formation," *Journal of Consumer Research* 34, no. 4 (2007): p.441.

<sup>46</sup> Watts and Dodds, "Influentials, Networks, and Public Opinion Formation."

<sup>47</sup> Zikmund, *Business Research Methods*.

conducted to provide conclusive evidence but to clarify problems.

2. Descriptive research is conducted when there is some understanding of the nature of the problem (it is used to provide an accurate description of the problem).
3. Causal research identifies cause-and-effect relationships when the research problem has been narrowly defined.

Hussey and Hussey go further to suggest that the four purposes of research are to be exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and predictive.<sup>48</sup> Explanatory (or analytical) research is similar to descriptive research; however, it goes beyond describing characteristics to analysing how and why something has happened. Similarly, Miles and Huberman break analysis into exploring and describing or explaining and predicting. Unlike Hussey and Hussey, they suggest that these are not two clearly distinct areas and that there is no clear boundary between ‘describing and explaining’.<sup>49</sup>

This research seeks to explore the concepts developed in the literature review. In particular, it seeks to address the research problem by investigating how NCP alumni and ASC academics are developed into opinion leaders who contribute to Australia’s public diplomacy efforts in China. The purpose of the research is exploratory because government and universities assume that, through the provision of funding and opportunities, recipients will become opinion leaders through the development of people-to-people links. More research is needed to understand people-to-people links because the required conditions to make participants willing and able to not only build people-to-people links but sustain their contacts into the future is not currently known.

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<sup>48</sup> J. Hussey and R. Hussey, *Business Research: A Practice Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students* (London, U.K.: MacMillan Business, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> Hussey and Hussey, *Business Research: A Practice Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*; M.B. Miles and A.M. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publication, 1994).

### 4.3 Research paradigm

This section examines the two major paradigms present in the research literature and justifies the selection of the interpretive paradigm as appropriate for this research. For the purpose of this research the following nomenclature is used. Logical-positivism, covers methods that test hypothetical-deductive generalisations. These are methods that start with a well-defined hypothesis and, from this, seek to prove or disprove the hypothesis. Interpretive inquiry refers to methods that use naturalistic approaches that draw on induction and seek to understand experience. This is an exploratory approach open to new information.

Whilst the paradigms are often presented as a dichotomy, it is contended that this exclusivity need not be the case. Robson and Yin suggest 'mix and match' approaches according to what best fits the study as the preferred strategy.<sup>50</sup> 'Epistemological debates ultimately do not describe, explain, predict, or control phenomena'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Sinclair and Hogan share Robson's and Yin's sentiments, that is, suitability for the research is critical.<sup>52</sup> Zikmund states that there need not be a polar choice, rather there are intermediate choices available to the researcher.<sup>53</sup>

To justify the approach used in this research, the following discussion reviews the two paradigms of logical-positivism and interpretative inquiry. This is followed by a review of holism and reductionism. Finally, this section concludes with a synthesis of the concepts discussed.

#### 4.3.1 Logical-positivism

According to Limerick & Cunningham, the logical-positivism paradigm is characterised

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<sup>50</sup> C. Robson, *Real World Research* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1993); Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

<sup>51</sup> R. Sinclair and R. Hogan, "The Answer Is Still Yes: But What Was the Question?," *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 32, no. 4 (1996): p.438.

<sup>52</sup> Robson, *Real World Research*; Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*; Sinclair and Hogan, "The Answer Is Still Yes: But What Was the Question?."

<sup>53</sup> Zikmund, *Business Research Methods*.

by the replicability of results, specificity in the definition (i.e. a sound hypothesis), causal relationships, environmental control (i.e. laboratory conditions) and a rigorous research design in which there may be control groups and control of extraneous variables.<sup>54</sup>

While positivism has advantages, it also has critics. Positivism has been accused of structuring questions and answers to simplify quantitative processing.<sup>55</sup> Dainty further argues that logical-positivism governs questions by including or excluding data. In discussing the emphasis on the positivist approach in his doctoral research he states, ‘it seems strange that, in general, the emphasis is on how orthodoxly a subject may be studied, rather than on how important it is as a subject.’<sup>56</sup> As there is more to public diplomacy than research, applying research usefully in international relations can be exceptionally difficult. Thus, it is suggested that there is a danger that the philosophy may over-ride the core objective of investigation, which is to provide research that can be used as an aid to government and university decision making.

Yin states that social science research is usually based on the collection and analysis of empirical data.<sup>57</sup> Findings and conclusions are then derived from these data. Logical-positivism is the philosophical school of thought that espouses this practice, which is the foundation for the natural sciences. Sometimes an applied approach is preferable. For international relations research, ‘the case may be particularly strong and go beyond abstract philosophical concerns, because of the potential use of the research findings.’<sup>58</sup> As highlighted in the literature review, no specific theories for successful implementation of public diplomacy exist. Therefore, this thesis is using theories from the fields of psychology and communication. As Cunningham

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<sup>54</sup> D. Limerick and B. Cunnington, *Managing the New Organisation* (Sydney, Australia: Business and Professional Publishing, 1993).

<sup>55</sup> E. Gummesson, *Qualitative Methods in Management Research* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> R. Dainty, "What Is Management Research?," in *The Handbook of Management Research*, ed. Craig Smith and P. Dainty (1991), p.63.

<sup>57</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

<sup>58</sup> Dainty, "What Is Management Research?," p.221.

stated, ‘there is growing recognition of the difficulties of applying a positivistic research paradigm for carrying out research and change in real-life settings.’<sup>59</sup>

### 4.3.2 Interpretive inquiry

In the literature, a number of approaches form part of what will be referred to in this thesis as ‘interpretive inquiry’. Using Patton’s work, there are ten types of interpretive inquiry. With relevance to this research are phenomenology, hermeneutics and heuristics. Phenomenology is defined by Patton ‘as inductively and holistically seeking to understand human experience in context specific settings’.<sup>60</sup> Leedy distinguishes phenomenology from other approaches, as the difference between how a person constructs the meaning of a phenomenon as opposed to how it exists externally to the individual.<sup>61</sup> Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek ‘to interpret’ and refers to the interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics uses an interpretive process to understand reality.<sup>62</sup> Derived from the Greek ‘to discover or to find’,<sup>63</sup> heuristics questions the researcher’s experience of the phenomenon. In this sense, it is somewhat similar to phenomenology.<sup>64</sup>

Whilst it is acknowledged that each of these terms has a specific meaning, there remains the underlying theme of adopting a broad perspective and seeking an understanding of the phenomenon of public diplomacy which is being studied. However, it is contended that the choice of one element does not rule out the other from being used. Each type provides a different view of how NCP students and ASC academics contribute to Australia’s public diplomacy efforts in China, and contributes to an overall understanding of the research.

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<sup>59</sup> Limerick and Cunningham, *Managing the New Organisation*, p.33.

<sup>60</sup> M.Q. Patton and (2nd Edition) 1990, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd Edition ed. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990), p.37.

<sup>61</sup> P.D. Leedy, *Practical Research, Planning and Design*, 6th Edition ed., vol. New Jersey, U.S.A. (Merrill, Upper Saddle River, 19987).

<sup>62</sup> Gummesson, *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*.

<sup>63</sup> C.E. Moustakas, *Heuristic Research, Design Methodology and Applications* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990).

<sup>64</sup> Patton and 1990, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*.

This research can be categorised as heuristic research. I have a strong interest in the impact of funding scholarships and collaborative research as a public diplomacy strategy. Patton identifies the researcher's personal interest in the research issue as a major characteristic of heuristics.<sup>65</sup> Heuristic research consists of six phases. First, initial engagement from the researcher's inner search to discover a topic or question. To continue the dedication and concentration required, the researcher has an intense interest in the topic of using higher education as a tool for public diplomacy in China. Second, my immersive two years studying in China under a government-funded scholarship, therefore having a personal understanding of the problem. Then incubation, after the initial immersion and confirmation of the doctorate the researcher retreated from the initial concentration. The incubation process, or reflection time, resulted in a deeper understanding of the problem. Following this is illumination, in which the researcher became open to tacit knowledge and intuition, resulting in a new level of awareness about the contribution of international education to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China. Explication then follows, in which a new level of awareness results in a process of seeking to fully examine what was awakened in the consciousness. Ultimately, a comprehensive picture of dominant concepts was developed. The final phase is creative synthesis, in which the research will be challenged to put the components and core concepts into a creative synthesis. This should happen as the researcher reflects on the influence of 'his/her own reality'.<sup>66</sup>

The final phase of 'creative analysis' is particularly relevant as this thesis will include not only the results of the analysis of data but also reflection on the researcher's own reality. This thesis starts with a problem, in relation to international education being used as a tool for Australia's public diplomacy in China, and seeks to grow in its understanding of the

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<sup>65</sup> Patton and 1990, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*.

<sup>66</sup> Moustakas, *Heuristic Research, Design Methodology and Applications*, pp.27-37.

contribution that NCP scholars and ASC academics make towards the phenomenon. Whilst this research is not exclusively heuristic, the overall flow appears to be most closely aligned to the heuristic model at the macro level.

### 4.3.3 Holism and reductionism

A critical aspect in scoping this research is how broadly or narrowly it is defined. This is captured in two diverse approaches: holism and reductionism. On the one hand, there is the drive to narrow the topic to ensure focus. Alternatively, there is a desire to understand the entire operation of government-funded international education as public diplomacy and the impact that participants have on Sino-Australian relations.

Reductionism is closely associated with logical-positivism and involves the breaking down of indivisible parts.<sup>67</sup> Newton and Descartes, as far back as the seventeenth century, believed that the whole could be represented as the sum of its parts.<sup>68</sup> Thus, by explaining or solving the problems at this component level, it is assumed that it can be aggregated into a solution for the whole. The fundamental assumption of reductionism, that the sum of the parts equals the whole, is disputed.<sup>69</sup> Senge postulated that the sum of the parts may even be greater than the whole. In a similar vein, Carr and Kemmis comment that research data are too frequently fragmented, which conceals the true significance.<sup>70</sup> A further criticism of reductionism is that it pursues simple answers to complex issues.<sup>71</sup>

An alternative to reductionism is holism. Holism is generally associated with the interpretive approach used in this thesis. The holistic design is advantageous when no logical

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<sup>67</sup> Limerick and Cunningham, *Managing the New Organisation*.

<sup>68</sup> Gummesson, *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*.

<sup>69</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York, U.S.A.: Doubleday Business, 1990).

<sup>70</sup> W. Carr and S. Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* (Falmer: Lewes, 1986).

<sup>71</sup> Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*.

sub-units can be identified and when the relevant theory is itself of an holistic nature.<sup>72</sup> Gummesson advocates that the whole can 'be understood only by treating it as the central aspect of the study'.<sup>73</sup> Yin states a major concern arises when research focuses only on the sub-unit level and fails to return to the larger holistic unit of analysis.<sup>74</sup>

To avoid the potential problems that arise when a global approach allows a researcher to avoid examining any specific phenomenon in detail, the research in this thesis will take a two-phased approach. Phase One will interview experts in the field to gain an increased understanding of why the Australian Government funds international education programs as public diplomacy strategies. It will also focus on the goals and outcomes achieved by the ASCs in China. Phase Two, is the analysis of data from surveys and interviews of NCP alumni. Each sub-unit or individual informant used in the research will assist in gaining a more complete understanding of Australia's use of international education as a tool of public diplomacy in China.

This section has reviewed the research paradigms. This thesis will use an interpretative approach in the research and adopt an holistic view of international education as public diplomacy as an entity within the study. Having adopted a framework and a paradigm, the next section considers how this will be implemented in terms of methodology.

#### **4.4 Research Methodology**

Research methodology gives credence to a study's findings; however, the array of paradigms and methodologies available can be overwhelming. Whilst research approaches are important, their importance is predicated on providing relevant information to answers to the research questions and the problem.<sup>75</sup> Qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been

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<sup>72</sup> Gummesson, *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*, p.76.

<sup>73</sup> Gummesson, *Qualitative Methods in Management Research*, p.76.

<sup>74</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

<sup>75</sup> N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Thousand Oaks, London: Sage

seen by some as the ultimate dichotomy in social science research,<sup>76</sup> - with both having their advocates and critics.<sup>77</sup> Robson states that most real world studies will require the use of quantitative and qualitative research, as this will increase the understanding of the object of study.<sup>78</sup> Yin's work is applied in that he asserts the right research approach depends on what is trying to be achieved.<sup>79</sup> For the purpose of this research, the nomenclature of qualitative and quantitative is used when discussing the mixed method approach. This mixed-method study combines an interpretive inquiry approach with a quantitative approach, with three well-defined hypotheses and three research questions.

Using the contact hypothesis and the two-step flow hypothesis, mixed mode is particularly appropriate for this research. Firstly, the contact hypothesis has rarely been used to measure the impact of education programs internationally on students' stereotyping or prejudice (particularly Australian Government-funded scholarships and research centres in China). It is difficult to use the contact hypothesis on exchange programs as they all differ depending on the recipients' intended study program. Any ambiguity of results was restricted in this study by limiting the investigation to the NCP and ASC programs in China. Semi-structured follow-up interviews after the surveys allowed me to identify examples of positive contact within the students' programs, and how these programs or interactions positively influenced their cultural understanding.

The second theory used in this thesis is the two-step flow hypothesis. This theory has mostly been investigated quantitatively through the mapping of networks of influence. This research will interview the opinion leaders identified through the survey, and use qualitative

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Publications, 1994).

<sup>76</sup> M. Hammersley, "Deconstructing the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide," in *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research* (Avebury: Aldershot, 1992); Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*; Robson, *Real World Research*.

<sup>77</sup> Denzin and Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*.

<sup>78</sup> Robson, *Real World Research*, p.307.

<sup>79</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

analysis to investigate the program and post-program contact that led scholars to become influential within Sino-Australian relations.

The potential for bias by research participants was considered, particularly given that respondents may not wish to offend their sponsors.<sup>80</sup> Most research into scholarship programs asks participants to explain how their involvement in a program changed their lives. Criticism of this is that, when asked by those who have funded their studies, participants will inevitably respond positively. While it is acknowledged that there is always some risk of research bias with in-depth interviewing, it was considered low in this research given that: i) respondents usually provided positive and negative views as well as detailed and sophisticated justification of their views; ii) respondents were made to feel comfortable in volunteering honest and frank views in interviews, including a guarantee that responses would remain anonymous; and iii) after interviewing a number of participants, a composite picture of interpretations was able to be identified. The research utilises the opinion leadership scale to objectively identify those who have continued to remain either personally or professionally involved in any aspect of Sino-Australian relations since completing their program.

The importance of this research lies in the qualitative nature of follow-up interviews with identified opinion leaders. Not only has this research allowed for the identification of those who have continued to remain influential but, by utilising follow-up semi-structured interviews, it has allowed for greater understanding as to how the opinion leaders' post-program trajectory has allowed them to enact this role.

#### **4.5 Two-phase approach to data collection**

How the data was collected and measured is described in the two phases of the research project. The triangulation of data was utilised to address some of the limitations of the

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<sup>80</sup> (Borg and Gall 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Merriam 2009)

methodology.<sup>81</sup> Triangulation is a means of strengthening a study,<sup>82</sup> - to overcome potential bias.<sup>83</sup> This has been achieved by a two-phase investigation. Firstly, interviewing experts within government, the Australian embassy in Beijing, universities, and the private sector with expertise in international education, public diplomacy and Australia-China relations in Australia and China. A desktop audit of the ASCs' in Chinese universities output and financial reports was conducted to identify Centres that are currently promoting collaboration with Australian institutions and individuals. Interviews were also conducted with ASC staff and experts within international education affiliated with the Centres. In addition, I surveyed NCP alumni to identify conditions of positive contact and to measure indicators of active opinion leadership. Using opinion leader scales those who were identified as opinion leaders were invited to participate in a follow-up interview to gain a deeper understanding of their personal experience.

#### **4.5.1 Phase One: expert interviews and content analysis of ASC reports**

While conducting a literature review of the history of public diplomacy in Australia, and the use of exchanges to boost Australia's influence in Asia, it became clear that publications on these topics are limited. Therefore, the first phase focuses on answering the question: Why does the Australian Government fund international education programs in China? This was done by conducting semi-structured interviews with experts in international education, government policy, public diplomacy and Sino-Australian relations. These exploratory interviews allowed me to gain a better understanding of the Australian context of international education as public diplomacy.

The first phase investigates the extent to which the network of ASCs in China actively

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<sup>81</sup> Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

<sup>82</sup> Patton and 1990, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*; Zikmund, *Business Research Methods*.

<sup>83</sup> Hussey and Hussey, *Business Research: A Practice Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*.

provided the conditions in which Chinese and Australian academics and students collaborate on academic work that helps promote better understanding. This consisted of a desktop audit conducted while I was working for the ASC at Peking University. Directors of each Centre were asked to provide a detailed update of work that had come from their research Centre. In addition to this, funding reports from the ASCs were analysed to identify what areas are most active and what programs are most highly funded. The final analysis was an interview with people directly involved in the ASCs, and other experts who understand the work of the Centres. The findings provide a snapshot of how foundations, councils and institutes contribute to building collaboration within the education sector between Australian and Chinese academics and, more importantly, recommendations for improvement will be offered.

#### **4.5.2 Phase Two: survey of NCP alumni followed by opinion leader interviews**

Phase Two is an analysis of data from interviews with NCP experts and surveys of NCP alumni using the contact and the two-step flow hypotheses in the development of opinion leaders. An analysis of their experience in-country and their ability to build cultural ties and enact their role as an opinion leader in Sino-Australian relations was undertaken. Currently, the literature outlines two objectives (contact in improving cultural understanding and educating future opinion leaders) that differentiate prestigious government-funded scholarships from traditional exchanges. Most of the literature utilises evaluations of these programs based on accounts of recipients' satisfaction to justify the continued funding.

The survey (Appendix A) is split into three parts: Part A - pre-program, Part B - during their program, and Part C – post-program. Part A will identify the participants' demographics and program details, for example where and when they studied, and their perceptions of China before commencing their program. Part B, will use the contact hypothesis as a framework to investigate participant's time studying in-country to identify specific examples of positive and

negative accounts of contact under the conditions provided in the literature (top-down support, high acquaintance potential, perceived equality and co-operation). Finally, Part C uses opinion leader scales to examine the recipients' post-program experience and whether alumni members qualify as opinion leaders.

In this thesis, opinion leaders are identified using the positional approach, as participants held positions of leadership (NCP alumni). Using the work of Nisbett and Kotcher, three scales of opinion leadership will be used to investigate whether participants were considered opinion leaders and therefore influential in the area of Australia-China relations.<sup>84</sup> The first scale will identify whether alumni have an involvement in, or a passion for, Sino-Australian relations by operationalising opinion leadership as a continuum. This will be done using a summated score to questions that identify the participants' frequency of conversations with friends and family regarding China.<sup>85</sup> The second scale measures the participants' comfort in leadership roles by investigating their personality strength. In previous studies, the top quartile is considered to be influential.<sup>86</sup> Finally, the third scale, the Roper ASW's Influentials, uses a 12-item scale to identify whether a person's involvement in recent activities categorises them as an active opinion leader. This scale, identifies individuals that provide an affirmative response for three or more of the twelve given examples, they are considered an active opinion leader.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, after identifying NCP alumni who qualify as active opinion leaders, they will be offered follow-up semi-structured interviews. The interviews will extend on the work of Bettie, in which she evaluated the effectiveness of the Fulbright program as a tool of US public diplomacy.<sup>88</sup> The purpose of these follow-up interviews is to better understand the experience

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<sup>84</sup> Nisbett and Kotcher, "A Two-Step Flow of Influence? Opinion-Leader Campaigns on Climate Change."

<sup>85</sup> Childers, "Assessment of the Psychometric Properties of an Opinion Leadership Scale."

<sup>86</sup> Weimann, "The Influentials: Back to the Concept of Opinion Leaders?."

<sup>87</sup> E. B. Keller and J. L. Berry, *The Influentials: One American in Ten Tells the Other Nine How to Vote, Where to Eat, and What to Buy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

of the NCP alumni and how it enabled them to continue their involvement as opinion leaders in Australia-China relations. Interviews were semi-structured so that participants could tell their story and I could get an in-depth understanding of how specific experiences offered the necessary environment to develop opinion leadership.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the research framework and methodology. The two theories, the contact hypothesis, the two-step flow hypothesis and opinion leadership, have been explained. The research strategy and paradigm were discussed in order to clear up any confusion surrounding methodological nomenclature. This included a discussion of logical-positivism, interpretive inquiry, holism and reductionism. Potential bias, in this thesis, is minimised through the triangulation of data in a two-phase mixed method approach to data gathering.

The next chapter outlines the data analysis process and presents the findings from the analysis of the data gathered through interviews with experts in the field and the desktop audit of ASC reports.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PHASE ONE – ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the thematic and content analysis of Phase One data. Phase One entailed a field trip to Beijing, during which I spent a year gathering data through surveys and content analyses of ASC's financial and outputs reporting; and through interviews with 15 experts in the fields of international education, public diplomacy and Sino-Australian relations. The rationale for the selection of interviewees is followed by the data analysis process for the interviews.

### 5.1 Rationale for selection of interviewees and questions

Participants interviewed in Phase One were selected based on their knowledge and reputation as experts in the fields of international education and Australia's public diplomacy in China. Julie Bishop, then Foreign Minister, was unavailable for a face-to-face interview but agreed to provide personal written responses to the interview questions. Interviewees were employed within the Department of Education, higher education consultancies in China, DFAT, the Australian Embassy in Beijing, commentators, education researchers, ASC Chinese academics and Australian academics. The interviews were conducted from July 2017 to July 2018. This extended period gave flexibility to include interviewees as they were identified through the literature or recommended as relevant.

The open-ended questionnaire and consent forms are attached as Appendix A and C. Extending on previous research by Bettie, who investigated the Fulbright Program in the US, the questions were adjusted to suit the Australian context. The questions were designed to be

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Einstein as quoted in Zikmund, *Business Research Methods*.

open in nature to allow the experts the freedom to offer candid opinions. This approach allowed interviews to be in-depth, which assisted in exploring the relatively under researched academic field: international education as public diplomacy in Australia.

## **5.2 Responses provided by Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs**

Julie Bishop was Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs from September 2013 until August 2018. Since launching the NCP in 2014, and the implementation of the pilot program in 2014, as Foreign Minister she provided high profile and public personal sponsorship of the program. In her response she stated that:

My inspiration for this policy was to support Australian undergraduate students to live, study and work in our region. Similar to the success of the original Colombo Plan in the 1950's, I envisaged a program that seeded deeper connections between Australia and our neighbours. Colombo Plan scholars are today business, political and community leaders throughout our region.

As a former Education Minister, I saw the need for greater opportunities for Australian students to study in our region. I reversed the original Colombo Plan in order to achieve that outcome. In 2013, I launched the New Colombo Plan as a signature foreign policy initiative of the Coalition Government to reflect its potential to contribute to Australia's prosperity and security, which is anchored in the Indo-Pacific. Since then, the Government has supported more than 30,000 Australian undergraduates to undertake part of their studies at a university in one of 40 countries in our region.

## **5.3 Analysis of Data Process**

Analysis of data, and the presentation of findings, proceeded according to the six-stage process outlined by Braun & Clarke in Figure 27.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006).

Phases of Thematic Analysis	Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data
		Reading and re-reading the data
		Noting down initial ideas
	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data
		Collating data relevant to each code
	Searching for themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts
		Generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
	Reviewing themes	Checking themes
		Generating a thematic map
	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme
		Generating definitions and names for each theme.
	Producing the report	Final analysis
		Producing a scholarly report

*Figure 27 Phases of Thematic Analysis. Adapted from Braun & Clarke*

In accordance with Step 1 of the data analysis process, all interviews were transcribed for ease of reading and familiarisation of the data. I began this process by reading through each transcription and making notes in the margins to identify emerging patterns and meaningful units. In addition, I highlighted this information in the text of each transcript.

Step 2 consisted of coding the full dataset (i.e. the text of each interview was subject to coding in its entirety). Braun and Clarke define a code as ‘a word or brief phrase that captures the essence of why the researcher thinks a particular bit of data may be useful’.<sup>3</sup> The issue of convergence was dealt with by looking for recurring regularities in the data and excluding divergent patterns, data that were not replicated in participant transcripts.<sup>4</sup> Due to the small

<sup>3</sup> Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," p.207.

<sup>4</sup> M.Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd Edition ed. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 2002).

sample size in Phase One, hand-coding was used in the data analysis.

Following this, in Step 3 I searched for themes, which required re-reading each marked up transcript several times to extract explicit and implicit meaningful units. Both semantic codes (i.e. codes that reflect the explicit content of what the participant said) and latent or researcher-derived codes (i.e. codes that reflect implicit meaning of my understanding of what is being said) were developed. Once meaningful units had been extracted for all participants, a second copy was used to cross compare meaningful information that was present in more than one participant transcript. From the extraction of meaningful units, a classification system for the information was created.

The thematic map depicted in Figure 28 defines and names the six hierarchical themes involving significant data gathered from the interviewees. In addition, due to the richness of the data, as a result of both the generosity of time and the high level of the interviewees' professional knowledge, the need for subthemes was considered. This is in line with the work of Braun and Clarke, who designed the data analysis process and suggested identifying and analysing between two and six themes for a project of this size and scope.<sup>5</sup>

Step 4 ensured the themes identified in Phase One data analysis had validity and reliability. After the transcripts were completely coded, recursive pattern-based analysis was applied to the dataset, and all previously coded interviews reviewed, to ensure that any revised or merged codes were consistently applied to the emerging dataset. Pattern-based analysis rests on the presumption that ideas occurring across a dataset capture something psychologically or socially meaningful.<sup>6</sup>

Step 5 identified the broader patterned responses, which allowed me to define and name themes with a central organising content. Finally, Step 6 meant that significant data were

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<sup>5</sup> V. Clarke and V. Braun, *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," p.223.

represented as phenomena reported in three or more of the interviewees' responses. Completion of Step 6 required that I review the data under each theme, while identifying any and all instances in the transcripts that were relevant to the three research questions and the three hypotheses.

#### 5.4 Data analysis

This section is divided into two parts: first, data mapping; and second, Phase One findings are outlined.

##### 5.4.1 Six hierarchical themes

In this section, data gathered from expert interviews are mapped into six hierarchical themes, matching how education programs are being used as public diplomacy in practice versus how they are theoretically depicted in the literature. Figure 28, maps the six hierarchical themes for this research.

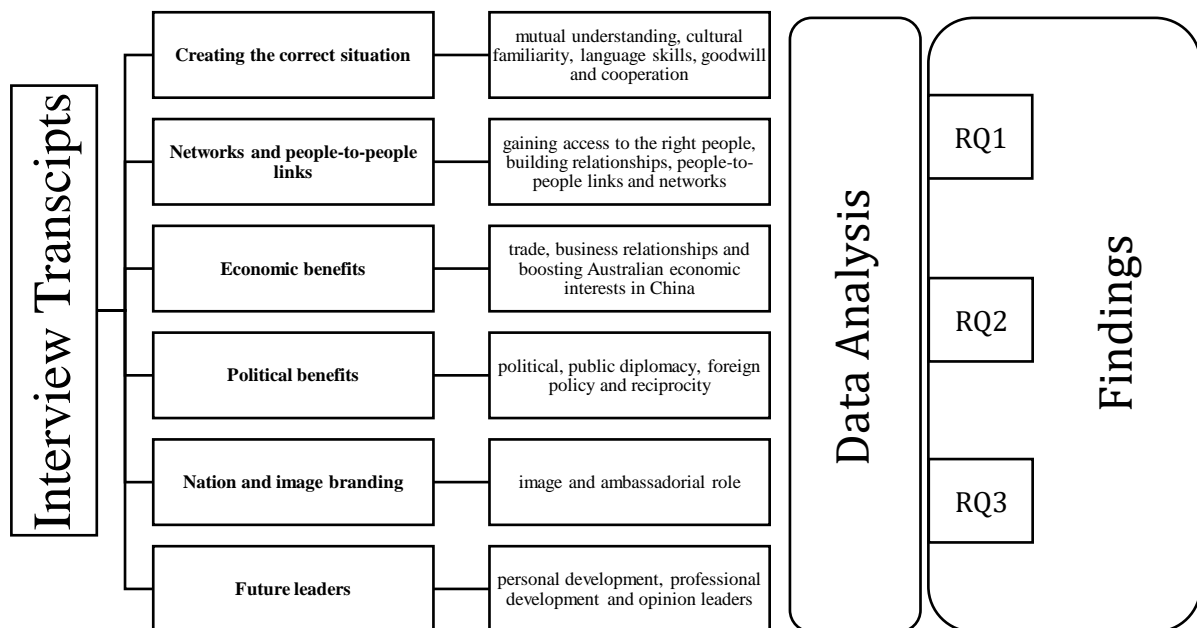


Figure 28 The process of mapping the themes

The decision was made, wherever possible, to write the final analysis while maintaining the voice and tone of the experts interviewed. Consent to use the names of experts that were deemed strategically involved in the New Colombo Plan and Australia Studies Centres were provided. The initials of these experts have been used, as all interviewees listed below have given consent to be identified as the source of their comments: Stephen Fitzgerald (SF) (Australia's first Ambassador to China), Colin McKerras (CMc) (Sinologist), Peter Vaghese (PV) (former Secretary of DFAT and current Chancellor of the University of Queensland), Kevin Hobgood-Brown (KH) (FASIC Chair), David Walker (DW) (founding BHP Billiton Chair of Australia Studies), Greg McCarthy (GMc) (former BHP Billiton Chair of Australia Studies). A written response to the interview questions was also provided by the then Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop (JB) in July 2018. Responses from other experts interviewed were kept anonymous.

#### **5.4.2 Theme One – Creating the correct situation**

This section uses the words of the experts to identify key criteria that they felt was necessary for the NCP and ASCs to effectively contribute to Australia's public diplomacy in China. Comments on mutual understanding, cultural familiarity, language skills and collaboration are included in Theme One. It was unanimously reported that the major challenge for NCP scholars to build influential networks, increase mutual understanding and cultural familiarity, was a lack of language skills. There was a strong response that NCP scholars should be encouraged or, in the case of mainland China, mandated to undertake language training prior to their arrival in their host country. Interviewees who were based in mainland China were unanimous in their thoughts that intermediate language skills were essential for anyone to assimilate into the community:

For decades many have tried and failed, to influence the government to change the curriculum of Australian schools, to include a second language as a compulsory subject (Expert11).

If Australia wishes to be seen to have the influence of a middle power in the Indo-Pacific, the school curriculum must change for students at an early age to start to learn an Asian language (Expert 6).

Although language is the first step it takes a lot to assimilate into a different culture. It is important to constantly push yourself outside your comfort zone. First and foremost, I think Asian literacy is about being fluent in Chinese and being culturally aware. I think my Chinese level is quite good but I think my interaction with Chinese society is quite limited (Expert 1).

Language is critical and it's not just because the market is more sophisticated but it's because we as individuals get more out of it if we understand what the heck is going on around us. I think people get demoralised with Chinese because one year is the minimum required to speak like a three-year-old so it's the start of a very long process. Whereas if you went to France or Spain or certainly Indonesia after one year you would be sitting around with the philosophers and the poets and holding your own. Not the case in China, one year is a minimum, I think (KH).

The topic of language was also prevalent when experts discussed the level of support provided to the ASCs. The history of ASCs, as narrated by the interviewees, showed that at their time of establishment, English literacy in China was not as high as it is today. David Walker discussed translation and literature as two areas where the level of English competency was sufficient, therefore the objectives of the network focused on these fields. Some experts reported that Chinese scholars at the time had a preference to research topics that were considered 'safe', such as the literary works of Patrick White. More recently, with the publication of the *Journal of Australian Studies in China*, there has been intense discussion over whether the articles should be published in Chinese or English. Advocates for the journal to be published in Chinese asserted that this would provide a larger domestic audience. Whilst this may be true, there are others who believed that publishing in Chinese would result in fewer Australian readers, and a lower contribution rate from Australian academics. David Walker reported that a compromise was reached and the journal's editorial board agreed to accept articles in both Chinese and English.

When identifying essential areas of support, it was unanimous that funding is paramount. All interviewees believed funding for the NCP was sufficient or, when comparing the cost of living in China to Australia, too generous. In contrast, the limited Australian Government funding supporting the ASCs has not been increased for many years. It is perceived that limited funding makes it challenging to encourage Chinese academics to

contribute to teaching and research in Australian studies.

Funding has remained static for the last ten to fifteen years yet the relationship with China has doubled several times during that period and the number of Centres has increased (KH).

The opportunity that we have to give funding support has diminished and that also places a question on the academic standing and promotion prospects (DW).

The dilemma for the ACC is its brief is to support business and that is where most of the money goes. Education is a quarter of its budget and it's always going to be that. They get pretty good bang for their buck for that quarter (Interviewee 5).

Some of the resource, infrastructure and funding is internal to the universities. Most of them get a room and then how much they get is calculated in terms of the teaching load. Then they have to find some ways of asking for money. FASIC is the conduit for funding, BHP funds the chair and then FASIC funds a number of other things like giving money to support the chair and that flows across to different things. FASIC funds the conference and some other networking things (Interviewee 5).

If the ASCs are to act as ambassadors for Australia then Australian Government funding should increase in relation to the importance of trade between Australia and China (Interviewee 14).

Responses show that because Chinese academics perceive Australian universities as less prestigious, comparatively speaking, against first-tier institutions in the US and UK, it is difficult to attract Chinese academics to collaborate with Australian academics. Some respondents reported a perception among Chinese academics that the field of Australian studies was not considered topical by the editorial boards of first-tier journals. As highlighted by one respondent:

Chinese academics are always going to strive to publish with colleagues from prestigious international universities and many Australian universities do not fit this profile. There needs to be other incentives such as funding for collaborative projects between Australian and Chinese academics (Interviewee 14).

When discussing the merits of Australian and Chinese academics undertaking collaborative research, there were conflicting reports from experts. There was agreement that collaboration had the possibility to benefit Australia-China relations. The other agreement was that, for both Australian and Chinese academics, the possibility of publishing in a high-level journal would over-ride any thoughts of collaboration:

Collaborating with Chinese universities is a very competitive space. The ASCs depend on their home universities for infrastructure support and recognition so most believe that it is important that they undertake collaborative research that has a high percentage of being published in top tier journals. This may not happen easily when researching in the field of Australian studies (Interviewee 5).

Not much has changed for Australian academics wanting to publish with Chinese. The whole era of where to publish does prioritise certain journals but as far as I can judge this decision-making does not value collaboration. Publishing with a Chinese academic would be fine if it is in a high-ranking journal but if it is to be lower down than the collaboration with the Chinese would be seen as a disadvantage (DW).

The *Journal of Australian Studies in China*, published through the ASCs, is unlikely to get much reward as in points for peer review. It would not be judged high ranking in a sense it is collaboration and authors would see this more as a philanthropic stance rather than prestige (DW).

### 5.4.3 Theme Two – Networks and people-to-people

The following comments from experts were coded under Theme Two - networks and people-to-people links. Julie Bishop stated in her response:

There has been overwhelming support for the NCP across our region. The partnerships that we have developed with these 40 nations are remarkable and the NCP has been an investment worth making, as our students are returning to Australia with new perspectives, understandings, skills, and a network of connections that will last a lifetime. They will be our ambassadors, the future leaders with connections and friendships throughout our region. There are numerous examples of how the NCP has transformed the lives of students and relations between universities.

Influential champions are critical to the success of the NCP. I established the NCP Reference Group to provide high-level strategic advice and guidance to the Australian Government regarding the implementation of the NCP. In addition, Reference Group members play a role as ambassadors for the NCP, engaging in promotion and advocacy of the program through the networks.

David Walker, stated that people-to-people links were really important because, in times of tension, personal networks help to normalise relations. He recounted that the last time he was in Beijing, the current tensions in the bilateral relationship temporarily impacted on his personal networks:

Once you have a beer or two, the troubles that are occurring at the bilateral level become more discussable. You can sit and talk about how the Chinese are viewing the issue and how the Australians are viewing it and where are the commonalities. It is good for people to develop friendships so that they can transcend the bumps that the bilateral relationship will inevitably encounter.

The majority of interviewees agreed that the people-to-people links and networks, formed through integrated learning and internships, set the NCP apart from many other exchanges:

The NCP alumni are helping to build strong people-to-people links between Australia and the people of China and Hong Kong. They are playing a central role in organisations like the Australia-China Youth Association, which provides a significant platform to continue their relationship with China after their NCP experience (JB).

The cool thing about the NCP as compared to other prestigious scholarships is the real push towards work integrated learning and internship (Interviewee 1).

Respondents also commented that the role of the ASCs, in the research and teaching of Australian studies and literature, remains influential:

The ASCs have provided an important avenue for Australian culture and literature to be understood and researched by academics and students interested in China. Over time, this has evolved to cover areas of interest including public policy, economics, Indigenous affairs and other disciplines where China's interest to learn more aligns with areas of comparative advantage for Australia. Our ability to engage in this deeper way with the Chinese academy help to shape a more positive relationship with China (JB).

There were mixed responses to the question: *Do you think that an individual can make a difference in the negative stereotypes held by their networks?*

My own personal experience has shown that an individual can make a difference but small. When I am in rural Australia and friends of mine who have never set foot in China or have no interest in ever going ask me what's [these media reports] all about and I say it's nonsense. Someone took this little piece of verifiable information and blew this story out of it. That helps them put it in context. How effective are you by affecting those individual issues on a case by case basis probably not very in terms of the broad scheme of things (KH).

The overwhelming drivel that we see in the media currently and that we have seen over the past year about China still reflects the fact that our media doesn't get it. The public doesn't have a good understanding of China either (Interviewee 14).

Not one individual person will make a difference in any grand strategic way but it can't hurt (Interviewee 5).

I mean I am making very broad-brush stereotypes here but I do believe that students from low-socio economic groups can make the biggest impact on improving Australians knowledge of China. I think these types of students have more potential to make the impact that you are talking about because they go back into communities that may not have had any exposure to anything China and may be very suspicious of anything happening in China fueled by media (Interviewee 3).

If you look at the Lowy Institute polls over the years it is known that China has been an important contributor to our prosperity. I think the Lowy Institute poll shows that China's reputation has taken a dip over the last couple of years mostly due to this nonsense we are seeing in the media. What can we do to combat negativity. Firstly, we can talk about it with those who have some ability to influence it. The more you talk about them the more you get energised to make those same representations to people who are in power. At some point that has an impact (Interviewee 14).

It is important that individuals selected to undertake the NCP have the right outlook and personal motivation to build relations in China. Responses showed that experts believed the program would not succeed if participants only took advantage of opportunities for personal gain.

If scholars are not open minded it could be a huge waste of money. If they are open-minded and they do their program in China they will continue to take an interest in China in the news every day so when they return home they have a better cultural awareness and will keep in touch with their contacts (Interviewee 3).

Many of the experts asserted that mature-aged students were more likely than younger

undergraduate students to maintain engagement with China through established people-to-people links after their program had ended. This was linked to mature-aged students having to sacrifice more to study in China:

Scholars in China can really build links that will endure but only if they build their networks appropriately (Interviewee 7).

As the NCP scholarships are offered to undergraduates under the age of 28. I am concerned about the level of influence that these awardees could exercise at the start of their careers when most have not formulated plan for their future (Interviewee 6).

It was also asserted that the reputation and prestige of the program increased the access of NCP scholars to speak with influential people. Meeting senior executives allowed scholars to build strong and influential networks during their program, with networking opportunities often leading to internships. David Walker cautioned that, just because people have built strong networks and have an interest in Australia, it does not always result in positive reporting of Australia in the Chinese media:

Within the ASCs there is a spectrum of academics who would definitely see Australia as their expertise and they would be called upon to comment in difficult times like now. From the Australian side, it may not be what we want to hear. It is one thing to have people interested in Australia but in some ways we are not prepared to hear things we would rather not hear. We have a sensitivity. We love people to love Australia but we don't necessarily want to hear any criticism.

The Australian Embassy in Beijing, in conjunction with student associations such as the Australia China Youth Association (ACYA), collaborate to create an environment in which Australian and Chinese students interact with one another. Since the implementation of the NCP, ACYA has reported a resurgence in membership and an increase in influence among the youth of Australia and China. Six out of the twelve ACYA national executives are NCP scholars. An Embassy official in Beijing was very aware of the difficulties some Australian students experienced in gaining exposure to local students:

I remember the false assumption that just because you are studying at a Chinese university that you are interacting with the locals. My university experience was very much like that where I spent two years and my class cohort was 22 different countries and not one person from China. Then you might intern at a multinational organisation. Many times, you end up having a very limited experience within the Chinese community.

Others observed that locating the NCP in DFAT ensured the program achieved a high profile

both at home in Australia and in China:

Locating the NCP under DFAT signals the government's intent that this is government priority as a public diplomacy initiative. Having Julie Bishop as the owner and major proponent has meant that the Australian consular staff have engaged with the program actively and use it in their government-to-government relations as a signal of Australian intent to engage (Interviewee 7).

This has encouraged Vice Chancellors and others to be more engaged in student mobility (both a benefit in terms of profile raising and a curse in terms of them competing with each other over funding (Interviewee 3).

It is quite unique and sends a powerful message to have the Foreign Minister presenting countries in Asia with an image of Australia as motivated to engage with its region by sending their best and brightest to study abroad:

What other country has the Minister for Foreign Affairs so publicly sponsoring international education as public diplomacy (Interviewee 5)?

It was evident in most responses that Julie Bishop's high-profile sponsorship for the NCP has raised the program's profile both within the Australian and Chinese Government and universities.

#### **5.4.4 Theme Three – Economic benefits**

Economic benefits were placed under Theme Three. Even though there was no specific question relating to economics and trade, many experts voiced an unprompted opinion, expressing concern at the impact of negative reports in the media on Australia's economic future in China.

It is probably not possible for good news stories driven by NCP or ASC individuals to counter negative public statements made by Australian politicians (Interviewee 11).

The government's recent speeches denigrating China as a leader in the region and then the media flurry following these comments do not serve our country's interests (Interviewee 5).

This rhetoric does help offset, to some extent, the perception of Australia as involved in international education only for the inbound income (Interviewee 7).

I also think part of this is that our countries are very much economically intertwined. I think it is also because the China-Australia relationship is pretty new. I mean Britain has been investing in Australia since 1778. No one ever talks about this and the US invests in Australia's farming much more than China does but it's because they started in the 19th Century whereas China started maybe 20 years ago (Interviewee 6).

I am concerned about the public perceptions in China. If people start seeing positive messages in the media things can change and people will say oh well it's great to see things back on track.

(Interviewee 5).

Most experts referenced the increase of Australian students studying in China both because of the economic benefits and the high-profile of the NCP.

The ability to show Chinese colleagues that trends in Australian international education were shifting toward the region makes it easier to show practical outcomes rather than just continued rhetoric (Interviewee 8).

In terms of student mobility, it's good being able to talk to the Chinese about something positive such as the fact that China is the second most popular destination for Australians doing study abroad (Interviewee 7).

I mean taking all the scholarships together I think that does show quite a concerted effort by the Australian Government to effectively use international education for public diplomacy. One hopes that the NCP plants a seed in these young students to return (Interviewee 3).

Reciprocal arrangements for Australians to study in China is important and always has been. NCP has done an outstanding effort in encouraging Australians to view China as a country of choice for study abroad. Ultimately just like the Chinese students coming to Australia you want Australian students studying in China to be market drive. There is a role for the government to create initial incentives (Interviewee 14).

Experts thought there was more interest in the bilateral relationship today because of the economic interdependence of Australia and China. They also thought that in recent years the government has funded more opportunities. Kevin Hobgood-Brown stated:

Frankly, five years ago you didn't find as many people such as yourself who were finding a way into China. It happened you know but it was much more sporadic and numbers were insignificant. I think you have to keep banging away, you may not know exactly what opportunity is in China.

China opened up in the 80s and people moved to China to teach and work A lot of people hated it. We are never going to be able to guarantee that people who choose a career are going to like it or do well at it. What you want to do is create an environment in which people can pursue opportunities if that is something they see as right and then hope for the best because people change.

All interviewees were interested in the impact of networks or people-to-people links that boost Australian economic interests in China.

#### **5.4.5 Theme Four – Political benefits**

Comments from the experts that discussed political benefits, including public diplomacy, foreign policy and reciprocity, have been placed within Theme Four. Experts agreed that the Australian Government uses international education as a tool for public diplomacy; however, they differed in opinion on how to effectively implement the programs. Julie Bishop is

confident that the Chinese Government continues to show strong support for the NCP. She stated:

The Chinese Government has indicated its support for the NCP. During a visit early 2017, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China supported pursuing the NCP with Australia. 'We stand ready to work more closely with Australia in areas of education, culture, sports, you and sub-national relations and write a new chapter of friendship between our two countries.

As outlined in our Foreign Policy White Paper, strengthening our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China is vital for Australia, and the NCP is playing a role in expanding bilateral interests and is building strong institutional and people-to-people links between Australia and the people of China. China is the most popular destination for NCP undergraduates.

Another expert stated:

I think the government uses education generally as a means of promoting an image of Australia that is modern multicultural, technologically sophisticated and as a place that has a lot to offer China and the world generally. It's also I think so intertwined with the public diplomacy goal to improve Australia's standing with China more generally (Interviewee 3).

The experts were asked: *Do you believe students understand the goals of the NCP program?*

The responses showed that the majority of interviewees believed the students were trained adequately to understand their responsibilities. These responsibilities include contributing to Australia's positive image through being independent; using funds wisely and having the awareness to be proactive in identifying people-to-people links; and networking opportunities.

The experts expressed that the Australian Government uses international education as one tool to contribute to its public diplomacy strategy in China:

I think the government uses education as a means of promoting an image of Australia that is modern, multicultural, technologically sophisticated and as a place that has a lot to offer China and the world generally. It is intertwined with the public diplomacy goal to improve Australia's standing with China more generally (Interviewee 4).

Education is an overt example of education being used as a bridge building tool between the two countries. China looms largest in the international student strategy because it is bigger than anywhere else and bond made through education do make an enduring network although it takes work to maintain those networks. Australia is its best own advertisement so the best way for Australia is for people to come here and see what a society we are and what sort of culture we are (PV).

Education has the most potential because if you get someone interested in Australian studies in their 20s then the likelihood over the next 20 or 30 years is that you are going to have someone interested in Australia that will pay us back many times over (DW).

It is hard to divorce the public diplomacy goal from the fact that education is a huge export earner for Australia and we have such a strong dominant education relationship with Chinese students. Chinese student numbers currently enrolled in Australian universities indicate in times of leadership discord regarding China, Australia continues to be a very attractive place. (Interviewee 14).

The respondents tied the importance of the economic relationship to the need for diplomacy, including public diplomacy. This was in response to the question: *Why does the Australian Government fund international education programs in China?*

What I hope more than think is that reciprocity is part of it and that this is in some way a recognition of the large number of Chinese students who come to Australia and therefore sending some back across the ditch is a good idea. I think that is part of it and I also think part of this is that our countries are very much economically intertwined (Interviewee 5)

A gesture of reciprocity in terms of movement of students (helping offset perception of Australia as greedy in terms of international education, a gesture of willingness to engage in these countries and within their cultural settings, developing Asian literacy in young Australians for future benefit and promoting Australia through youth education and enthusiastic students (Interviewee 3).

Well it's not simple but I suspect that what is behind this government's push is to secure Australia's future as China emerges as a super power (Interviewee 7).

Peter Vaghese, Chancellor of the University of Queensland and previously DFAT Secretary:

Public diplomacy itself is a very important but under resourced element of our overall diplomatic strategy. Australia more than any other country needs to carve out a distinctive image of itself. Public diplomacy has a big part to play in that. Education is a very neat fit because it sends out a number of different messages which can be well integrated into a public diplomacy.

All respondents stated that the NCP is strongly used by the government as a symbol of Australia's commitment to its region. When talking about the Australian Government's perception of the contribution the ASCs make towards Australia's positive image in China, the respondents commented on the history and original objectives of the ASCs, which remain current today:

As the Chair I did not get an overwhelming interest from the government. I don't get rushed off my feet from DFAT saying what are the programs about and how might we improve them and their value (DW).

One of the drivers for setting up the Centres within a university in China is not unlike the situation in Australia. The field of Australian studies needs to be seen of strategic importance by the leaders of the university and driven by an individual or groups of individuals. I think the other dimension of the story is one that we need to pay close attention to the increasing importance in the Chinese academic system that research capacity need to be demonstrated. This means the Centres need to provide opportunities to put forward evidence for promotion. There is not much point if the ASCs do not provide pathways to promotion (Interviewee 15).

The kind of questions you are asking are not the kind of questions that are put to me by ACC or DFAT (DW).

Many stated it would be negative for the government to promulgate the ASCs overtly as public diplomacy activities:

For the academics I think they need to know that anything they hear within the ASC is consistent with government policy. Anything that is going to use the Centres for public diplomacy would not be a good idea. I think there is a going away from language in the 80's when the Centres were developed and now there is a range of disciplines as the Chinese have sufficient English to study international relations, science, etc. I think the diversification is taking place slowly but it is taking place. I don't think that Australia pushing in any way is worthwhile, it has to be organic (DW).

It is necessary to understand the history of the ASCs and the original reason they were established. Public diplomacy and an ambassadorial role were not in the vernacular at that time. Academics joined the network to teach and research Australian Studies thereby increasing Chinese students' interest and knowledge of the country (Interviewee 8).

The role that public diplomacy has within international relations is arguably in the way it allows the Australian Government to harness the country's soft power. In other words, how does the public in China view Australia's policies and how can Australia increase the influence they have over the Chinese public and government. It is how the public views about current foreign policies that are directly relevant in shaping international outcomes. It is difficult to view that the Chinese academics would see this as their priority (Interviewee 5).

The number of Australian students studying in China is increasing; however, a concern remains that the majority of Australian students are choosing to go to Shanghai and Beijing. This is similar to Chinese students failing to experience regional Australia outside of Sydney and Melbourne.

We have kicked a big goal by getting China as the number one destination but now students need to get out of Beijing and Shanghai. If individuals are to gain the contacts to be knowledgeable opinion leaders it is essential that they take the opportunity to become familiar with China as a whole (Interviewee 1).

When discussing public diplomacy, many respondents echoed Interviewee 5, in that 'the Chinese government is using education very strongly as a tool for the One Belt, One Road policy. The Confucius Centres are going from strength-to-strength.' Interviewee 3 stated that, 'using education as a tool for public diplomacy is not new. Many universities such as Griffith have been sending students to China for at least 25 years.' She went on to say:

I think students attending a three-day structured event can have an impact as well as those who spend longer in-country – it will be the impact of the experience on them and their careers, and what this means for Australia and for their host country, in the longer term that will matter. This is an investment in long-term relationships and the future (Interviewee 3).

In contrast to the positive comments, some experts expressed concern:

I think the NCP is very much in the teething stages it's only been in place for a few years and by definition you have to be an undergraduate so we would only have had a handful of people who have actually graduated. Given the labour laws here in China none of them would have been eligible to come back here and work. It is part of what the government is doing working with the Chinese government to try to influence policies around internships and employability of graduates (Interviewee 2).

Some of the scholars feel when they go back to Australia their skills are not in demand. They feel often like they have come to China they have learned Chinese and they are going back home and their skills are not valued in the way they expected them to be. Whether it is society has not caught up with what the government is trying to look ahead and prepare for what is to come.

Ensuring the NCP program remains prestigious, with access to high-profile events and sponsorship by leading government and business figures, was considered important:

Keeping the program prestigious is what will prove successful in transferring these programs into tangible soft power benefits.

The NCP recipients are encouraged to engage with the work of the Embassy, with the broader Australian environment and broader multilateral environment. The Embassy sends invites to awardees to events of interest. We use these events so that the best and brightest young Australians learning about China can talk about their experience but also learn from others. It helps them with their ambassadorial role (Interviewee 1).

#### **5.4.6 Theme Five - Nation and image branding**

Comments relating to Australia's image branding have been placed in Theme 5. Experts expressed that the network of ASC's was a good model for presenting a positive image for Australia. They also agreed that the NCP was a long-term strategy and that, sometime in the future, participants may have a positive effect on Australia's capabilities in China. Interviewee 5 stated that 'a lot of Chinese people outside Wudaokou have not met that many international students so whether they want to or not they are always representing something larger than themselves'.

Although the experts had noticed a sharp increase in students studying and working in China there is still a long way to go before Australian students are culturally and linguistically prepared for professional life in China, beyond the bubble of expat multinationals.

On a scholarship you are expected to sing for your supper a bit. Most scholars I have spoken to have worked for multinationals or Australian companies based in China. It's often because language is a difficulty if you are going into a Chinese company (Interviewee 7).

Interviewee 6, expressed a desire for the NCP to continue to promote the program to students in rural parts of Australia. Just as most Australian students studying in China need to broaden their horizons from Beijing and Shanghai, most Chinese people have not met people from rural parts of Australia. Understanding what rural Australia has to offer China is an important part

of the bilateral relationship:

Students may not know that the NCP exists or their university may not have MOUs with partners in China. Maybe the local university they go to is not like the University of Sydney or Melbourne with 1000s of students and loads of staff with grant writing expertise (Interviewee 5).

The Australian Government recognises the strong Chinese diaspora in Australia. However, similar to engaging alumni, there are challenges in harnessing these communities to promote and positively brand Australia in the Indo-Pacific region. Interviewee 6 believed there is an opportunity to tap into the Chinese diaspora in Australia:

The diaspora communities are Asian literate just by nature of their upbringing. You have Chinese born and now naturalised Australians who have linkages back in China or they have a relative who lives and does business and they have these transnational links which are amazing.

Experts did not believe that engaging with the Chinese diaspora had occurred in any depth. It was mentioned as a loss for Australia as these people had so much cultural knowledge, as well as personal and professional ties to China, which are the very goals these programs intend to achieve.

The majority of experts were aware an alumni strategy had recently been planned and enacted; however, there was little knowledge of the details, and how this would involve the international education sector as a whole. Comments were made about the challenges of keeping in contact with Australian alumni groups. Building an effective, sustainable alumni group requires ongoing offerings of added value, whether through networking opportunities or other events. It was mentioned that the NCP would need to maintain the current level of prestige in order to motivate students to remain engaged with the program as they build their careers.

Some experts discussed that, due to the relationship between senior leaders in China and high-ranking universities in the UK and the US, it is difficult for Australia to market its higher education programs to the Chinese public. Chinese students understand the brand of their domestic institutions and prestigious universities within the UK and the US. For this reason, their first preference is to study at one of China's prestigious universities, such as Peking University, Renmin University, Fudan University or Tsinghua University. When

students do not succeed at entry into a top Chinese university, Australian institutions are lower than their second choice - the US or UK. If future leaders gain PhD qualifications through the ASC networks they may look more favourably on studying in Australia.

#### **5.4.7 Theme Six - Leaders and ambassadors**

Experts' comments regarding personal and professional development of opinion leaders have been placed in Theme Six. Experts quoted a number of high profile business and government leaders who claim international scholarship programs had a deep impact on their future careers. Mention was made of Prime Ministers Hawke, Abbott, Thatcher and Turnbull.

Living overseas is one of the most transformative experiences a person can have. You know travelling is fine and we have a national history of travelling with gap years but living in a place is totally different. The way of the future for our country because we are a tiny little place population wise and our ability to understand other places and effectively engage with them is vital. That means getting out of our little paradise and hitting the road (KH).

The majority of Australian experts were adamant that any potential benefits of the NCP are speculative at best. Due to the recent commencement means that many alumni are still at university or in the first few years of their career. The ASCs, on the other hand, are quoted as being an example of best practice, but most experts referred to a lack of funding preventing the Centres from expanding their influence.

Some experts commented that while information from the government and/or mass media may be criticised, discussions with an individual are more credible. All interviewees agreed that living in, or visiting, China does affect how Australian's relate to their host country in the future. The experts expressed a level of knowledge about the government's concern regarding Asian literacy, cultural familiarity and mutual understanding. However, they were reluctant to make any bold assertions due to the lack of longitudinal evidence of how education programs can create opinion leaders.

Some experts were concerned that the Australian Government and private sector had not changed to meet the new global demands expected of future leaders. As stated by Kevin

Hobgood-Brown:

Are our Australian corporates demanding and using students effectively who come out of the leadership initiatives regrettably I think the answer to that is no? Employers' ability to absorb China-savvy talent and take it mainstream within their organisations has been very limited and generally unsuccessful. I have unfortunately seen lots of brilliant students and young leaders joining organisations thinking, yeah, I'm going to develop a China related career with this organisation and it's just not happened. You almost have to tackle it corporation by corporation or institution by institution because it's not just the corporations as universities would have similar issues and other non-profits would have similar issues. I don't think we've quite figured that one out yet.

There were other negative responses regarding how these new skills of the NCP alumni were valued by employers upon their return to Australia.

## **5.5 The Role of the Australian Studies Centres in China**

Due to the lack of empirical evidence regarding the role of the ASCs in building positive Australia-China relations this section discusses the findings from the interviews with ASC specialists to gather additional data regarding why the Australian Government funds the ASCs.

The respondents had some commonality of thought regarding the contribution the ASCs had made to Australia-China relations, but also presented a diversity of thinking around the strengths and weaknesses of the network model. The work of the Australia-China Council and FASIC were recognised by the respondents:

The ACC has played a really important role in the education space from the 70's. The ACC was set up in 78 so it turns forty this year. It has never had huge sums of funding but I think it's used its resources really strategically to promote educational ties between Australia and China. I think the best example is the ASCs which have become a locus for knowledge and study of Australia in China but also a valuable locus of exchange of academics and higher degree students (Masters and PhD students) over the years (GMCC)

There is a huge potential for a corporate Australia to come into that process and we wanted to create a vehicle that would be appealing across the country. We do understand that if you are a national corporation and you want to do something in this space with China and you have operations in all states and you pick a university let's say in NSW to support, there is a little bit of awkwardness so why pick one university here. That is a role that FASIC can and will play in the future being a vehicle that can apply for funding across the board for worthy initiatives (KH).

FASIC is the only not for profit privately funded organization promoting ASCs (DW).

BHP Billiton funded the Australian Studies Chair that was a windfall but it is the exception not the rule generally Australian business is pretty stingy with these sort of things (Interviewee 8)

Foremost was the positive assertion that the ASCs are a strong but undervalued network that contribute to Chinese students' and academics' understanding of Australian history and values.

Greg McCarthy, the former Chair of Australia Studies stated:

Where the Australian Studies comes in is to work against the traditional Chinese educational system and its social system which looks to America. From an Australian point of view, we are fighting against a training program where all the leaders have been trained in Ivy League institutions so the problem I see facing us is with leadership. They don't know anything else. If you can't get into US there its Oxford or Cambridge. I think it's important that Australia is being represented through the ASCs and that we are the trainers for many of the intellectuals of the next the next generation of influential Chinese.

ASCs is the most highly successful program in the world even though there are strong and weak Centres. It has been consistent since 1979. It has grown all the time. Even though its sometimes only been a one-man band it is about that consistency.

The ASCs create a great network of ambassadors. They elect their officials and they liaise in a general way. In a city like Beijing the four Centres do get together. How much weight does Australian studies hold within their institutions - probably not a lot, or as much as we would like.

Interviewee 5, echoed these sentiments, adding:

The Embassy keeps asking is there 30/32 or more Centres? Is there anything with depth and how do you evaluate where there is depth? The usual response to this question is research, teaching and developing future generations. Unless you are training PhD students you are not creating the next generation. This is where you create the next round of ambassadors.

Translations do allow the large Chinese population to read Australian literature so that is positive. It is funny Kevin Rudd's autobiography for example sold much more copies in China than it ever did in Australia. This was just fascinating for me.

David Walker was resolute in his belief that the NCP and the ASC could work together for the benefit of both programs, and Australia at large.

I would recommend that the NCP scholars could spend some or all of their time within universities in China who have established ASCs. It would go both ways the students would be in a university that has an interest in Australia and the universities would benefit from having someone from the NCP to help their program. This would broaden the appeal for Chinese students to study in Australia and about Australia. It would also give the NCP students a chance to go to second and third tier universities. There is an ASC in Inner Mongolia and I am sure NCP students would be welcome to spend some time talking to the locals.

In response to the question about the activities that ASCs are involved in, respondents quoted:

FASIC does not want to be seen as interfering with collaborations that are already in place. They run a large conference that is successful and its getting bigger each time.

You have famous people who come through and big names will come through all the time but not in the regions. But what can you do. We don't have the money. I think looking back you have got the Embassy that is well supported it is the second largest Embassy Australia has. They are a glue that holds everything together. The academics within the ASCs are important and for them it's a cost benefit analysis because if you have thirty of them they need to figure out what is important. When invited to an event, they will ask is this meeting important (Interviewee 5).

FASIC is strategically lacking there is not a big picture strategy driving the ship so it's just kind of cast adrift and there is nothing online or in anyone's head. Communication is very important so I think newsletters and the use of WeChat needs to be in FASIC's strategy for the ASCs (Interviewee 7).

The strengths are that translation and the students can now read them. So that was the beginnings of Australian studies. It is bigger now. It has grown as you can see from the conferences but its core is still hanging on to literature and foreign language studies. The network is successful much more successful than any other country. The other problem with China is what I call, 'combined uneven development' that David Walker calls, 'regional differentiations' (Interviewee 5).

In relation to the ability of the ASCs to collaborate with Australian institutions, Greg McCarthy discussed the impact of a lack of resources in allowing Chinese academics to be actively involved in Australian studies:

I think they are much better at doing in-reach between each other rather than outreach with Australia. They do engage but much more with each other than back to Australia. It comes down to resources and networks and introductions and also sometimes academics can be shy and introverted and at times may not be the best vehicles for public diplomacy as wonderful as they are in many other aspects.

Several respondents spoke highly of the diplomatic work achieved by the Foundation Chair of FASIC, Dr David Walker. It was reported:

It is all credit to David and BHP and FASIC. The Chair has actually been the glue that holds all of this together. There isn't a week that goes by where I am not asked to go somewhere just to give a talk or give some ideas or raise the flag. David did a fantastic job in setting that up and keeping that going. It is interesting in that one of the things that BHP and DFAT recognise that that is exactly what it is (an ambassadorial role) and that that is exactly what it is and why other countries don't have it (Interviewee 5).

David Walker has done an amazing job in promoting Australian studies in China (Interviewee 7).

The Australian Embassy in Beijing was thanked for its contributions towards helping the Centres achieve their objectives; however, many thought the Australian Government was not maximizing the possible benefits that could be achieved through the ASC network.

I think that is where the embassy does a really good job. Their influence is important for the work of the ASCs and the promotion of the NCP (Interviewee 8).

What we have got here the Embassy would say is that the ASCs and universities' MOUs don't seem to correlate. It does strike me as being quite piece meal. It is true because to establish an ASC you need a Chinese academic or academics interested in Australian studies (Interviewee 5).

The Embassy work is important as people listen to what they have to say and generally feel privileged to be invited to their events (Interview 1).

Interviewee 1 was very emotional about her work in public diplomacy and in particular with her work promoting the NCP:

I believe in the NCP. I do not experience criticism of the program very much because I am based in China. I am dealing mainly with the Chinese people and the Australian companies who are impacted by NCP here and they love it. I have had such good feedback because the quality of the students is outstanding. Criticism is more from the Australian side especially that NCP is an elitist group. There is a big fancy dinner I think maybe this is where the criticism comes from. The scholars

are privileged. They are told that they are special but it's because they are special.

In response to the question: do you think the Australian Government is maximising the benefits of the ASCs, an example response is:

I don't think that they are as aware as they could be especially in a number of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier cities they could be quite useful. It does not seem to matter how many times you say it you feel that it is the first-time government and university representatives here it because you see the astounded look on their faces when they hear that we have a network of 35 (Interviewee 5).

When discussing motivations for Chinese academics to become involved in the ASCs, the experts made the following statements:

The academics involved with the ASCs are committed to Australian research and want to teach it. They have an intellectual commitment to the field of Australian studies (DW).

These academics have a real love and passion for Australia and its culture, films and literature and that is just their academic focus. For some of them it's a little broader and for some of them it's just English literature more broadly. For some of them who teach they have a passion for introducing Chinese students to something about Australian culture. What happens beyond that is a huge question mark. Some of them do Masters programs in Australian studies so their students are undertaking pretty serious commitments to Australian studies (Interviewee 5).

I think some of them in the past were placed into it. Like back in the 80s you were told what your expertise was. A lot of them came out of English language schools (Interviewee 7).

I believe that some of these academics don't really care I mean they like Australia they like the literature but in terms of building a deep bilateral relationship they are not necessarily interested in that. They just want to do their academic thing and if they can meet an Australian academic who is in their area that is fantastic. Better still if they can have a trip to Australia and do some research. They are far too polite and would never say this but it's a little bit of sense of being wheeled out from time to time by the Embassy. How are they contributing? I think they are contributing through their teaching and their translations of literature into Chinese which means people can read Australian literature (Interviewee 8).

Does it help their career I am not sure. Some of them do it on top of what they have to do. The problem is that up until now you did not have to publish too much. Also, I think another one which not many people will tell you is that the field of Australian studies within literature and language is safe and not contentious (Interviewee 1).

Kevin Hobgood Brown, when asked what he saw as the goals of the ASCs and what support was needed to increase their contribution to Australia-China relations, stated:

Originally, the idea was let's create a vehicle through which government programs can be supplemented, collaborated with and expanded using non-government funding. As a result, FASIC was set up as an independent non-profit foundation and registered with the Australian Non-profit and Charities Commission and has raised funding from the private sector to create the Chair of Australia Studies at Peking University. Now it is the primary funding source for the Australian contributions to the Australian studies in China.

Academics in the Centres are critical to their success. Chinese people get interested in Australia and in Australia studies, pretty much the same way students here get motivated by things. You have a professor who strikes that right chord of interest and excitement and knowledge and passion and passes that on to somebody else so that they get enthused. If they are successful the program is

successful. Like here there is a whole range of factors which influences whether a particular teacher is successful or not successful.

## **5.6 Evaluation**

There was agreement that the current Australian Government places public diplomacy high on their strategic profile, but that evaluation of public diplomacy initiatives is difficult:

This stuff is really hard to find evidence and actual data is tricky to show cause and effect for public diplomacy. When the Embassy does measure public diplomacy, Australia is so positively regarded in China. An early establishment of diplomatic ties in 1972 and an early investment although modest in these educational links and other types of cultural and arts links in the '70s and '80s, I think really did lay the groundwork. (Interviewee 1).

The big challenge with this is measuring it. It's so qualitative (Interviewee 5).

When talking about evaluating the ASCs, an expert referred to the output grant reports:

The issue with the Centre grants which are called output grants is they can't be accurately and scientifically measured. The Directors can just write a glowing report, there is no incentive to collaborate with Australian academics and there is no accountability (Interviewee 5).

## **5.7 Analysis of ASC Outcome Reports**

A request was submitted to access the ASCs annual reports, however I was advised that annual reports are not prepared. I was granted approval to access and review the output reports. These are annual reports that ASCs can submit to the Australia-China Council to identify their outputs for the previous year and to request additional funding. The desktop audit shows that funding for the ASCs has remained static and the objectives have not changed since their inception.

Figure 29 shows that the majority of funding applications were within the fields of Drama, Literature and the Arts. This should not be surprising given the ASCs' objectives are mostly related to the use of English language courses and research in Chinese universities. These funding opportunities aim to enhance the range, volume, quality and value of research on Australia, and to promote greater Australian teaching content in China.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia-China Council".

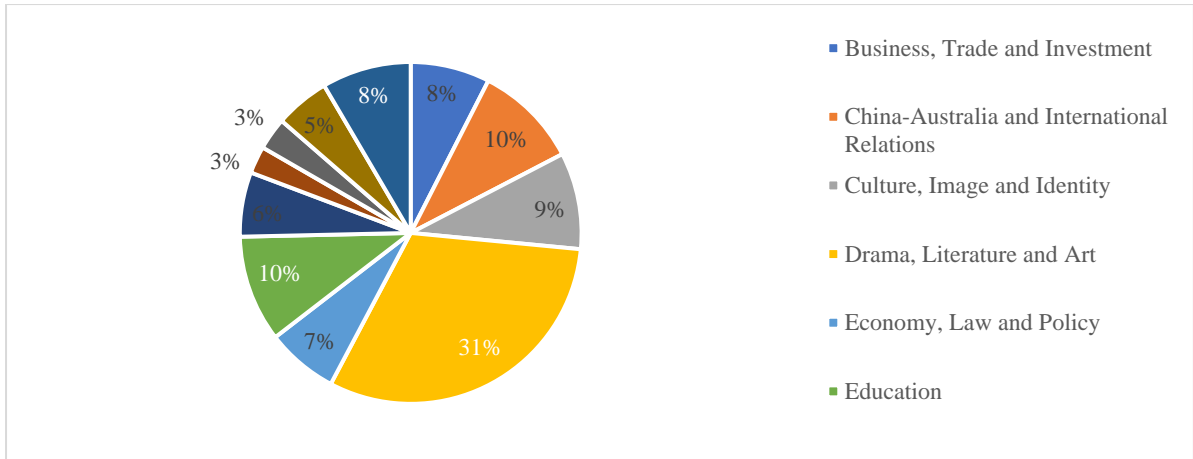


Figure 29 Proposals considered by discipline

Figure 30 shows that the fields of Drama, Literature and Art (34 per cent) are the most successful in receiving funding, with applications for research related to the Australia-China bilateral relationship and cooperation (16 per cent) the second most approved.

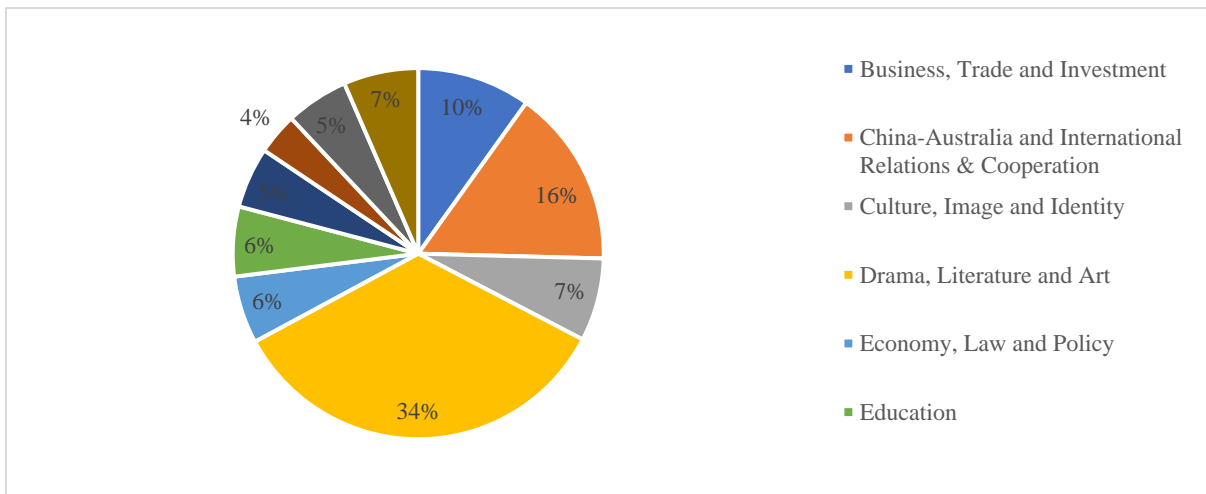


Figure 30 Approved funding by discipline

Figure 31 shows that funding applications for education research have been relatively unsuccessful, with less than 30 per cent of applications successfully gaining funding. In line with increases in STEM research between Australia and China, and China becoming Australia's largest source of immigration and tourism; not surprisingly, Science, Environment and Technology, and Tourism and Immigration both have a 50 per cent success rate. Over 70 per cent of Australia-China related applications were successful; however, less than 50 per cent

of Drama, Literature and Art applications successfully applied for funding, which seems to show a move away from predominately supporting English literature (the original purpose of the ASCs).

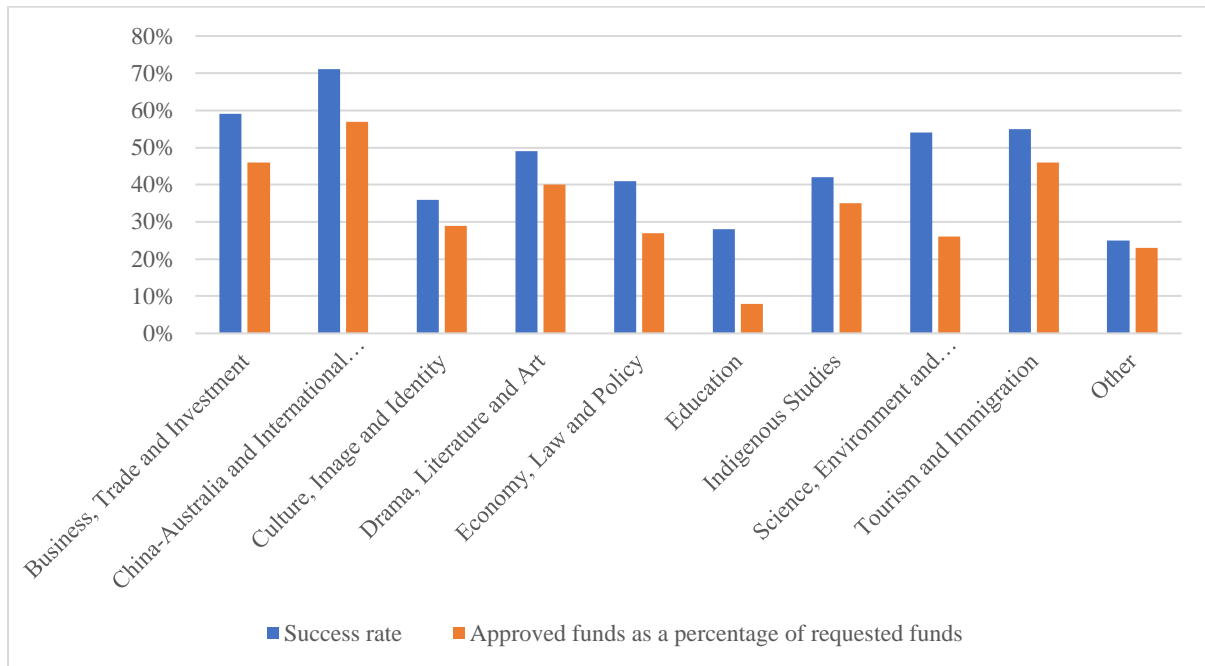
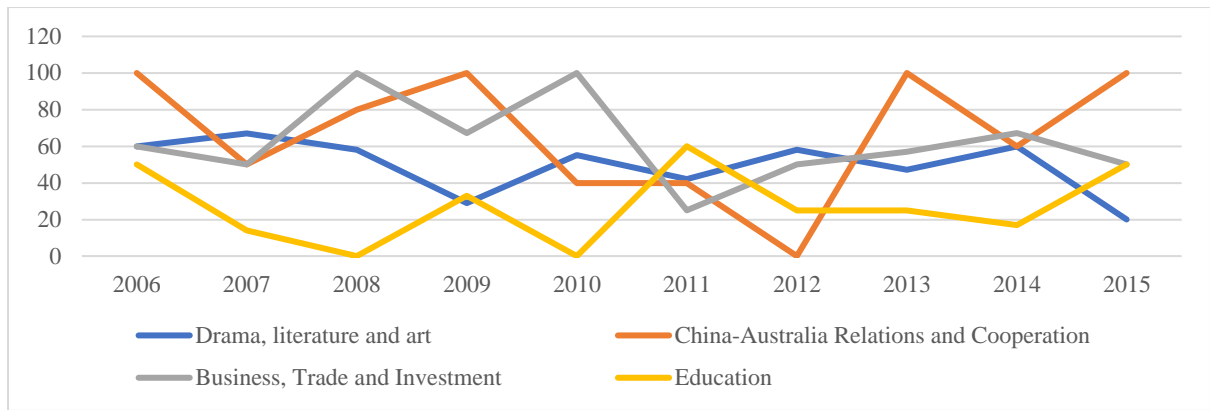


Figure 31 Success rate and approval of funds as a percentage of requested funds

Figure 32 looks at the funding trends of key research areas from 2006 to 2015. Drama, Literature and Art has stayed relatively steady until 2014 when there was a downward trend. There appears to be significant variability in funding Australia-China Relations and Cooperation topics, with no funding provided in 2012 followed by a sharp increase through to the end of 2015.



*Figure 32 Success rate of key strategic disciplines over time*

Education topics have remained consistently low with no sign of increasing. Finally, the fields of Business, Trade and Investment, a priority area for the Australian Government, has seen a drop since its peak in 2007, slowly declining since 2010.

### **5.7.1 Desktop audit of ASC activities and collaborations**

While interning for the Peking University ASC, I sent correspondence to all ASCs across universities in China, to identify those most active in key areas such as research outputs, teaching, events, visiting fellows and online media.

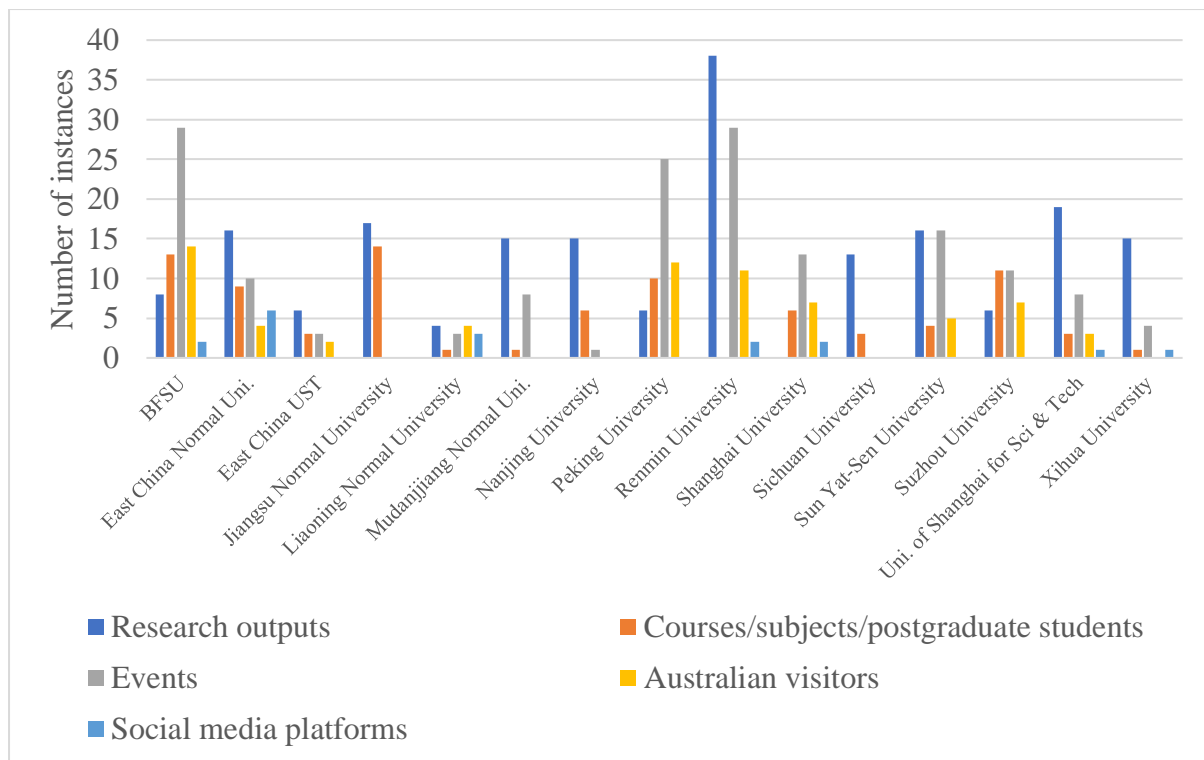
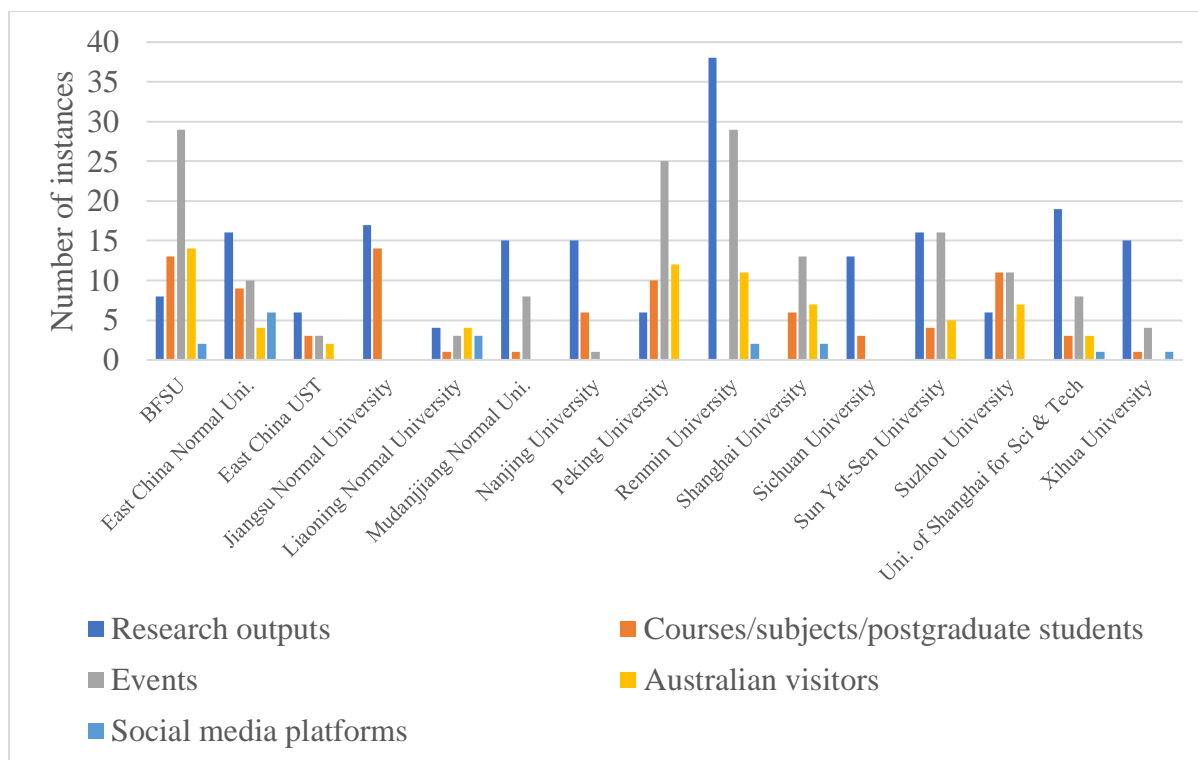


Figure 33 outlines the results from an analysis of the 15 most active Centres in universities across China. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of activities and cannot be used to evaluate the effectiveness of individual Centres. It is to provide a snapshot of which Centres are active in these specific areas and the kind of work that is being undertaken to promote Australian studies in China.



*Figure 33 Recent activities of the most active Australia Studies Centres in Chinese universities*

Recent fellows, from Australia, who visited the ASCs were mostly researchers or government officials residing in China or visiting for other purposes. Although these visitors from Australia may not be promoting new engagement with the Centres, this highlights the essential role they play in providing structure to Australian Studies in China. The ASCs provide an existing network across approximately thirty cities, in which visiting Australian business leaders, students, academics or government officials can tap into. In the case of visitors, it is the larger more well-known universities - Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) (14 visitors), Peking University (12 visitors) and Renmin University (11 visitors) - within the past three years that hosted visiting Australian students and/or experts. This is most likely due to visiting experts and academics having prior knowledge of, or connections with, the more well-known universities in China. BFSU, the most active Centre in relation to visitors, had several well-known academics and sinologists visit their Centre, including Professor Bob Carr (UTS),

Professor Colin Mackerras (Griffith), Professor David Walker (Deakin), Professor Greg McCarthy (Adelaide), Professor Nicholas Jose (Adelaide), Professor Stephen Whittington (Adelaide), Professor Wayne Hudson, Professor David Carter (Queensland), Professor, Mark Finnane (Griffith), Professor Chris Aulich (Canberra), Professor Nick Bisley (La Trobe), Professor Geremie Barme (ANU), Dr. Xianlin Song (UWA), and Dr. Richard Hu (Canberra). Peking University, the second most active, also had high profile visitors, including former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and prominent Australian journalists, authors and Vice Chancellors.

Events held at ASCs produced similar results in that it was the well-known universities that held the most events over the past three years. BFSU (29 events), Renmin University (29 events) and Peking University (25 events) were the most active in hosting events on campus. BFSU reported the most events, with mostly academic talks and forums relating to modern Australian political phenomena, as well as English translation competitions and Australian Writers Week. In addition, Renmin University held similar events, with a focus on lecture series and addresses. Peking University held high-profile events and conferences on Australian studies; public talks and roundtables; translation competitions; drama courses; lectures from respected Australian academics, politicians, writers and journalists; and Australian Writers Week.

Jiangsu Normal University was identified as having the most courses, subjects, and postgraduate students selecting Australian studies, with a large focus on postgraduate students and undergraduate subjects: Australian History (postgraduate), History of Relations Between China and Australia (postgraduate), Overseas Chinese in Australia (postgraduate), International Relation Theory (postgraduate), History of Sino-Foreign Culture Exchange (postgraduate), History of British Commonwealth (postgraduate), Relationship between Asia and Europe (postgraduate), Selected Readings in History (undergraduate), Australian Tourism

(undergraduate), History of Chinese and Foreign Relations (undergraduate), History of Relations between China and Australia (undergraduate), History, Society and Culture of Australia (undergraduate), History of International Relations (undergraduate) and Social History (undergraduate). BFSU was similar, with a long list of Masters and undergraduate courses available, including Australian history, Australian literature, Australian gender studies, Australian literary translation, Australian politics, Australian nationalism, Australian language and society, Australian politics since 1990, China-Australian Relations, Western images of China, Australian social and cultural issues, and Australian great books.

Renmin University was identified as the most research active Centre (38 research outputs). The Renmin University ASC has been proactive in outlining their research outputs online. Examples of research outputs are mostly abstracts from journal articles written on a vast array of political, linguistic, cultural and economic Australian topics. They are co-written with Australian academics and not necessarily published in peer-reviewed journals. The University of Shanghai (19 research outputs) and Jiangsu Normal University (17 research outputs) were the next most research active, with mostly peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers. Although statistically less output at Renmin University, it could be argued that peer-reviewed journals would have greater audience impact.

Finally, most Centres did not list any social media or had inactive websites. The active Centres used Weibo (China's version of Twitter) and WeChat (China's version of Facebook and/or WhatsApp), but with limited updates. One powerful connection tool for the Chinese academics is the ASC WeChat group, in which participants often share articles and news stories regarding Australia. This is a strong tool to ensure Chinese academics remain engaged and built relationships with their colleagues around China.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the Phase One results, as carried out to investigate the problem: *Have Australian Government-funded international education programs resulted in a network of Sino-Australian opinion leaders who contribute to Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China?* Data analysis of expert interviews, was presented under the six key themes: creating the correct situation, networks and people-to-people, economic benefits, political benefits, nation and image branding, leaders and ambassadors. A discussion on the role of the ASCs in Australian-China relations and evaluation of the programs followed. The results of the ASC desktop audit provided a content analysis of the ASC output and grant reports. These findings were discussed in relation to key areas such as research outputs, teaching, events, visiting fellows and online media.

The next chapter will present results from the student survey and opinion leader interviews. In the final chapter, findings will be discussed in the context of published literature, conclusions will be presented and implications of the findings will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER SIX: PHASE TWO – DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

Despite having joined the Chinese Communist Party and working closely with Mao Zedong since Yan'an in 1946, I will always be considered an outsider.<sup>1</sup>

### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of Phase Two data, gathered through an online survey of NCP alumni who undertook their program in China. Opinion leader scales were used to identify if NCP alumni were opinion leaders by asking questions regarding their continued involvement with China after their program. If they were identified as active opinion leaders they were asked to participate in a follow-up interview. The analysis will break down the results into four conditions of contact necessary for NCP scholars to build mutual understanding. This will be followed by an outline of key themes from the survey and interview data.

### **6.1 Process of data collection for Phase Two**

Using the literature to extend the research of Molly Bettie, who investigated opinion leadership and contact hypothesis through the Fulbright Program, an online survey was created.<sup>2</sup> Questions were designed to identify examples of positive contact (using the contact hypothesis) as well as three scales of opinion leadership to measure if NCP alumni were actively involved in Australia-China relations and showed signs of opinion leadership

A spreadsheet of NCP alumni was created using the list of awarded scholars on the DFAT website. Students who were awarded their scholarship in 2016 or 2017 were not included as it was assumed they would either still be studying, interning in China, or yet to commence their program. This study is limited to scholars who selected to study/work in

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney Rittenberg as quoted by an NCP alumnus in his interview when referencing what he learned about Chinese culture during his NCP program.

<sup>2</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

mainland China and/or Hong Kong. The online survey was emailed to all 76 NCP recipients who had completed their program. A database was created using contact email addresses, WeChat, Facebook and NCP alumni groups. WeChat IDs and accounts were also used to obtain scholars' contact details. In addition to individually emailing and messaging all participants, DFAT assisted by posting a link to the survey on the NCP Alumni Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Initially, the link was emailed directly to participants and posted on social media on 5 February 2018. Every two weeks, until 5th April 2018, reminders were sent to scholars who had not completed the survey. Follow-up interviews with the scholars who were identified as opinion leaders were then conducted.

## **6.2 Process for analysing the online questionnaire data**

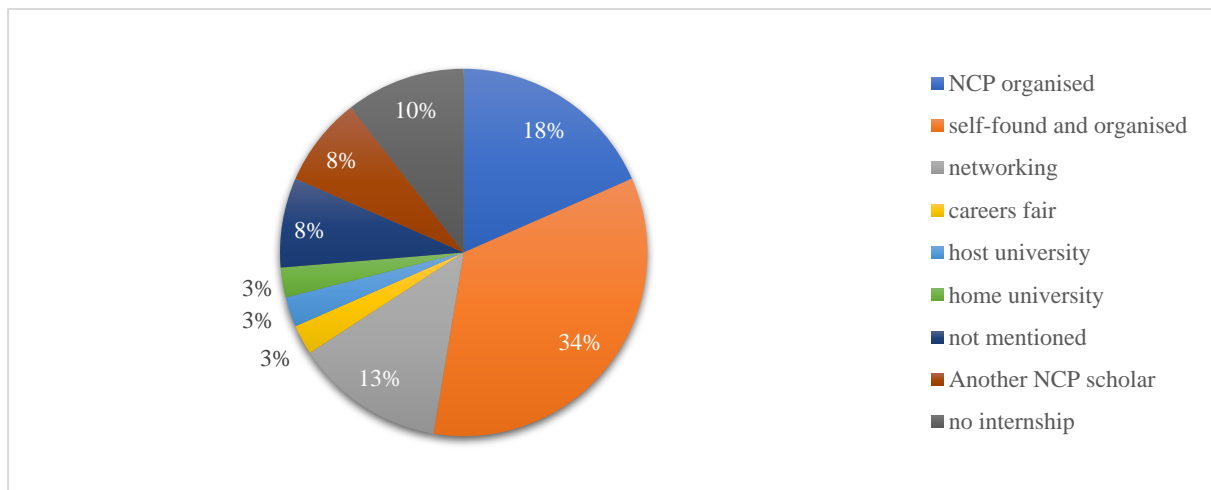
This section presents the findings from the analysis of data from the 39 responses to the online questionnaire. These results represent just over half (51 per cent) of the NCP alumni contacted. There are 26 questions in the questionnaire, consisting of Part A, B and C. Questions 1 and 2, in Part A, gathered names, contact and permission to interview, demographic data and information about the scholar's experience prior to their arrival in China. Part B consisted of Questions 3-21, asked the scholars about their experiences in China; and, Part C consisted of Questions 22 to 26 asked the scholars to provide a response regarding their experience upon returning to Australia. Responses to Questions 22 to 24 were tested using scales of opinion leadership to analyse if the scholar had exhibited the behaviours of an opinion leader since completing their program. This is discussed in more detail in section 6.3.

### **6.2.1 Online questionnaire data**

*Q3 Did you complete an internship as part of your program and who organised it?*

This question was asked to gain an understanding of the level of support given to NCP scholars

and if they thought this was sufficient to prepare them for their role as an opinion leader. Figure 34 indicates that 34 per cent of NCP scholars organised their own internship, either through networking or direct contact with their host organisation. The DFAT NCP Unit, the Australian Embassy in China, the Australian Chamber of Commerce, other NCP scholars and home universities were mentioned in responses as providing useful support to identify suitable internships. The scholars believed that as part of the selection process, NCP recipients were assessed as independent and resourceful and therefore should be able to access support as and when needed.



*Figure 34 How NCP scholars found their internships*

Scholars were unanimous in their recognition of Australia China Youth Association (ACYA), as a student organisation that provides support and advice before, during and after the scholars complete their NCP program. Figure 35, shows the cities in which ACYA clubs have been established.

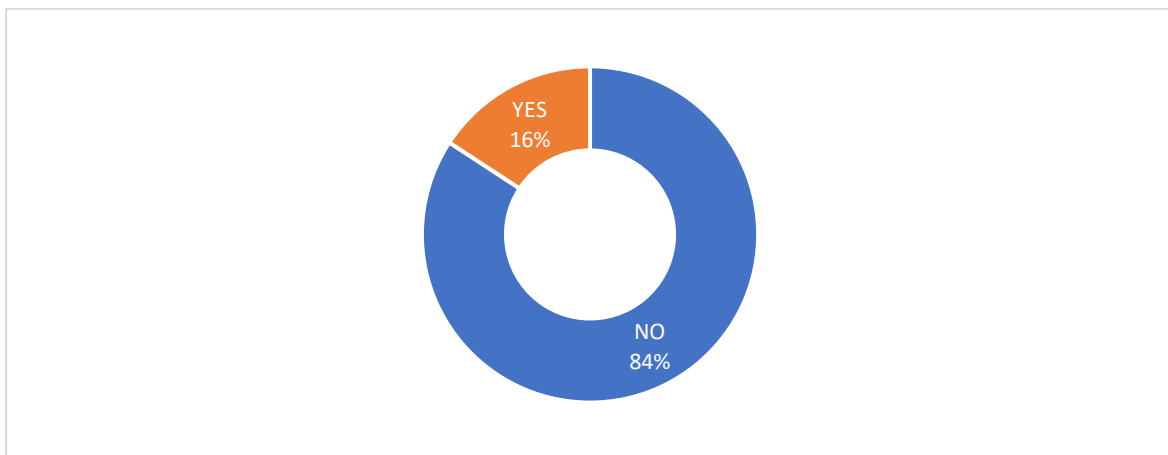


*Figure 35 Network of ACYA chapters around China and Australia*

*Q4. Do you consider yourself ethnically Chinese?*

Question 4 was asked to understand if Chinese diaspora were engaged with the NCP program.

Figure 36 shows that 16 per cent of respondents identified as ethnically Chinese.



*Figure 36 Responses who consider themselves ethnically Chinese*

Figure 37 displays the results in response to Questions 5 and 6, showing that prior to the program all scholars had achieved a minimum of beginner Mandarin, and that during their program the majority of scholars improved their language skills whilst in China.

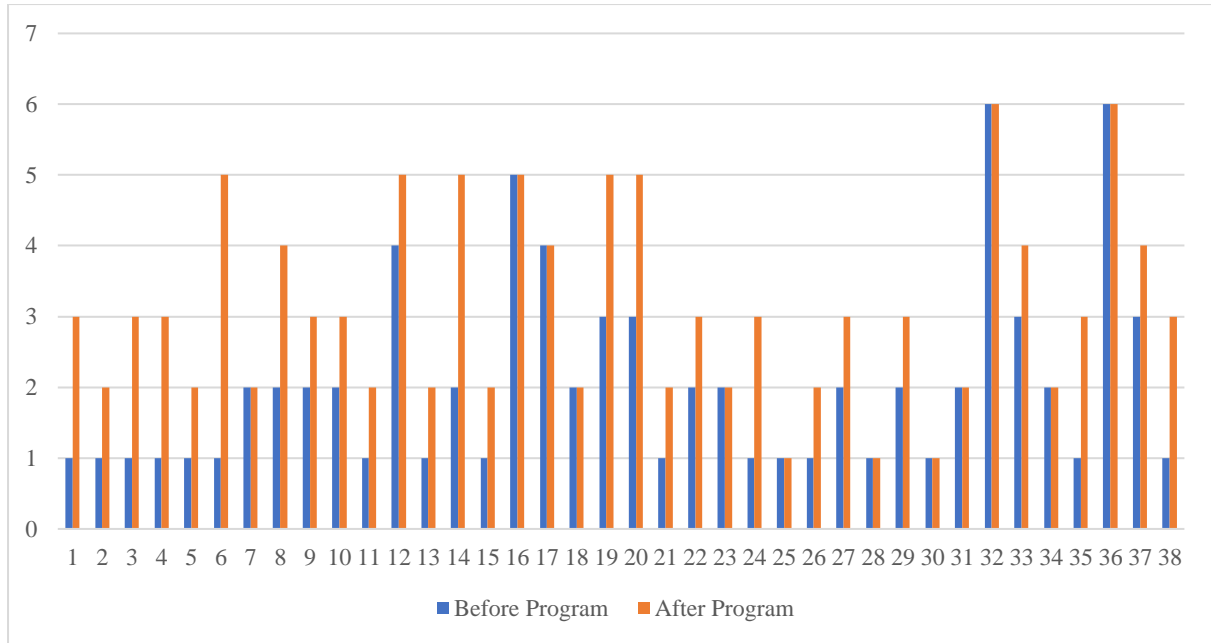


Figure 37 Chinese language ability

Q7. What were your motivations for applying for an NCP?

Figure 38 shows that the opportunity to travel and spend time in China were high motivators for scholars applying for the NCP scholarship. In addition, the data shows that NCP scholars are career focused, and interested in building professional contacts and improving their chances of gaining a better job. The prospect of enhancing their employability is a higher motivation than money or prestige.

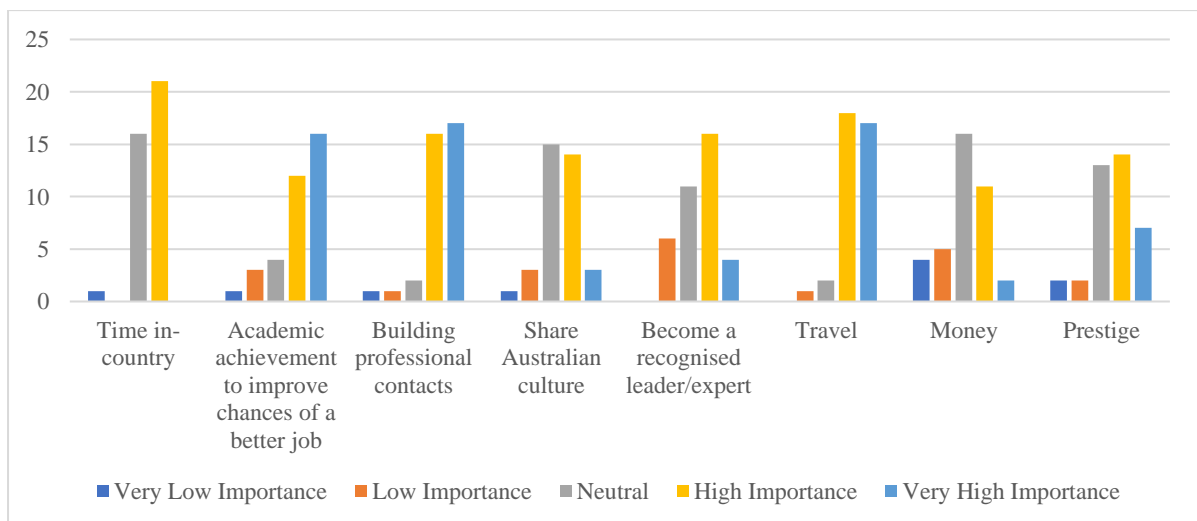


Figure 38 Motivations for applying to be an NCP scholar

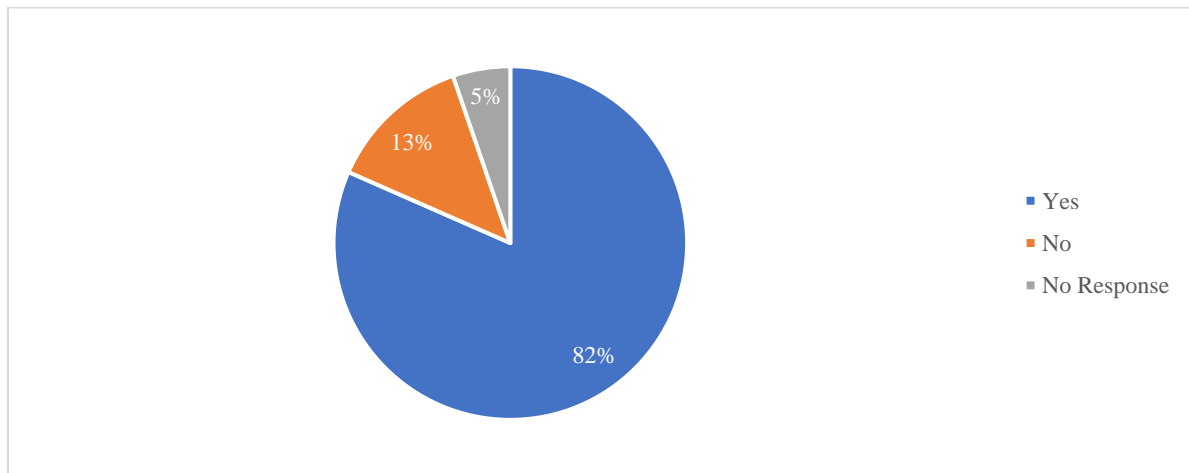
*Q8. Examples of support that were provided to you before leaving Australia that helped prepare you for moving to another country?*

In response to Question 8, the majority of scholars indicated the support they received prior to their departure from Australia was at a very high level. They nominated events and organisations such as the NCP departure training, case managers, home universities, ACYA and previous NCP scholars as people and organisations that provided support.

Questions 9 and 10, were focused on in-country experiences:

*Q9. Did you feel you received adequate support during your time in your host country to ensure you were able to adjust to a new culture?*

Figure 39, shows that most scholars (82 per cent) reported that they received adequate support in-country to adjust to a new culture.



*Figure 39 Did you receive enough support to adjust to a new culture?*

*Q10. Who provided the support?*

Figure 40, indicates that support was provided by similar organisations as prior to departure; however, once in China additional support was provided. The largest provider of support were foreign friends (18 per cent), followed by local friends (14 per cent) and ACYA and their host university (10 per cent).

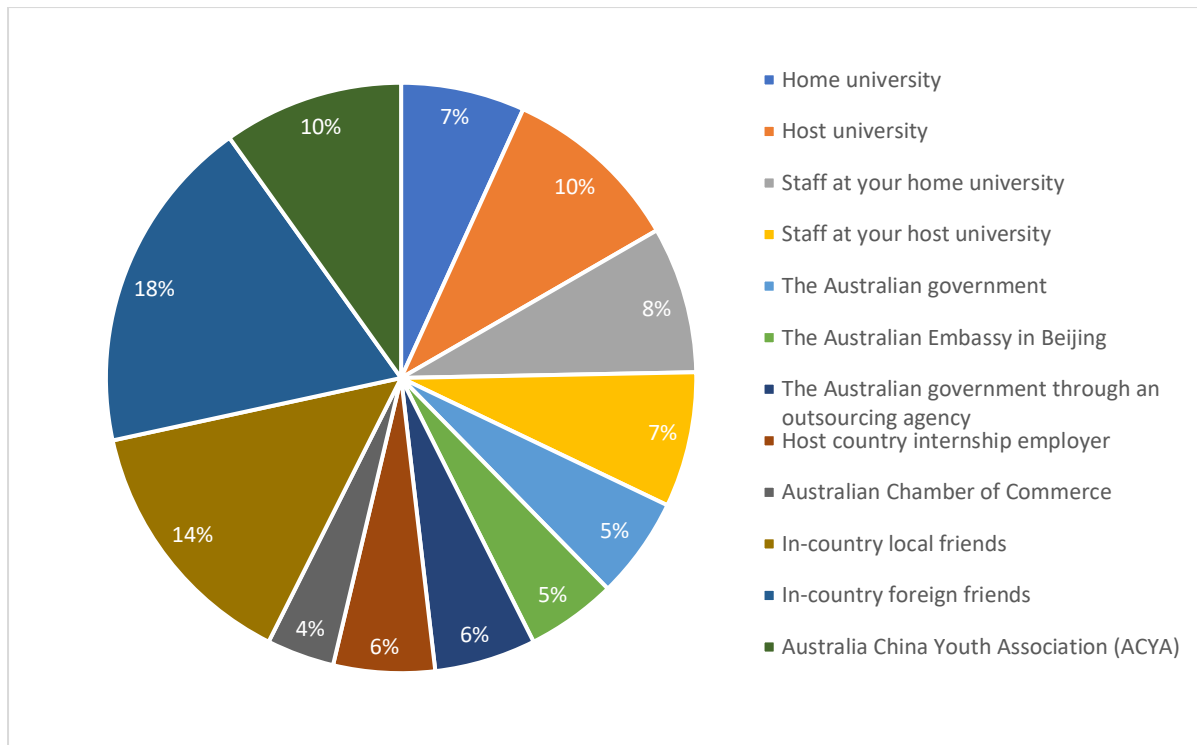


Figure 40 Support while in China

*Q11. Examples of activities that were organised during your program in-country that helped you better understand the people and culture.*

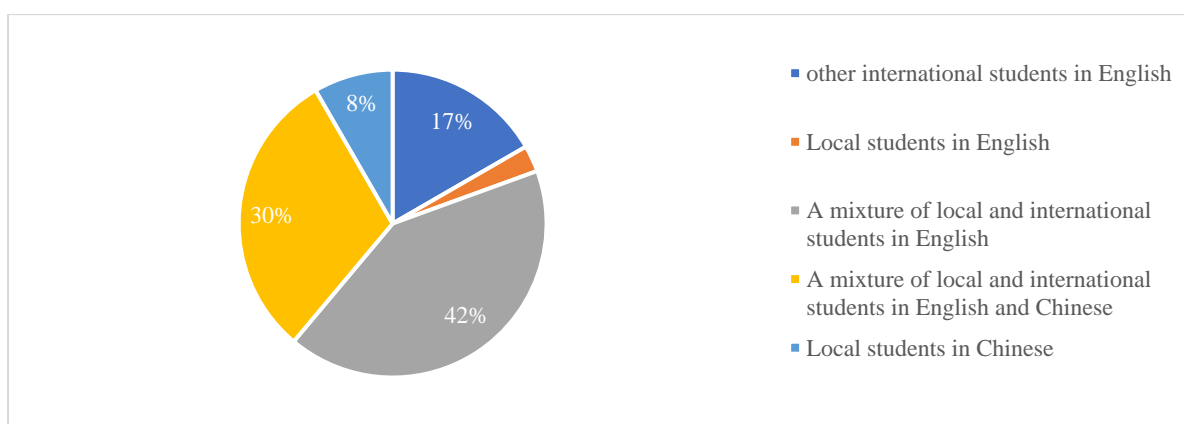
Figure 41 presents an itemisation of the variety of activities organised for scholars during their NCP experience in China. Most students believed that it was the responsibility of each NCP scholar to identify their own extra-curricular activities. In addition, they expressed an appreciation for any activity that gave them an entrée into the local community, particularly being invited into someone's home. Only one scholar stated they had no activities organised for them.



*Figure 41 Cross-cultural activities during their NCP program*

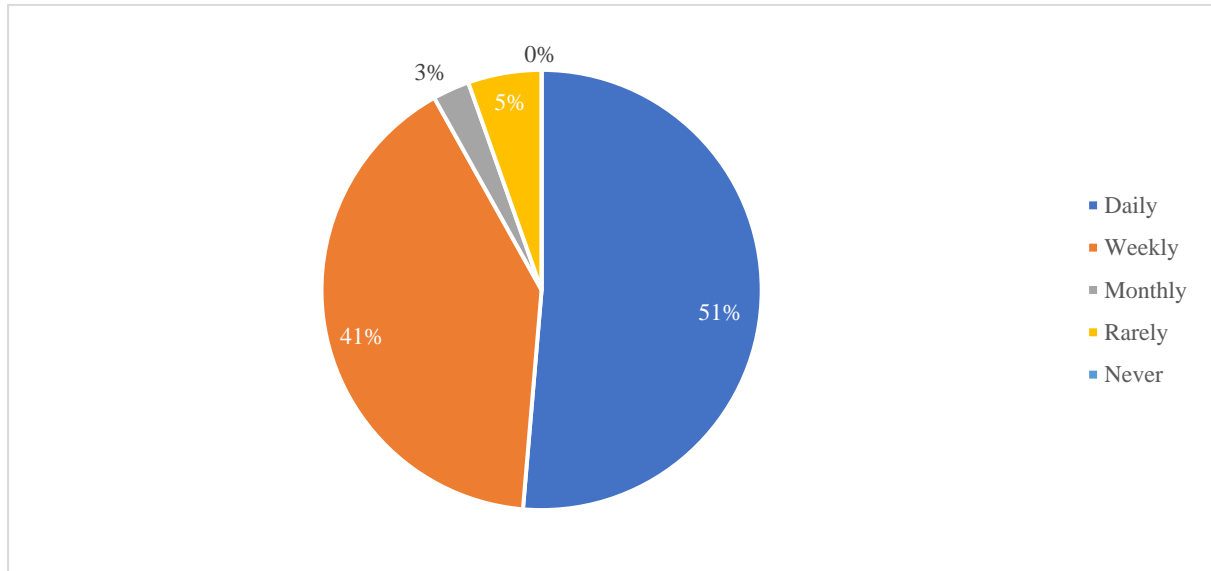
*Q.12 In your friendship groups who were you mostly socialising with?*

Figure 42 shows that most NCP students did not speak Mandarin with local students when socialising. Only 8 per cent reported speaking mostly in Chinese with local students and even less reported speaking with local students in English (3 per cent). However, there was a reasonable response that they socialised with a mixture of local and international students in English and Chinese (30 per cent). The majority of NCP scholars' socialisation occurred within a mixed setting of local and international students speaking in English (42 per cent).



*Figure 42 Scholars social groups while in China*

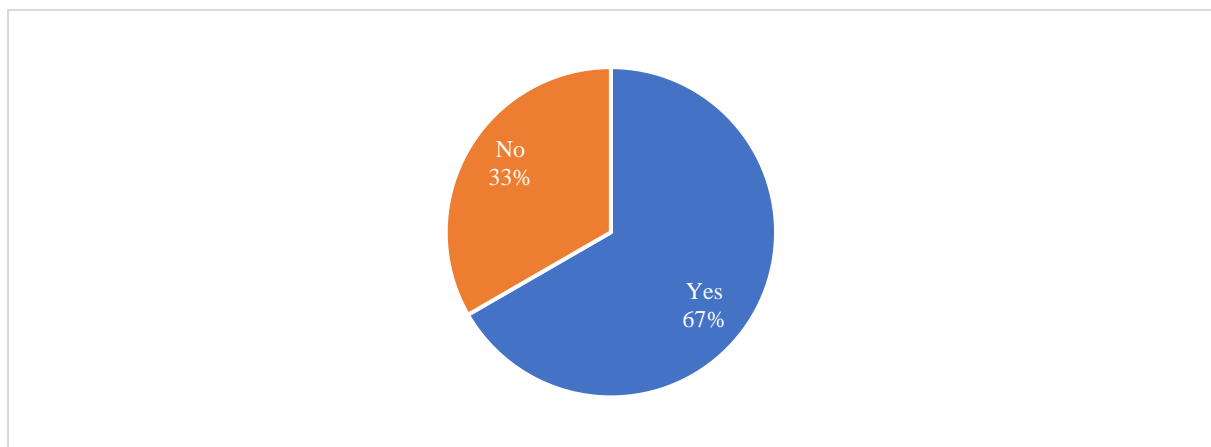
In response to Question 13, Figure 43 shows that just over half (51 per cent) of the NCP scholars interacted with local people on a daily basis, with most of the remaining scholars only interacting with local people on a weekly basis (41 per cent), or rarely (5 per cent).



*Figure 43 Frequency of interaction with local people*

*Q14. After spending time with locals in China did any of your preconceived stereotypes change?*

NCP scholars were asked if their experience living in China altered any of their preconceived stereotypes. Figure 44, shows that 67 per cent of NCP scholars, after spending time in China, changed some of their preconceived stereotypes.



*Figure 44 Did your stereotypes of China change after your program?*

*Q15. Did your stereotypes of China change after your program?*

Table 6, summarises the responses to Question 15. As a way of presenting the tone and content of the responses, frequent comments were coded under six themes. These themes are friendliness, Chinese students and host universities, culture, political change, language and gender. Some scholars changed their negative stereotype of Chinese people being rude, unhelpful and introverted. They realised many Chinese were shy, underconfident with their English abilities, but curious about foreigners. In addition, with such a large population and different political system, it was more practical and appropriate to act in different manners in different situations. They also changed their views on the negative stereotype that Chinese students were not able to think critically. They now believed that Chinese students can think critically; however, local people do not place undue pressure on themselves by criticising government, superiors or elders, as is common in Western societies. All scholars reported that China is a diverse country and NCP students should be encouraged to travel outside the heavily populated and busy capital cities to broaden their outlook. Chinese culture varies greatly from region to region so building assumptions based on experiences in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong do not sufficiently represent the depth of Chinese culture.

*Table 6 Changes in preconceived stereotypes*

<b>Friendliness</b>
I once thought Chinese were unfriendly to foreigners but now I think that unfriendliness is mistaken for shyness, and Chinese are curious about foreigners.
I once thought Chinese were rude but this changed once I gained a deeper understanding of their values, culture and living conditions. Living in a country of 1 billion+ requires some level of selfishness.
I now think Chinese are very receptive particularly in regional areas such as Gansu, [Inner Mongolia] and Qinghai.
I now think Chinese are extremely welcoming which can turn into ‘positive racism’ whereby foreigners overtly receive favourable treatment over fellow Chinese people.

<b>Chinese students and host universities</b>
I thought Chinese students were not able to think critically in relation to their government and general issues due to media censorship but now I think that it is not a rational thing to do in the

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current job climate.

I now think that Chinese students do know how to balance study and play and don't just focus on studies.

I once thought that Chinese students are passive now I think they are quite interactive.

Now I think that students are not that different to Australians, they still miss lectures.

Did not expect such a strong student hall culture.

Increased understanding of the different markers of success.

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## Chinese culture

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Chinese people were mostly very serious about traditional values, but many (especially young) have very liberal thinking.

What we see in the West as Chinese food is a limited sample. I did not realise to what degree many foods are isolated to particular regions and how very different the cuisines of different regions are.

The concept of Chinese self-perception was something that changed quite heavily. By mixing with locals from all different facets of Beijing, I was able to see that there is not one uniform perception of China, its government and its culture.

Locals were a more diverse group than the Chinese people I had previously encountered in the past. Recognition of diversity of Chinese culture.

A lot of China was mega cities and crowds of people, but I got to travel and see the natural beauty of China.

HK life is not as fast as it looks

I assumed everyone was the same everywhere, but there are quite large differences in how people are brought up in China versus Western countries I've lived in.

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## Political change

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I now understand that not all Chinese people necessarily desire political change, many believe democracy is not the right fit and do not actively seek to use tools such as VPNs to gain access to unfiltered information.

More nuanced view of the dynamics between HK and mainland China.

The influence of the CCP in day to day life for Chinese citizens was different to my preconceived stereotypes as I found it to be significantly lesser than I had imagined.

All Chinese were communists is completely wrong.

Young people are more willing to talk about 'difficult issues'.

Students are mostly happy with the current situation although some express concern with the rife corruption among high-level officials and businessmen.

Things aren't done wrong, they're done right for China.

China is a less developed country was challenged daily.

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Actions may seem selfish and get a lot of attention internationally have underlying reasons

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behind them.

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### Language

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Chinese culture/language is somewhat impenetrable for foreigners.

I believed that most people spoke English fairly well; while this may be true for younger generations, it is not true of older generations.

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### Gender

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More nuanced understanding of the gender divide. I did not expect the degree to which gender roles, particularly those of women, are promulgated and prescribed normatively by not only men but women as well. While women are very empowered in big cities, still very pervasive stereotypes as to how women should behave, and the kinds of tasks men should do because women can't.

Unwanted attention from men as the stereotype is that 'white' women are promiscuous

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One of the stereotypes held by the scholars was that most Chinese can speak English and are confident in their ability to do so with native speakers. They were surprised at the diversity of cultures and values in China, and the reticence or inability of the local people to communicate in English. One scholar echoed the sentiments of many respondents, stating that she did not believe she had changed her preconceived ideas around stereotyping but rather that her ideas had developed. On the other hand, several scholars responded that they did not have any preconceived stereotypes.

*Q16. Did you at any time feel like you were treated differently to local students (positive and/or negative experiences)?*

Scholars' responses to Question 16 showed that most believed local Chinese communities welcomed foreign students but that there was an insurmountable barrier for scholars without a minimum of intermediate Chinese. Respondents reported that language was a substantial barrier to assimilation and involvement in extra-curricular activities. The majority of scholars believed that NCP students must have basic language skills to be informed about events and to participate in local sporting and cultural teams.

Many commented that they felt they were treated differently, or as an ‘outsider’. This was not intended to be a negative statement, it was merely a fact. All commented on the positive attention gained from locals. On the negative side, respondents reported that taxi drivers would often refuse to pick up foreigners and restaurant owners treated foreign clients differently than locals. They also reported that shopkeepers and the elderly were more likely to be negative towards foreigners than younger members of the community and university staff. Several female students commented on gender issues in China. One respondent claimed, ‘There are still roles for women in China and sometimes disrespect for their perception of Western women’s values.’

*Q17. Was there a time in which culture-shock led you to feel ‘different’ during your time in-country?*

Many scholars reported that they had experienced culture-shock after arriving in China. They attributed this to needing time to adjust to the crowds, pollution, and to gain confidence to use their limited Chinese language skills. They discussed the importance of understanding the Chinese sense of humour, in which laughing at someone does not hold the same level of insult as it does in Western countries. Similarly, the Chinese do not understand Australian irony and self-deprecating humour. One scholar stated, ‘as a tall, white man you are very obvious in a crowd, locals are often taking pictures. Funny at first but makes you feel isolated and singled out after being in China long enough.’

Time of arrival in-country is important when dealing with culture-shock, as the feeling of being an outsider is escalated if scholars arrive during festivals such as Chinese New Year. One student reported, ‘I felt very lonely and out of place as I was not joining in on traditions like I would back home in Australia during holiday seasons.’ To overcome culture-shock, students reported that individuals must quickly gain an understanding of the ‘different ways of

doing things and because of that, student groups and institutions are heavy in bureaucracy’.

The positive experiences reported by students can be summed up by the following responses:

Yes, you do feel different, being white makes you feel that frequently. That’s not due to culture-shock. That is why I love China.

When I travelled throughout China I don’t think I ever felt different but culture-shock hit me after getting onto a train and being the only Caucasian on board I realised the amount of cultural diversity that exists beyond the typical Western society.

Being in a country as a minority is a humbling experience and has been the primary motivation for me to learn Mandarin.

A quote that possibly explains the phenomenon of living in China, reported by one student citing Sidney Rittenberg, was that ‘despite having joined the Chinese Communist Party and working closely with Mao Zedong since Yan’an in 1946, I will always be considered an outsider.’ This student went on to say, ‘Perhaps the Chinese culture and language is impenetrable by foreigners’.

*Q18. Do you have any examples in which you were made to feel welcomed by local friends, students, colleagues or staff?*

Most students reported that they were always made to feel welcome. Sometimes they were feted by locals, particularly when visiting small villages that had few foreign visitors. The events organised by the Australia China Youth Dialogue, ACYA, AustCham and the Australian Embassy were much appreciated by the NCP scholars. Many host universities have orientation events, residential college activities, and buddy programs, and through these activities they encourage local students to invite NCP scholars to their home for dinner or to visit tourist spots. The responses showed that it was up to the individual to join cultural or sporting activities as a way to assimilate within the local community.

*Q19. Did your classes provide situations in which you could regularly collaborate with local students?*

The majority of scholars responded that collaboration with local students was challenging. Most classes had group work but collaboration was difficult as many foreign exchange students did not take university seriously, preferring instead to spend their time travelling. Scholars also reported that many Chinese students preferred to work in groups speaking Mandarin or Cantonese.

*Q20. Did you have any issues working in groups with local students?*

Most scholars believed that many Chinese students were too shy to converse socially with foreign students on a regular basis. Communication was at times a barrier due to the limited English proficiency of Chinese students. Conversely, there were a few scholars who had no problems working or integrating with the local students in study group sessions, stating that locals were very happy to share their ideas. These scholars believed that the issues present in group work in China and Australia were similar. Some scholars believed that barriers were broken down when Australian students, gained Chinese language abilities and the confidence to use it as well as an understanding of the importance of hierarchy in Chinese culture, a value that is entrenched within academic and professional matters.

*Q.21 Where did you learn most about working with local people and their work/study culture?*

The largest contribution to cultural knowledge about Chinese work/study life was through internships, in particular, from their Chinese colleagues (23 per cent). Other large contributors were local students (13 per cent), local people (10 per cent) and networking events (9 per cent). To a lesser extent, Chinese friends (8 per cent) and ACYA, ACYD or AustCham networking events were also mentioned (6 per cent).

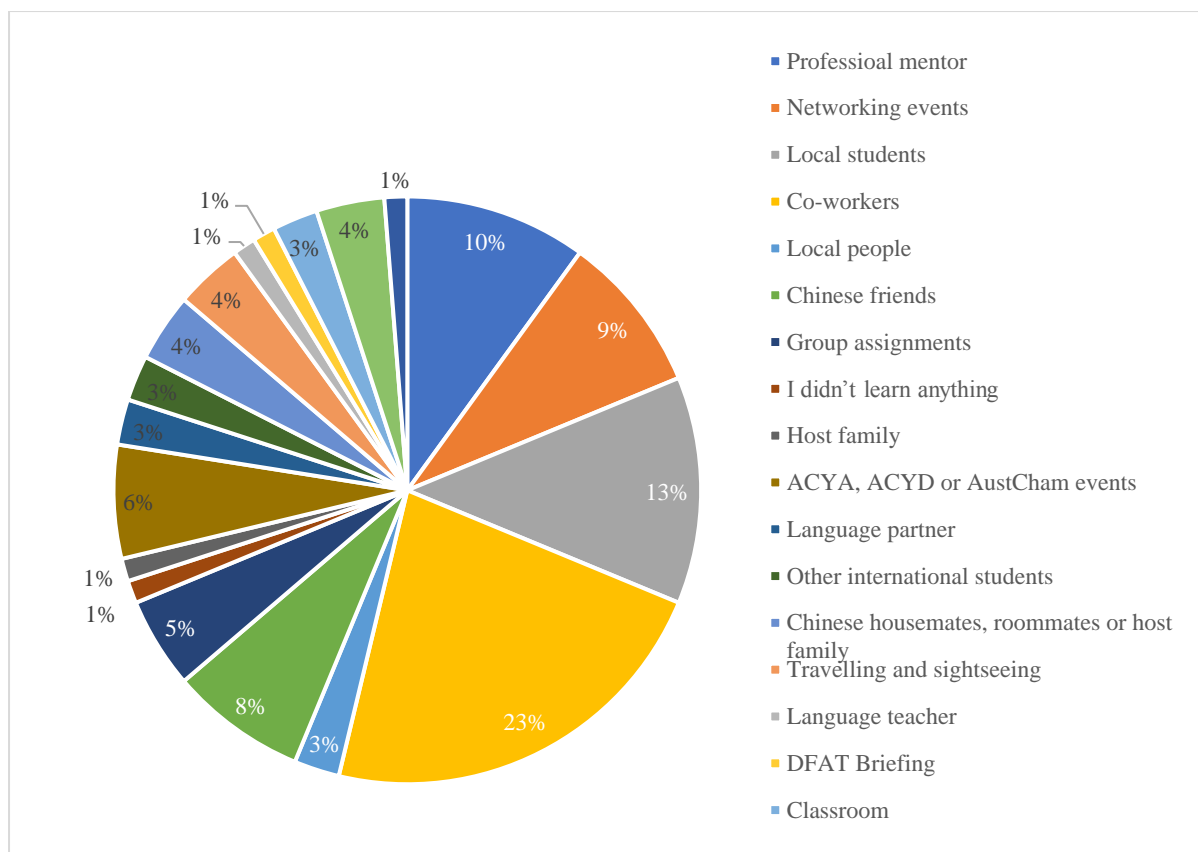


Figure 45 Where NCP scholars learned about Chinese professional culture

### 6.3 How the opinion leaders were identified

Follow-up interviews were conducted with alumni who were identified as opinion leaders (using three sets of opinion leader scales). The first scale measured the scholars' interest in China; and the second measured a scholar's leadership potential, with those in the top quartile considered to have the most potential to be influential. The third scale measured scholars' continued engagement with China by asking about their involvement in activities relating to their host country since the completion of their program. Those who completed at least three activities in the past year were considered engaged alumni with potential for being an opinion leader in this area.

There were 24 NCP alumni who were considered opinion leaders; however, four of these scholars did not give consent to be contacted for interview. Therefore, 20 participants were followed up for interview. Scholars provided their email address as consent for partaking

in a follow-up interview. These interviews were designed to be semi-structured to allow scholars to discuss their personal NCP experiences before, during and after their program in more depth. The aim was to gain a better understanding of how and why these opinion leaders remained engaged with China. In addition, I was interested in how the scholars transitioned into a career or further education that demonstrates an ongoing interest in China. Of these 20 participants, 14 responded to a request for a follow-up interview. The other six either did not consent or did not respond to several requests for interview. The interviews were transcribed and the data coded to identify instances where a scholar mentioned the presence, or absence, of one of the four conditions identified within the contact hypothesis literature.

#### **6.4 Analysis of opinion leaders' interview data**

The four conditions identified by Brown are social and institutional support, high acquaintance potential, equal status contact, and common goals and co-operation.<sup>3</sup> Positive and negative comments made by the opinion leaders have been placed under the most relevant condition.

##### **6.4.1 The presence of 'social and institutional support'**

The data shows that social and institutional support was present at a high level. All agreed that the generous funding enabled scholars to stay in China for up to 19 months. When discussing the support available prior to their departure, most scholars acknowledged that since the NCP had become a recognised brand within the Australian international education sector home universities were offering more assistance to students through the application process. Scholars unanimously commented on the high-level of support that the NCP program receives from DFAT and in particular the sponsorship by former Foreign Minister Julie Bishop. One student commented that,

I am amazed at the time that the Minister for Foreign Affairs spends supporting and promoting the

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<sup>3</sup> Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*.

NCP. The Minister's sponsorship has encouraged international companies and agencies to act as sponsors and to invite interns. This would not have been possible without Julie Bishop's support.

As a group, the majority of the opinion leaders believed that the level of support they received enabled them to settle quickly into life in China. However, many stated that it was still important that NCP scholars have the ability and knowledge to independently source the assistance they required, in order to gain the most out of their program. Scholars believed that if the government wanted to maximise the contribution made by alumni there would need to be additional support to encourage such engagement post-program.

#### **6.4.2 The presence of 'high acquaintance'**

The second condition, which is the presence of high acquaintance, was identified at a lower level than the condition of support. Most opinion leaders believed that they put considerable effort into finding opportunities to socialise within their local communities, but they faced many challenges. To break down barriers to socialising and forming networks in China, scholars need drive, confidence and most importantly the ability to speak the language. These attributes, and other interpersonal skills, are necessary for scholars to become opinion leaders who can negotiate the cultural and hierarchical elements of living in China. The students studying in mainland China, and to a lesser degree Hong Kong, reported that socialising with locals was made difficult, and in many cases impossible, through the lack of language skills.

All opinion leaders mentioned the importance of the internship component of the program, explaining that this activity offered opportunities to both socialise and build skills. Two opinion leaders were fortunate to gain employment, while also providing the flexibility to continue their studies in China, as a result of their internship. The data showed that local students were reluctant to communicate with foreigners. They would catch-up to study but this would rarely extend to socialising outside university. There was a high level of agreement that

students in China were less collaborative than students studying in Australia. These traits led to a reduced level of acquaintance. When discussing the attributes of an opinion leader, one respondent noted:

Some students only do their program for a semester but how long you stay is a personal thing. There is no formal requirement for a language or homestay. I think the government gives you sufficient money and is happy if you study and do an internship. Not everybody gets engaged. It is up to the individual to find opportunities and then to take the opportunities up to build networks of influence.

The opinion leaders offered the suggestion that more would be gained if, prior to their arrival in China, NCP participants were encouraged to undertake Chinese language classes to gain a skill level beyond beginner. Similar to that of a diplomat, intensive language training would allow these students to increase their impact. In addition, prior to the commencement of their study program, scholars could undertake intensive language training in one of the regions where locals have a lower level of competency speaking English.

#### **6.4.3 The presence of the condition, ‘equal status contact’**

Questions regarding the presence of the third condition, equal status contact, elicited a diversity of responses. Students who studied in Hong Kong said the local community was familiar with seeing foreigners, but responses showed that opinion leaders sometimes felt they were treated differently because, ‘domestic students prefer to study and socialise with someone who can speak Cantonese.’

In mainland China, students believed that they were also treated differently, but more from ‘reverse discrimination’ or ‘favouritism.’ To quote one of the opinion leaders, ‘The only [inequality] was in my favour.’ Another said, ‘I never had a negative experience, as I speak enough Chinese not to get too ripped off’. The opinion leaders stated that being seen as different would more likely occur in the regions. Children were more likely to respond to the physical difference rather than adults. The opinion leaders who had undertaken considerable travel prior to their NCP reported that they adjusted easier, to being treated different, than those who had

not experienced living in a foreign country. All respondents reported that, as a foreigner in China, they felt they were treated differently, but always treated well. One scholar stated that,

In cycling circles and in rural areas I was almost idolised simply for being foreign. At cycling races, I would be listed first on the entry list and interviewed by journalists despite coming 30<sup>th</sup> in the race simply because I was a foreigner. Foreigners, particularly white foreigners, are treated extremely well and the Chinese people are incredibly welcoming towards most foreign nationalities, sometimes to the detriment of their compatriots. Most reported that the attention was more positive than negative and that the majority of local Chinese are welcoming and curious about Australian lifestyle.

The prestige of being an NCP scholar was one of the opinion leader's prime motivations for undertaking the program. Responses showed that combining the reporting of the mobility program with the scholarship lowered the prestige of the NCP scholarship in the marketplace. It is difficult for prospective employers to distinguish between the two-week mobility students and the eighteen-month scholarship recipients.

Most opinion leaders responded that host universities, through classes and dormitories, deliberately separated local students from foreign students, making it difficult for NCP scholars to be treated equal to locals. It is assumed that the segregation of foreign and local students is driven by the host university and accepted by the local students. Foreign students are given more flexibility with class assignments and much more direct contact with professors. Interestingly, from the perspective of the Chinese diaspora, one student responded:

I was always treated differently, as soon as a stranger saw that I am ethnically Chinese but can't speak either Cantonese nor Mandarin fluently. The locals would treat me as an inferior. Even being ethnically Chinese, it would take months to develop a close relationship with locals as many are embarrassed about their English.

Another said, 'it is common in class for the teacher to ask a foreign student over a local and to say, okay native English speakers, does this sound natural to you'? Another student, was surprised at how much he was made to feel different stating, 'Of course, you get treated differently because it is such an homogenous country and you stand out. I am learning so much about myself. I just could not believe so many people could live their lives so different to me.'

#### **6.4.4 The presence of ‘common goals and co-operation’**

The responses show that, except for a few high-profile students, there was a low-level presence of the fourth condition, achieving common goals and co-operation. It was axiomatic that any student would need to work hard on their co-operative relationships to identify common goals with the locals while in China. People-to-people links and networks are more important to people in China than in Australia. The opinion leaders responded:

Chinese work culture is a lot less direct. In China it is about who you know. You need to work hard on your relationships in China. Family and connections are paramount.

Because of the difference in culture, family relationships and career aspirations, it is unlikely that Australian students would have common goals with the Chinese students.

At work and at university I learned that Australians give instructions very openly and bluntly unlike the Chinese who worry about you losing face.

Most Chinese are more career focused than Australian students and because of this undertake more internships and in many instances are more serious about their studies.

Working within China’s bureaucracy takes time and patience.

The opinion leaders believed that many international organisations, and the Australian Government, work co-operatively to gain internships and to increase the NCP brand. In addition, the data showed that Chinese people were welcoming to foreigners, and that NCP scholars have a strong desire to understand Chinese culture and language, and to work co-operatively with the locals. However, the lack of language, and the difference in values and culture, make it difficult for NCP scholars and local students to achieve common goals and co-operation at a high level.

The opinion leaders believed their experiences in China made them reflect on their careers and their views on the country more broadly. They believed that their presence was appreciated locally, and that some Chinese officials, through the NCP, recognised that the Australian Government was prioritising relations with its neighbours in the Indo-Pacific.

The opinion leaders believed they could identify some level of commonality between their personal goals and the goals of the NCP, therefore they were prepared to work co-

operatively to assist the government (as the funding body) to achieve these goals.

## 6.5 Recognition and Reward

In order to establish if students had built networks and people-to-people links through their involvement with their NCP program, they were asked: *Do you believe that as an NCP scholar you have received sufficient recognition and reward from the scholarship and your experiences in China?* The majority of opinion leaders believed they had received a high level of recognition and reward, stating that:

I think people value the experience and will continue to do so in the future.

It does hold weight for network connections you can't get from education. I think it is important for potential employers.

Getting the scholarship gave me the confidence to do my honours. I feel like my experience has continued rather than stopped once I have come back to Australia. When you are NCP you meet more contacts and people tell you more.

The firm I work for always promotes my NCP to clients. Something that is valued and a great conversation topic. As to feeling rewarded, I think it is something that adds another dimension so I am not someone who has graduated straight from university so I have more to offer. Usually you would not get a deferred position but in my instance my future employer is an NCP sponsor and was pushing prestige so they gave me a year. And I worked with the partner in Hong Kong over the break.

People really value my time in China. A lot of our clients are from China. My employers asked me to do a presentation to give insight into my experience. There is a lot of interest in China. The information you get about China is mostly incorrect as it gets filtered through the news. In my experience it seldom resembles what I experienced as happening on the ground.

There were fewer negative comments compared to positive comments:

On my return, unless I remain relevant, the recognition will fade. Some employers who work in China recognise the skills that the scholars acquired during their program but if employers are not involved than it does not help with job prospects.

Like anything you have to keep relevant, however while it is current it does give you the opportunity to network and gain opportunities that may not be available otherwise.

When I first returned I felt recognised and rewarded now that I am working it seems like a distant memory.

Respondents found the prestige of the program to be one of its greatest benefits. However, upon returning to Australia, they were concerned that the skills acquired in China would not be valued by the Australian job market.

## 6.6 Change in stereotypes

Opinion leaders provided responses to the question: *Do you think you have changed your stereotypes of China and as an opinion leader do you think you have the ability to influence people in your networks?* Scholars were confident that they had changed some of their negative stereotypes regarding the values and attributes of Chinese people. Conversely, they believed they had strengthened some of the stereotypical beliefs they held. Finally, they were confident, but slightly less confident than the first two themes, that they could and had changed the negative stereotypes that some Chinese (within their network) held about Australians and vice-versa.

The following comments focus on the personal stereotypes that remain part of the scholars' beliefs. They have continued to believe that:

China is a bureaucratic, highly populated country which makes it difficult for foreigners to do business.

Chinese are shy and respect hierarchy and will seldom question their teachers or their supervisors at work.

China is a nation of hard working people, with local students studying until 3am in the morning.

Bureaucracy is a cultural thing. People in business who do not know the intricacies in China and how arbitrary the Chinese government can be, will and have failed.

If someone is higher on the ladder than you, you should show respect and listen to what they say. It is part of the culture to respect their knowledge. I felt I should not challenge them as I might have done in Australia.

The Chinese are hard-working. You do learn little things like in China it is okay to put your head on the desk and to have a nap whereas in Australia that would be considered rude.

On the other hand, through their experience of living in China, scholars changed their thinking on several stereotypes, offering responses such as:

I did not realise that not all Chinese are Communist.

Chinese know how to balance work and play, but this is possibly more for the younger generation.

China is a very diverse nation. Not all the regions have the same food or culture. The regions are not only different to the big cities but different from each other.

Since being in China, I realise that many Chinese are happy with the way things are and that Chinese do have humour but that it is different to Australians.

Stereotyping is different. It is definitely more nuanced than people think back home. Hong Kong is

portrayed as people in Hong Kong want to be separated from mainland China however there are some who want status quo. It is not quite the same level as people reading the media interpret it to be.

My understanding of the country has changed a lot. It is not what I expected. Particularly in the standard of the healthcare and how acceptable the low standard is to the greater nation. My perspective is that healthcare is very much a privilege. Allied health such as speech therapy is a luxury whereas it is accessible to the majority in Australia.

China is not a big, easily accessed money pot. Some Australians state that they hate Chinese tourists because they are loud and travel in big groups. Now having been in-country for the NCP I better understand that Chinese tourists travel in big groups because Chinese have only recently had a travelling culture and travelled overseas. Many times, they need to travel in groups as language is a problem.

The scholars believed that within their networks they had changed some negative stereotypes of Australian culture that were held by some Chinese members within their networks. These stereotypes included that all Australians were rich, unwelcoming to foreigners in their country, and racist against Chinese.

Even though I am young, because of my experience people are willing to listen and to trust my answers.

The Chinese are curious about Australia. Many only see the government run media which shows Australians as anti-Chinese. Sometimes the local Chinese would ask is this really what it is like in Australia. They are more likely to believe me because they know me.

The local people asked me to verify the facts regarding an item in the news about Australia.

I do get random questions from Chinese such as what is the feeling on the ground back in Australia? People assume you to be someone who they could go to. I think it would be the same for me if I was talking about a country that I don't have knowledge about. You would speak and trust someone who has had knowledge on the ground.

Many Chinese believe that Australia is 'anti-China'. I was often asked why Australians do not trust China.

## **6.7 China as the preferred destination for study and work**

The opinion leaders were asked: *Was China your preferred destination?* Many interviewees stated that before the commencement of their NCP application they did not have China as their first priority. However, once arriving in the country, their interest intensified. The few scholars who had a previous interest in China had visited the country on a short-term mobility course organised by their home university. Those who had an interest in China were focused on the importance of trade between Australia and China and the possibility that this

could increase their chances of employment in China.

Several scholars referred to the NCP influencing their decision to study in China. With comments such as ‘I had no interest in Asia, but now through my NCP I am living in China and looking forward to creating my future here’ and ‘Before the NCP I had no plans to live in Asia whereas now that is where my life is’.

Several scholars studying economics and commerce believed that if they achieved a high level of Mandarin or Cantonese by graduation, employment would be available because ‘Shanghai and Hong Kong are the centres of the financial universe’. In contrast, law students said it was essential for them to return to Australia to gain their credentials. Several law students stated that their return home to Australia, and the day-to-day demands of their career, had made it difficult to maintain their engagement with China. However, several students who had investigated the possibility of gaining employment, particularly in mainland China, identified barriers to doing so. One respondent stated:

It is naïve to think that graduate-entry foreigners will gain employment in mainland China. It is a ten-year plan and not for the feint hearted. Experience, knowledge, skills and high-level language skills are imperative.

Others reported that there was considerable difference between gaining employment in Hong Kong compared to mainland China. Other students did not wish to live in China, stating:

I want to build my life in Asia but based in Australia. In the immediate future my research will have me travelling through Asia to do my data gathering on the ground. Going forward with my career I think contacts made through the NCP will be important.

## **6.8 Studying in larger cities - Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing**

In order for opinion leaders to be considered influential (in this case Australia-China relations) they must be seen to have an in-depth knowledge of the given topic. With students lack of language skills and their limited experience in areas of China outside larger cities, they lacked the necessary exposure to be seen as knowledgeable in Chinese culture as a whole. As each of the opinion leaders had studied in one of the larger cities, such as Hong Kong, Beijing

and Shanghai, I asked about the scholars' decision-making and why they had not considered broadening their knowledge of China by either studying or interning in the regions?

The majority responded that they were unable to consider studying in a university outside the major cities because Australian universities do not have exchange agreements with these smaller universities. A challenge that was faced when considering study in the regions was that the program structures shown on complex websites of Chinese universities make it difficult to identify courses that are taught in English. Another strong reason was the opportunity for prestigious internships that would further develop their post-program career opportunities. In hindsight, the scholars said if the opportunity to study Mandarin was available, they would have undertaken specific language study in the regions, prior to undertaking their study and internship. These opinion leaders believed that as there was less access to English-speaking locals in the regions, the environment would have forced them to use their language skills. They also stated that their experiences outside Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong were now more memorable.

## **6.9 The reflections of opinion leaders after the completion of their program**

The majority of the opinion leaders have retained a strong interest in Australia-China relations and were keen to continue their involvement with the NCP, and the broader Indo-Pacific region. To gain an understanding of scholars' perceptions of their ability to influence their networks, on their return to Australia they were asked if family and friends sought their opinion regarding any issue in Australia-China relations. In response, not all scholars thought they had made, or would make, a positive contribution to the Australia-China dialogue, with four respondents offering negative comments:

My networks are well informed and they do not need to change their opinions.

I think I am lucky that the bubble I live in at home, which is quite progressive, and my friends and family, realise that a lot of the media is semi-sensationalist.

It does not happen that often as most of my acquaintances have little interest in China.

I don't think that I am fully involved in current affairs. I don't think I know enough about the big picture to be an expert about anything like politics.

The remainder of the students offered positive responses to being able to influence people's opinions within their network of influence, stating:

Most of the questions to me regarding negativity in the media is through social media such as Facebook. I think because I have a lived experience people are more inclined to believe what I say.

I think people would see me as kind of a China expert but I am not saying that this is valid. On the whole, Australians do not have that much lived experience in China. People tend to perceive that you know things. For me it is a massive plus because I do have opinions and I am happy to be seen as someone with knowledge. People don't really have a clue so they ask questions in the hope that they don't look ignorant as there is not much real knowledge of China within Australia.

A lot of my friends like to talk about China issues more broadly not many would approach me and say that China is a threat. They do ask about my impressions. The real China is very different to the one portrayed in the [Australian] media. No one comes to me out of the blue to ask my opinion.

People will ask what it was like when you were there and ask my opinion if the media reports are true. They do think that I understand the nuances a little after living there. They think I have more of a knowledge or understanding as to what is going on.

100 per cent - all the time. Anyone studying or interested in China asks me. It is always family and friends asking my opinion of China. Lots of coverage in China talks about a surveillance state. People in Australia talk about how terrible this is and then you come to China and see how many people they have brought out of poverty and some of the control is necessary and intrusion in people's lives when you are dealing with billions in the population. I have a more tempered view than some.

When the Dali Lama visited Australia, it was reported that the Chinese government paid money to student unions so that they would influence them to do things that China wanted. People sometimes feel that it could not happen whereas I am not that naïve to think that the Chinese Government would not interfere by supporting the student union. Then are we thinking that the Australian Government does not seek influence to gain their way?

To gain an understanding of whether the opinion leaders had intentions of continuing a career involved with China, they were asked: *What are your career plans for the future and do you intend to remain engaged with China?* In their responses, most opinion leaders asserted that they had kept in contact with their friends and colleagues in China, and that they would like to return to China in the future. However, some expressed disappointment in themselves at their level of engagement and what they had contributed back to the program. These opinion leaders were unsure what actions they could take to continue their engagement with Australia-China relations. Many scholars were continuing Chinese language study and had received invitations to Chinese events. In contrast, others stated that work and competing interests did

not always make attending networking events possible.

There was a perception that DFAT was trying to build a strong alumni network with the scholars. The NCP Alumni LinkedIn page and ACYA events remained a popular way for the NCP alumni to remain engaged. Most expressed that DFAT's NCP Alumni Unit was under-resourced and, as a result, the program was not getting good value from their alumni. A scholar remarked that:

There is a sense of community between the NCP alumni when they return to Australia. Alumni would like to be more involved but do not know how to do this.

The scholars were cautious so as not to be seen as criticising the government, as they were very appreciative of the opportunities that the NCP scholarship offered. While most were able to build relationships, there were only a few who mentioned a high level of engagement with other alumni:

Most students I know are keen to be involved with alumni but to date were waiting for DFAT to proactively drive the events and the communication.

The Queensland chapter is starting alumni event catch-ups so that will make it easier to maintain connections made during my NCP.

On the other hand, while the involvement in the NCP is fresh and scholars are actively involved, most believe the program does 'open doors'. Scholars reported that they were able to gain access to high-profile people who were aware of the program, 'They feel they already know me so they can trust me so they are ready to listen'. One opinion leader summed up their experience, stating 'My social enterprise and my research came from my NCP. Particularly NCP set me up for the recognition as before that I had no portfolio to show. Now I have been invited to sit on boards.'

## **6.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the results from Phase Two. The results from the NCP alumni questionnaire and the follow-up interviews with opinion leaders were displayed under the four conditions of contact: social and institutional support, high acquaintance, equal status

contact and common goals and co-operation. The opinion leaders were asked to reflect on their experience which they discussed key themes such as recognition and reward, change in stereotypes, post program as an opinion leader, studying in larger cities, and China as their preferred destination.

In the next chapter, these results will be mapped to the research questions, and the findings and the implications will be discussed in the context of published literature, including policy recommendations.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

I think people would see me as kind of a China expert...people tend to perceive that you know things. For me it is a massive plus because I do have opinions and I am happy to be seen as someone with knowledge (NCP alumni identified as an opinion leader).

### 7.0 Introduction

Chapters Five and Six presented the results of the empirical research; the current chapter discusses the findings and conclusions. Firstly, findings and conclusions for each of the three research questions and how they relate to the hypotheses are presented in sections 7.1 to 7.3. Secondly, opportunities for future research, and policy recommendations from the findings are presented in sections 7.4 and 7.5. Finally, the conclusion is presented in section 7.6.

### 7.1 Findings for Research Question One that test Hypothesis One

*RQ1: Why does the Australian Government fund international education programs in China?*

*Hypothesis 1: The Australian Government funds international education programs in China as it believes participants will contribute to the nation's public diplomacy through building positive relationships and mutual understanding.*

#### 7.1.1 Australia's use of public diplomacy

Australia, like many other countries, funds international education as a tool of public diplomacy as a way to build relations and mutual understanding between the peoples of different nations.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the review of relevant documents demonstrates that the government is consistent in its message that it also uses public diplomacy to refresh the nation's image. This is done through imagery of a modern, innovative and secure country in the Indo-

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<sup>1</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

Pacific Region that is ready and willing to lead and do business.<sup>2</sup> The literature shows that Australia continues to deal with image fluctuations affecting its reputation in China.<sup>3</sup> This is compounded by the stereotypes created through Australia's history of the *White Australia Policy*, the issue of refugees, asylum seekers and Australia's perennial perceived lack of independence in foreign and defence policies.<sup>4</sup> The findings outline concerns regarding the damage caused to the bilateral relationship, through negative media on Chinese influence in Australia. The ASCs and the NCP may not be able to directly deal with the ramifications of political differences between the Australian and Chinese government; however, experts believe that the people-to-people links created through these programs justify the expenditure of public funds. In addition, the personal links contribute towards stabilising the bilateral relationship during times of tension.

In reviewing the *PD Senate Inquiry*, this research found that several key recommendations had either been ignored or have been insufficiently addressed. The *Inquiry* recommended that DFAT ensure all government sponsored programs have clearly identified public diplomacy objectives.<sup>5</sup> The NCP has public diplomacy as one of its objectives, and, the scholars and the experts are in favour of this objective. However, the experts interviewed strongly disagreed with this recommendation for the ASCs. It was thought that academics working in the Centres are likely to have the knowledge and skills to contribute to the image of Australia. However, just because the Chinese academics have a voice in the field of Australian Studies, there is a risk that they may not always report Australia in a positive light in the Chinese media. It was believed by the experts that academics working in the ASCs would

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>3</sup> Darian-Smith and Waghorne, "Australian-Asian Sociability, Student Activism, and the University Challenge to White Australia in the 1950s."

<sup>4</sup> Darian-Smith and Waghorne, "Australian-Asian Sociability, Student Activism, and the University Challenge to White Australia in the 1950s."

<sup>5</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

not wish to be portrayed as willing contributors to Australia's foreign policy through public diplomacy actions. The academics' reluctance can be understood in the context of President Xi's recent media releases calling for all Chinese, including those living abroad, to work for the good of China.<sup>6</sup> Chinese academics within the Centres would, by association, see themselves as lecturers and researchers in Australian studies and at best promoting the ASCs. They do not see themselves as image-builders for Australia or that their work is related to Australian public diplomacy in anyway.

The *PD Senate Inquiry* also found that the nation would benefit from engaging with the Chinese diaspora in Australia as a significant resource. Sixteen per cent of NCP scholars in the *NCP Evaluation* identified as ethnically Chinese, which demonstrates that members of the diaspora are in some way involved with the NCP.<sup>7</sup> The findings show that many of the experts believed the Chinese diaspora was not being engaged at a sufficient level. The expatriate communities are also an undervalued resource, as this group are willing to contribute to Australia's public diplomacy in China. This is as long as the activities do not take them out of their comfort zone and avoid politically sensitive topics.

The NCP and the ASCs have been highlighted in policy documents as influential public diplomacy programs in building relationships and engaging with China. It is anticipated that active alumni engagement will strengthen people-to-people links; grow trade and investment; promote our capability; and enhance Australia's diplomatic, cultural, economic and international education interests.<sup>8</sup> It is concluded that the more distance between the government and the use of the NCP and the ASCs as contributors to the nation's soft power

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<sup>6</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

<sup>7</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting, "Evaluation of the New Colombo Plan."

<sup>8</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "The New Colombo Plan Scholarship"; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia-China Council".

capacity the better it will serve in potential benefits.<sup>9</sup> Public diplomacy may often be benign and well intentioned, fostering dialogue and understanding, but it might equally be malign and ill-intended. If China perceives that the Australian government through its *PD Strategy* intends to influence domestic affairs, programs would be met with distrust. The resultant negativity towards Australia would impact on the ability of the NCP and ASCs to reach their objectives.<sup>10</sup> Skepticism remains as to whether governments can be effective agents of soft power activities. In seeking to cultivate soft power, at least through the NCP and ASCs, the Australian Government assumes that other countries will not be suspicious of their motivation. However, there is a risk that the Australian Government's overt intention to increase its soft power in the national interest may make achieving the desired outcomes from the NCP and ASCs more challenging.

Australia, like many states, has a soft power strategy in practice, if not in name.<sup>11</sup> There is an argument to be made that soft power can only be successfully wielded by countries like the US, that also have a great deal of hard power.<sup>12</sup> The soft power wielded by middle powers, such as Australia, is different from the systemic ambitions of countries such as the US and China. Australia's intent to acquire soft power through the use of the NCP and the ASCs, as tools of public diplomacy, is in line with Slaughter's argument that middle power countries should focus on initiatives that are within the capabilities of a non-superpower.<sup>13</sup>

One of the key challenges for implementing public diplomacy activities is gaining attention and maintaining a positive presence in an already crowded space. The profile of the NCP has been elevated through the sponsorship of Julie Bishop, personally and through DFAT

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<sup>9</sup> Laifer and Kitchen, "Making Soft Power Work: Theory and Practice in Australia's International Education Policy."

<sup>10</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations."

<sup>11</sup> Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy."

<sup>12</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."; Kurlantzik, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*; Roselle, Miskimmon, and O'Loughlin, "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power."

<sup>13</sup> Slaughter, "A New Theory for the Foreign Policy Frontier".

on a broader level. The resultant prestige of the program has led to an increased awareness among many government agencies, private sector international companies, and universities in China and Australia of the government's intent to engage with the region. The *PD Strategy*<sup>14</sup> states that a common problem within public diplomacy strategies is how to effectively connect appropriate people with government agencies, private sector companies and individuals making daily contributions to Australia's image and influence abroad. The ASCs provide an already established network to connect government and other players. The ASCs have a large network of over 30 Centres across China however, because of a lack of government recognition through funding and support, the potential benefits to Australia's image is not being realised.

### **7.1.2 Trade and political relations**

Political relations have often helped support bilateral trading links between Australia and China, while enhanced economic linkages have contributed to the strengthening of political ties. Despite this, the level of trade and the state of political relations have not always been directly related. This is because trade fluctuations have often stemmed from changes in the domestic economic policies of both Australia and China, rather than from the complexity of political relations between the two countries.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Australia's reputation can influence political and economic policies as an asset or a liability when pursuing foreign policy objectives or gaining access to foreign markets.<sup>16</sup> The release of the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017*, and the harsh tone of comments made by some Australian politicians and media, resulted in significantly negative impacts for Australia-China relations. The findings show that the experts believed Australia's diplomatic relations with China were at their lowest point in some time. Concurrently, the literature shows that China retains its place as Australia's largest

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>15</sup> Wang, *Australia-China Relations Post 1949*.

<sup>16</sup> Wang, *Australia-China Relations Post 1949*.

trading partner, thus highlighting that political differences do not always impact all areas of the bilateral relationship.

Since Australia formally established diplomatic relations with China in 1972, the bilateral trade relationship between the two countries has gone from strength to strength; however, the diplomatic relationship has been more of a challenge for all Australian Prime Ministers post-Whitlam era.<sup>17</sup> One of the key challenges has been the lack of shared values.<sup>18</sup> Whitlam expressed his vision that Australia seeks a relationship with China based on friendship, cooperation and mutual trust.<sup>19</sup> This remains relevant today as the vision continues to be expressed in current government policy documents.<sup>20</sup> Findings in this thesis reveal that the experts, and some NCP scholars, believed the longstanding trilateral relationship - Australia's economic dependency on China and its security alliance with the US - requires the government to continue working on domestic and foreign public opinion in order to gain ownership for its foreign policy.

It is identified in the literature that to be effective Australia's public diplomacy must be aligned to its foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> Ross states that the public diplomacy quotient of virtually every foreign policy published today has risen dramatically.<sup>22</sup> The findings in this research highlight that the *Foreign Policy White Paper 2017* makes no specific mention to Australia's *Public Diplomacy Strategy*, but it does mention the intent to build soft power in the Indo-Pacific Region. The majority of participants in this research understand the importance for Australia

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Beeson and Jeffrey Wilson, "Coming to Terms with China: Managing Complications in the Sino-Australian Economic Relationship," *Security Challenges* 11, no. 2 (2015); Grattan, *Australian Prime Ministers*; Fraser and Simmons; Australian centre on China in the World, "Kevin Rudd and Australia-China Relations"; Fitzgerald, *Comrade Ambassador: Whitlam's Beijing Envoy*; Carew, *Paul Keating Prime Minister*; "Prime Ministers Series: Keating and China."

<sup>18</sup> White, "Power Shift: Rethinking Australia's Place in the Asian Century."; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper."

<sup>19</sup> Fitzgerald, "Managing Ourselves in a Chinese World: Australian Foreign Policy in an Age of Disruption".

<sup>20</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper."; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>21</sup> Byrne, "Public Diplomacy in an Australian Context : A Policy-Based Framework to Enhance Understanding and Practice."

<sup>22</sup> Ross Pillars of Public Diplomacy Grappling with International Public Opinion.

to establish a sustainable balance between the nation's economic relationship with China and maintaining independent foreign policy. They expressed concern regarding the challenges of the historical level of mistrust between China and Australia and the need to break down some of these barriers. China's centrality to Australia's economy, migration, tourism and international education, is obvious today and likely to continue.<sup>23</sup> The Australian Government continues to hold its position that both countries are committed to constructively managing differences, if and when they arise.<sup>24</sup> The findings show that participants in this research believe that the bilateral relationship is made stronger through the people-to-people links developed through the NCP and ASCs. In addition, it was recognised that there is a need for Australia's future leaders to build strong social and professional ties in China.

### **7.1.3 Diplomacy**

The nexus between public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy was recognised and, in agreement with the literature, the experts believed traditional diplomacy continues to play an important role in Australia-China relations.<sup>25</sup> The diplomatic role of the Australian Embassy in Beijing, combined with the high-profile presence of Julie Bishop sponsoring the NCP, are seen not only as active and supportive but essential during times of tension in the bilateral relationship. Most participants were aware of the complex nature of the relationship and the importance of the trade partnership, which has elevated the role of traditional and public diplomacy. This finding supports Ian Hall's urging that stronger, better, even transformed, diplomacy and the replacement of hard power by soft are welcome, but not at the cost of undermining the legitimacy of a system that allows diplomacy to be practiced.<sup>26</sup> The role of

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<sup>23</sup> Jain and McCarthy, "Between Centrality and Anxiety: China in Australia."

<sup>24</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "China Country Brief".

<sup>25</sup> Goldsmith and Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for Us Foreign Policy?."

<sup>26</sup> Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations."

public diplomacy through the use of the NCPs and ASCs is not seen as a replacement for traditional diplomacy but rather an opportunity for DFAT to collaborate with universities as a complementary dimension of traditional diplomacy.

#### **7.1.4 Public Opinion**

Over recent decades, Australia has become increasingly focused on public diplomacy as a means of influencing foreign public opinion and engaging domestic audiences. Public opinion is now an integral component of the new foreign policy mantra ‘to win the hearts and the minds of the people’.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, Australia’s public diplomacy does not directly impact the policies of the Chinese Government. On the other hand, mass public perceptions of China may place pressure on the Australian Government to act, therefore creating the potential to effect foreign policies.<sup>28</sup>

Most Australians are unaware of developments in public diplomacy since, paradoxically, Australian public diplomacy is rarely discussed outside government.<sup>29</sup> NCP alumni, through their involvement in the program, had a good understanding of the expectation that they would contribute to Australia’s public diplomacy efforts in the region. Their high level of understanding was demonstrated during interviews, through the students use of vocabulary similar to the rhetoric of government documents, i.e. people-to-people links, network of influence, public dialogue and contributing to public diplomacy. The experts reiterated that the Chinese academics are motivated to contribute to the Centres for professional gain and not Australian public diplomacy.

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<sup>27</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."

<sup>28</sup> Merickova, "Alternative Approaches to Public Diplomacy."

<sup>29</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia’s Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."; Byrne and Hall, "Realising Australia's International Education as Public Diplomacy."

### 7.1.5 International education as public diplomacy

Australia is currently using international education programs to increase its influence and to progress its policy agendas in the Indo-Pacific region. Some researchers have discussed the possibility that public diplomacy may not be benign, as it is inevitably linked to power.<sup>30</sup> There are others who are more explicit, questioning whether it is the same as propaganda.<sup>31</sup> More well-researched programs, such as Fulbright and Rhodes, state that their goals include making a contribution to international goodwill and the pursuit of peace.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, the government places its public diplomacy focus on boosting Australia's domestic understanding of China, and the reputation of the nation abroad.<sup>33</sup> The government's decision to focus on the domestic audience in Australia may be one way to ensure the important trade relationship is maintained despite political disagreements. On the other hand, the Australian Government may have omitted 'global peace' from their strategy in recognition of the limited influence a middle power can exercise in securing peace in the region.

The role and significance of universities in the conduct of Australia's public diplomacy is poorly articulated and relatively unexplored, and hence it is not well supported.<sup>34</sup> The tension between international education as public diplomacy and its primary role of teaching and research have yet to be fully reconciled, leaving this topic as an unresolved theme in Australia's public diplomacy. Australia's international education sector is diverse and fragmented. In their response to the *Senate Inquiry*, Universities Australia documents show that a decade ago the higher education sector gave limited consideration to its contribution to Australia's public diplomacy. Interestingly, the current website shows a change in this vision and it is now

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<sup>30</sup> Snow, "Fulbright Scholars as Cultural Mediators: An Exploratory Study."

<sup>31</sup> Evans and Steven, "Towards a Theory of Influence for Twenty-First Century Foreign Policy: The New Public Diplomacy in a Globalized World."; Snow, "Fulbright Scholars as Cultural Mediators: An Exploratory Study."

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*; Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>33</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>34</sup> RMIT, "Inquiry into the Nature and Conduct of Australia's Public Diplomacy".

acknowledged that the sector makes a strong contribution to the nation's good, not only through trade but also public diplomacy initiatives.

### **7.1.6 Evaluation**

The findings show that the Australian Government funds the NCP and ASCs to build a positive image of Australia through public diplomacy in China. However, to justify this funding, a rigorous evaluation, providing evidence of the programs' achievements, may go some way towards silencing the critics. This research shows that there is some criticism in Australia regarding the elitism and special support given to NCP recipients. Experts working in China stated that in their experience China welcomed the presence of high achieving students. The critics may not be taking into consideration that education programs are a long-term investment, making it too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of the NCP program in building networks of influence between Australia and China. In contrast, this research found that there is a need to review the network of ASCs to assess their effectiveness and to identify clear objectives. This aligns with the recommendations from the *PD Senate Inquiry* in that there is a need for a review of the FCIs (which includes the ASCs).

Over a decade ago, the *PD Senate Inquiry* identified the lack of appropriate performance indicators for Australia's public diplomacy strategies. This continues to be a concern to some of the participants in this study, who reported limited to no change in government evaluation processes for both the NCP and ASCs. However, regardless of the necessity to evaluate these programs, it is difficult to identify and measure public diplomacy outcomes. This is not just in terms of activity but there are considerable challenges translating the individual and cumulative experiences, exchanges, and interactions of individuals into soft power outcomes at the programmatic, state and regional levels. It is challenging to determine the impact of any aspect or initiative of public diplomacy, either on a nation's soft power or its

ability to achieve foreign policy objectives. Analysis is made more complicated due to the outcomes of the NCP not showing impact in the short-term. The impact of the ASCs is made difficult through a lack of clear objectives. The ASCs would benefit from increased funding linked to evaluation processes.

The formative *NCP Evaluation*, conducted in 2017, makes no reference to measuring public diplomacy outcomes. Of these alumni respondents a little over 50 per cent stated that they were willing to promote the NCP at events. This highlights a limited level of engagement so soon after completing their programs.<sup>35</sup> In addition, while the *Alumni Feedback Analysis* is informative, and may contribute to program developments and improvements, such quantitative activity-based evaluation conducted in the short-term provides insufficient findings for the NCP to reliably measure outcomes. The low response rate also makes the findings less reliable.

To answer the question as to why the government funds international education programs as public diplomacy, this thesis focused on two of the priorities within the *PD Strategy* that aligned with the findings. The first priority is to ‘build and nurture networks of influence and to strengthen engagement with domestic and international stakeholders’. The second priority relates to the international education sector’s effort to ‘promote Australia’s culture of resourcefulness, entrepreneurship and ingenuity; and creative industries, scientific research, organisations and education systems’.<sup>36</sup> The findings show that NCP scholars and ASC academics are contributing, at some level, to both of these goals; however, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of their efforts. A common problem within public diplomacy strategies is to evaluate whether participants engage with the appropriate people in order to achieve these goals, particularly regarding the influence of foreign publics. In agreement with

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<sup>35</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

<sup>36</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

Nye, the evaluation of public diplomacy may be necessary and may provide useful advice, but it will be a very expensive and difficult process.

### 7.1.7 The intent of public diplomacy

There is still no agreed definition for public diplomacy, with ongoing confusion around the nomenclature.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps where the definition for public diplomacy diverges is the different intent with which public diplomacy is utilised.<sup>38</sup> Public diplomacy, in its state-based guise, is similar to the well-established idea that publics matter to governments as tools of national foreign policy. The practice of actively reaching out to engage the domestic public to build or consolidate support for a policy position is increasingly accepted within the scope of public diplomacy.<sup>39</sup>

Through its policy documentation, the Australian Government is transparent in its intent to use international education to increase its soft power in the Indo-Pacific region. As an example, the *PD Strategy* states that the Australian Government's intent is to use public diplomacy to advance the nation's interest. The government recognises the challenge of exerting influence in the region as a middle power;<sup>40</sup> - nevertheless, the decision was made to continue funding the NCP and ASCs as public diplomacy as one strategy to gain influence in China. The *PD Strategy* objectives include strengthening Australia's influence so as to advance national interests and improve the domestic understanding of DFAT's role.<sup>41</sup> The government seeks to generate understanding, both domestically and overseas, of Australia's foreign and trade policies, and to project a positive image of the nation internationally.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy."; Melissen, "Public Diplomacy between Theory and Practice."

<sup>38</sup> Melissen, "Introduction."

<sup>39</sup> Nelson, *War of the Balck Heavens: The Battles of Western Brodacasting in the Cold War*. cited by; Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

<sup>40</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Foreign Policy White Paper."

<sup>41</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Public Diplomacy Strategy 2014-16."

<sup>42</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade, "Australia's Public Diplomacy: Building Our Image."

Over time, the objectives of international education programs can change and, therefore, what governments say publicly is not always a good indication of intent.<sup>43</sup> Research shows that using international education as public diplomacy is not necessarily altruistic and sometimes it is more about intent than practice.<sup>44</sup> Over time, the government's intent for funding the NCP and the ASCs could change, to address the political environment. Even though many agree that it would be useful to measure outcomes against the objectives of these programs, it is difficult for the public to effectively differentiate between rhetoric and reality when the intent of these programs may only be known to DFAT.

Government strategies for funding public diplomacy are varied. Firstly, the government's intent may be directed at achieving the *PD Strategy Mission Statement* which includes the engagement of domestic audiences. If this is the intent, it should not be surprising as the Australian Government tends to prioritise domestic political considerations, in particular public opinion, in its dealings with the global community.<sup>45</sup> The findings show that, these programs have increased the engagement of the domestic audiences within the university sector and some industries. If the intention is - to build relations and mutual understanding between China and Australia – the difficulty in isolating the NCP and ASC outcomes from other activities, would make the achievement of this objective very difficult to measure. On the other hand, if the government's intention is to show China that Australia has an interest in engaging in its region, then this can be demonstrated at least at some level. The findings in this thesis show that many businesses, universities and government agencies in China understand that through the NCP, Australia is sending the nation's best and brightest to study in their countries.

The ASC network with approximately 30 Centres does support Australia's positive

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<sup>43</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

<sup>44</sup> Evans and Steven, "Towards a Theory of Influence for Twenty-First Century Foreign Policy: The New Public Diplomacy in a Globalized World."; Hall, "The Transformation of Diplomacy: Mysteries, Insurgencies and Public Relations."; Hartig, "Deterrence by Public Diplomacy: The Negative Dimension of International Political Communication."; Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy."

<sup>45</sup> McDonald, "Australian Foreign Policy under the Abbott Government: Foreign Policy as Domestic Politics?."

image in China. If the government's intention is to address the public diplomacy issue raised by Education Ministers in Asia regarding the disparity of student flows, then the NCP would again be considered a successful strategy.<sup>46</sup> China has become the first choice of host country for Australian students electing to undertake an exchange and the most popular destination for NCP scholars.

As stated in the mission of the *PD Strategy*, if the intention is to raise the domestic profile of DFAT and that of the Foreign Minister, this has also been achieved through media reports and the support of champions from large corporates. The findings demonstrate that there is an appreciation of the work of the Foreign Minister, DFAT and the Australian Embassy in Beijing. However, this same level of support from the government and the media is not occurring for the ASCs.

If soft power is the intent, the literature shows that this concept is difficult to evaluate. Furthermore, evaluations may have diplomatic implications, making any recommendations unusable by the government as the funding sponsor. As mentioned in the *Foreign Policy White Paper*, Australia is using international education programs to increase its influence and forward its policy agenda through the NCP and the ASCs, to build its soft power. As research has shown, the NCP and ASCs as public diplomacy initiatives, are more likely to be successful if their objectives are distanced from the government.

Another intention that is possible, but has had limited discussion in the literature, is simply that as many other countries are using international education as public diplomacy, the Australian government is mitigating the risk that other states might acquire relative power should public diplomacy be successful<sup>47</sup>. Great and small powers are unlikely to spend much time pontificating on their level of power - it is mostly taken for granted<sup>48</sup> Managing the risk

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<sup>46</sup> Expert Roundtable for the NCP, "Expert Input at Policy Round Table on New Colombo Plan".

<sup>47</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."

<sup>48</sup> Patience, "Imagining Middle Power."

is more important to Australia than it is for China, as a superpower. Middle powers have much to gain if their assertion of influence is recognised at regional and global levels. In reverse, Australia as a middle power has a lot to lose if it is not.<sup>49</sup> Given the importance of China to Australia and the competitiveness of the public diplomacy space in the Indo-Pacific region, the Australian Government may be funding international education simply to hedge its bets.<sup>50</sup> Alternatively as Laifer and Kitchen included in their findings, Australia might not wish to be seen as complacent to other countries in the Indo-Pacific. In view of the findings within this thesis, the Australian Government may wish to be “in the game of public diplomacy” to ensure opportunities are not missed should there be benefits to be gained. The high-profile presence of the NCP scholars in China, driven by the sponsorship of Julie Bishop, shows that Australia may not, just be competing, but also has potential to be one of the better players using international education as public diplomacy. The ASCs are a unique network that, if supported appropriately, have the potential to contribute to mutual understanding and strong relationships that enhance Australia’s image within China.

The findings in this thesis show that to gain a true understanding of why the Australian Government funds the NCP and the ASCs as public diplomacy it is important to not be solely reliant on government rhetoric. Evaluation can be political as it requires the identification of clear and transparent objectives. Given the nexus between foreign policy, public opinion and public diplomacy, funding an evaluation program may not provide useful return on investment that is in the nation’s interest unless it is clearly known what objectives are being measured. Depending on what the goals of the programs are will alter the level to which return on investment is likely.

Maybe, the domestic and foreign audiences will never totally understand why the

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<sup>49</sup> Patience, "Imagining Middle Power."

<sup>50</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."

Australian Government funds international education programs in China. We could naively rely solely on government rhetoric or, alternatively monitor the promulgated key objectives, however, without transparency regarding the intent of these programs, any evaluation could be meaningless. Perhaps marketing the NCP and ASCs as vehicles for delivering a positive message, that Australia is engaged with its region, to both the Australian domestic audience and the Chinese public, is sufficient reason for funding these programs. This research has shown that the ASCs have potential to expand their role in Australia-China relations, however without serious consideration given to clarifying the objectives of the Centres and increasing funding this network cannot achieve its public diplomacy potential. The findings have shown, regardless of the government's intent, the NCP scholars have formed people-to-people links and networks. Because both the program and the scholars are young, it is too early to tell whether the NCP will produce opinion leaders. However, without further development of the alumni strategy the government risks losing the ongoing contribution of the NCP.

## **7.2 Findings for Research Question Two that test Hypothesis Two**

*RQ2: Do Australian Government-funded international education programs in China result in students and academics building sustainable personal and professional networks of influence?*

*Hypothesis Two: Australian Government-funded international education programs in China result in students and academics building sustainable personal and professional networks of influence.*

### **7.2.1 Influence of opinion leaders through the two-step flow hypothesis**

Anderson and Melen outlined the different ways in which young people, who are yet to gain positions of power, can influence their networks through discussions on topical issues.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Anderson and Melén, "Lazarsfeld's Two-Step Hypothesis: Data from Some Swedish Surveys."

These researchers describe opinion leaders as playing one of four roles: national leader (i.e. Ministers), community leaders (i.e. heads of local organisations), opinion leaders who are in touch with an important informal group in which they exert influence, or opinion leaders who discuss topical problems within a limited circle such as friends and colleagues. The scholars are early into their careers and in the majority of cases have not been in the workforce long enough to be CEOs. However, it is asserted that many see themselves as the fourth type of opinion leader and as such they believe that they will continue to develop their role as their career progresses. The results of this thesis align with the literature, in that NCP alumni reported they had influenced their immediate networks. The people within their networks consider them knowledgeable on the topic of China due to their NCP experience. Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller, in an investigation of opinion leaders in agenda setting, found that people make sense of messages they receive in the media by consulting with their personal networks.<sup>52</sup> Most of the NCP alumni said they influenced their networks when friends and family would ask them questions to clarify negative statements about China in the media. This is in line with how the two-step flow hypothesis is thought to influence how people receive messaging from the media. The literature shows that the general public will alter their views on a media article if a close person within their network (whom they trust on the topic area) disputes it as exaggerated or untrue.<sup>53</sup>

Opinion leadership theory investigates whether participants in education programs use their people-to-people links and their network of influence to reduce prejudice and change negative stereotypes. The experts interviewed in this thesis were unable to provide direct evidence of the ‘multiplier effect’ where NCP scholars or ASC academics had used their

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<sup>52</sup> Erbring, Goldenberg, and Miller, "Front-Page News and Real-World Cues: A New Look at Agenda-Setting by the Media," p.18.

<sup>53</sup> Erbring, Goldenberg, and Miller, "Front-Page News and Real-World Cues: A New Look at Agenda-Setting by the Media."

influence as opinion leaders to impact the general public.<sup>54</sup> However, this thesis did not seek to show the effect of participants individually influencing broader public opinion either domestically within Australia or in China. In contrast, this thesis aimed to give a voice to participants in order to better understand their views on the contribution of the NCP and ASCs towards Australia's public diplomacy in China. The following section combines the results from Chapter Five and Six with the literature on opinion leadership theory and the two-step flow hypothesis to answer Research Question Two.

NCP alumni who did not feel they had changed the perceptions held by members of their network which is aligned with the findings from Valente and Pumpuang, in that opinion leaders usually monitor public opinion and assert themselves in areas in which norms are already shifting and assist with behavioral change.<sup>55</sup> These students said they already socialised within circles that understood the importance of, and were very open minded to, Australia's involvement in China. This is also highlighted in Robinson's adaption of the opinion leader model, in which he discusses the importance of horizontal flows of information (opinion leader to opinion leader) and the vertical flow of influence.<sup>56</sup> Many of the NCP scholars believed prior to their arrival in China that a majority of the young people would speak English. However, they found that this belief was not true. Therefore, scholars who only spoke English communicated with the locals much less than those who could speak Chinese at an intermediate or higher level. NCP scholars who were more extroverted and, had the language skills to discuss culture and politics with local people, were better able to show these horizontal flows of information that first influence the opinion leader and eventually make its way vertically to the other people in their network.

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<sup>54</sup> Anderson and Melén, "Lazarsfeld's Two-Step Hypothesis: Data from Some Swedish Surveys."; Katz and Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence, the Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, *The People's Choice*.

<sup>55</sup> Valente and Pumpuang, "Identifying Opinion Leaders to Promote Behavior Change."

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, "Interpersonal Influence in Election Campaigns Two Step-Flow Hypotheses."

### **7.2.2 Investing in a network of opinion leaders**

The findings showed that the Australian Government understands that not all NCP alumni would enact their role as a future leader but that they intend to measure the success of the program, in the future, when alumni have had time to become influential. In addition, all scholars said they had positive experiences in China and had departed the country with a more optimistic view of Australia's relationship with China.

As outlined in the opinion leadership literature as long as an individual is respected in a given topic area it does not matter what position of power they hold they may still be influential in people's decision-making. As the scholars are still in the early stages of their career and due to the recency of the program, the decision was made not to ask NCP scholars if they felt they held a position of power but rather if they felt they influenced opinions. This decision was affirmed through the work of Watts and Dodds that showed it is the connection the opinion leader has to the topic area and the community that allows them to be influential, not their position of power.<sup>57</sup> This was reflected in the findings of this research, where NCP scholars reported that they were seen as knowledgeable on China as a result of their program and that, even as junior staff members, they had been asked to deliver workshops on business in China or assist in areas of cultural awareness.

### **7.2.3 Challenges of opinion leaders influencing their networks**

The scholars discussed the challenges they had to overcome to form networks and build people-to-people links. The findings showed that most scholars believed they had minimal impact on China's public opinions, but that living in China had a transformational impact on them as individuals. As the literature states, the impact of these programs is always far greater on the individual moving abroad than on the host country. Marshal states that although in

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<sup>57</sup> Watts and Dodds, "Influentials, Networks, and Public Opinion Formation."

theory the flow of information and culture in an educational exchange is two-way, it remains unequal and imbalanced.<sup>58</sup> Inequality of impact, reported by some NCP scholars, is an important finding as it has the potential to reduce the NCP program's impact on foreign publics. Students who reported inequality of impact appeared to be focusing on their individual needs and future careers rather than the objectives of the program. This individualist approach, if widespread, has the potential to limit justification for funding.<sup>59</sup>

The framing of the NCP scholarship as public diplomacy impacts not only the design of the program but also DFAT's policymaking. Dassin, Marsh and Mawer contend that this should encourage scholarship and international education practitioners to recognise the limitations of idealised trajectory.<sup>60</sup> The findings agree with the work of these researchers in that the NCP scholarship recipients cannot be seen as a homogenous group with similar ambitions and learning outcomes. NCP scholarship holders each have different expectations for the program and come from a variety of disciplines. As an example, at the end of their program, law students were required to return to Australia to complete their qualifications, whereas many economics students were seeking work in China. Securing employment in mainland China, due to visas, language and experience expectations, as well as competing with Chinese nationals who have better bilingual abilities, was deemed too difficult.

In a departure from traditional exchange literature, the scholars did not alter their values or cultural identity to be more aligned with Chinese culture. These studies have usually focused on international students leaving developing countries to study and/or seek a better life in a more developed country, or on students who stay in their host country after graduation. De Wit explains that, 'exchange students are selected so that they are able to understand the host country and to develop sympathy with its political systems, culture and values.'<sup>61</sup> The results

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<sup>58</sup> Marshal, "The Strategy of International Exchange."

<sup>59</sup> Marshal, "The Strategy of International Exchange."

<sup>60</sup> Dassin, Marsh, and Mawer, "Introduction: Pathways for Social Change?."

<sup>61</sup> De Wit, "Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe," p.85.

showed that NCP alumni had developed a better understanding of Chinese culture and did feel that some of what they read in the Australian media about Chinese politics, culture and values were either exaggerated or untrue. This is in line with Lima who argues that ‘the successful implementation of foreign policy could be more related to either convergence or divergence of interests between nations, rather than the development of a positive image by other governments or foreign publics’.<sup>62</sup> In other words, it is not expected that either the NCP alumni or the ASC academics will always have a positive view of each other’s countries, but rather that they will have an understanding of the importance of the relationship and a desire to be part of building mutual understanding. These programs are more than just image branding for the government. The results have shown that before most NCP scholars commenced their programs they had no interest in going to China, but that the NCP had taught them about the importance of the Australia-China relationship.

Wilson asserted that if the opinion leader model holds, policymakers should seek to utilise exchange students who will go on to be influential opinion-formers.<sup>63</sup> One of the weaknesses of the NCP program is that it focuses on young undergraduate students yet to prove themselves as having influence or being passionate about a career involving China. Some scholars reported that their priorities had changed following their return to Australia, as a result their motivation to maintain active engagement with their network in China were diminishing.

#### **7.2.4 NCP scholars as ambassadors for Australia in China**

According to Lowe and Kent, the expectation that participants and/or alumni of education programs will perform a positive, influential role for both their host and home countries is a significant impost.<sup>64</sup> The government promotes the NCP in alignment with Nye’s

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<sup>62</sup> Lima, "The Role of International Educational Exchanges in Public Diplomacy," p.236.

<sup>63</sup> Wilson, *International Education Programs and Political Influence: Manufacturing Sympathy*.

<sup>64</sup> Lowe and Kent, "The Changing Profile of Education as Aid and the Impact on International Public Diplomacy."

work on soft power, in that, on their return, scholars will contribute to Australia's soft power through shaping the behaviour of publics in China. The government is transparent in the NCP objectives that there is an expectation these scholars will contribute to public diplomacy and to the reputation of the program. However, the findings show that scholars vary greatly in how they give back to the program according to their interests, career motivations and environment. According to Lowe, understanding that NCP scholars are not a homogeneous group will go some way towards seeing international education, and the role of international student ambassadors, more realistically as 'life-long experiences' rather than 'life-long education'.<sup>65</sup>

### **7.2.5 ASC academics as ambassadors for Australia in China**

Internationalisation has changed the academic profession, adding a new level of convergence and complexity to the roles of both Chinese and Australian academics, who are traditionally expected to contribute to society through teaching, research and service.<sup>66</sup> The need to balance an academic's time across these three areas is a global challenge. Similar to Australian academics, Chinese academics will seek out collaboration opportunities with international researchers who will give them a better chance to publish in high ranking journals. In addition, as the Chinese higher education system improves, and China's global influence rises, Chinese academics are increasingly seeking to collaborate within their domestic networks, with colleagues in-country. It would be difficult, if not counterintuitive, for the Australian Government to attempt to utilise Chinese academics as ambassadors for Australia's public diplomacy programs in China. It is important to motivate Chinese academics with prestigious opportunities that are good for their career and utilise the resulting goodwill toward Australia as soft power. This is in line with the literature that states the further governments

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<sup>65</sup> Lowe, "Australia's Colombo Plans, Old and New: International Students as Foreign Relations."

<sup>66</sup> Bentley and Kyvik, "Academic Work from a Comparative Perspective: A Survey of Faculty Working Time across 13 Countries."

are seen to be from the implementation of public diplomacy initiatives the more effective they are in harnessing soft power.

### **7.2.6 Long-term and sustainable networks of influence**

International education programs are based largely on the assumption that the participants will go on to build personal networks within the host country. Upon returning to their home country they are then seen as a highly credible source of information. NCP scholars and experts consider that the programs' participants either have gained, or will go on to gain, the knowledge and skills to break down stereotypes and increase mutual understanding. This research supports the literature, in that international students create powerful personal, cultural, diplomatic and trade ties between their home country and the rest of the world.<sup>67</sup> International education, through student exchange and collaborative research, is one strategy for building long-term and sustainable relationships with foreign publics.<sup>68</sup>

Scholars reported that they often felt like an outsider and were treated differently to the local students. They also referred to the differences in campus life for Chinese students as they were more reluctant to socialise and collaborate in group work with foreign students. This was believed to be due to their shyness and lack of confidence in speaking English with native speakers. The limited Chinese language skills of the scholars presented the greatest challenge to building networks and assimilating into the local Chinese communities. NCP scholars who did have the language skills and confidence to use Chinese found they were able to avoid these barriers.

The *PD Strategy* states that over time the NCP alumni network will establish itself as an influential cohort with direct experience of living, studying and working in the region. The findings show that an NCP alumni body has been established. It is too early to evaluate if the

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<sup>67</sup> Universities Australia, "Australia's Education Exports at Record High".

<sup>68</sup> Universities Australia, "Universities Australia's Submission to the Australia in the Asian Century," (2012).

alumni network has achieved the government's goal of being an influential and diverse network of Australians with direct experience in the Indo-Pacific. It appears from the *Feedback Survey*, that engagement with the alumni network has not been strong with only 29 per cent having attended an alumni event. The online events have not been successful, with only four per cent participation. These online events were conducted using digital platforms, such as Facebook Live or webinars.

In response to Research Question 2, Australian Government-funded international education programs in China have the potential to result in students and academics building sustainable personal and professional networks of influence; however, as these groups are not homogeneous the outcomes depend on the interest and drive of each individual participant. The NCP participants understood that the Australian Government funded these programs with the expectation that they would build sustainable, personal and professional networks of influence that would contribute to the nation's public diplomacy. The ASCs, based on their history, have no such understanding. They do have the potential to build sustainable personal and professional networks of influence, but their motivation for doing so is more professional than altruistic in helping Australia's public diplomacy in China.

### **7.3 Findings for Research Question Three that tests Hypothesis Three**

*RQ3: What conditions of contact are necessary for Australian Government-funded international education programs in China to build mutual understanding, and positively influence participants' views of each other's nation?*

*Hypothesis Three: The ASCs and NCP provide the necessary conditions of contact for individuals to contribute towards the goal of mutual understanding, and positively influencing participants' views of each other's nation.*

Research Question 1 outlined the political rationale for investing in the NCP and ASCs as public diplomacy in China. Research Question 2 outlined the justification of investing in a future network of opinion leaders that will positively impact Australia-China relations. Finally, this section will focus on the cultural impact of contact in breaking down negative stereotypes and building mutual understanding. Using the four conditions of contact laid out in the contact hypothesis the NCP and ASCs will be used to investigate the presence of these four conditions in order to answer Research Question 3.

### **7.3.1 Social and institutionally supported contact**

The first condition, social and institutional support, was present at a very high level for NCP scholars.<sup>69</sup> They reported that their program had provided strong support from the beginning, with a pre-departure meeting in Canberra, and this support continued while in China. NCP scholars commented that it was appropriate to use their own networks and contacts to organise internships, as they believed recipients of an NCP should have the drive and capability to independently identify and pursue opportunities. On the contrary, there was limited support available for alumni after their program has been completed and, as a result, an environment encouraging alumni to continue engagement with both the NCP and the Indo-Pacific region has not been created. Since the commencement of this research the government has established an alumni strategy and it is still too early to make comment on its effectiveness.

In contrast to the NCP, the ASCs receive limited recognition from the Australian Government. As a result, the findings showed that the potential for the network of over 30 Centres is not being reached. The level of support that the ASC academics receive from their home universities differs according to the individual's influence and the strategic aims of their organisation.

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<sup>69</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded."

### 7.3.2 Equal status contact

The next criterion, equal status contact, requires that both Australian and Chinese participants of the NCP and ASCs feel equal to one another when collaborating.<sup>70</sup> The scholars reported that they had put in a strong effort to socialise and to represent Australians to the Chinese community in a positive way. NCP scholars were made to feel welcome in China; however, they were not treated as equals and felt like ‘outsiders’, even though they receive ‘positive discrimination’ and ‘favourable treatment.’ Being treated as equal to domestic students was rare, as segregation between foreign and local students was driven by the host universities and, accepted as common practice by local students. Although NCP scholars all reported that they were not discriminated against, there was a common thread of feeling different and not being treated the same as local students. Most extra-curricular activities organised on Chinese university campuses actively segregated foreign students from Chinese students. As a result, NCP scholars discussed struggling to find opportunities to socialise with local people, meaning most interactions with Chinese students was through forced class interactions. This led to an increase in feelings of segregation and an ‘us versus them mentality’.<sup>71</sup> The inequality within campus life extended from the classroom to student living quarters, where several NCP scholars discussed the better living standards they received in comparison to local students at a different location on campus. Breaking down the barriers to equality is essential for Chinese and Australian students to build mutual understanding.

Culture and the importance of family connections made it difficult for the NCP scholars to achieve equal status with the domestic students while in China. The literature shows that universities are, in theory, the ideal location for improving intercultural understanding; but, without encouragement and incentives, students can quickly divide into cultural subgroups as

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<sup>70</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded."

<sup>71</sup> Charles Stangor et al., "Influence of Student Exchange on National Stereotypes, Attitudes and Perceived Group Variability," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 26, no. 4 (1996).

this feels more comfortable and natural to them.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, some respondents felt that being in a country as a foreigner was a learning experience and motivation to learn the native language. The findings agreed with the literature in that the Australian students found it more comfortable to socialise with other English-speaking students and therefore gravitated toward these social groupings. In addition, the students who were excited by the opportunity to learn from locals were more likely to pick up the language and adapt to the Chinese culture.

The findings from expert interviews showed that Chinese academics within the ASCs would like to see more opportunities for them to collaborate on international research projects, as well as to attend conferences in Australia. They felt that Australian academics had disproportionate access to opportunities in China and they would appreciate equal opportunities to experience Australian culture firsthand. The ASCs do have opportunities to apply for limited funding but these rarely allow Chinese academics to co-publish with Australian academics and participate in conferences in Australia.

### **7.3.3 High acquaintance potential contact**

The third condition, high acquaintance potential, requires that contact between participants is of an adequate frequency and duration.<sup>73</sup> The findings showed this condition was present for the NCP scholars, however at a low level and with several barriers. Firstly, the most significant barrier to achieving a higher presence of acquaintance concerned language ability. NCP scholars would gain a greater understanding of the geographical and cultural diversity in China by undertaking an in-country language program, preferably in a second or third tier city, prior to the commencement of their coursework. For the ASCs, high acquaintance potential was still an issue for Chinese academics, although it was not related to

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<sup>72</sup> Jackson, "Preparing Students for the Global Workplace: The Impact of a Semester Abroad."; Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded."

<sup>73</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded."

language difficulties. The findings showed that Chinese academics rarely had the opportunity to interact with Australian academics except at the annual FASIC conference on Australian Studies, or the occasional campus visit. However, these events often do not provide the necessary duration and quality of contact to go beyond a networking relationship. Universities in Beijing and Shanghai that have an international culture with more Australian university partnerships have the potential for high acquaintance contact.

#### **7.3.4 Common goals and co-operative contact**

The final condition, common goals and co-operation, was most lacking for both the NCP and ASCs.<sup>74</sup> In line with Brown's work, it is essential that both parties feel they are working towards a common goal. As outlined in the literature, establishing a common goal sometimes requires the provision of programmed or organised interventions, otherwise contact is unlikely to develop into mutual understanding.<sup>75</sup> The NCP students and ASC academics would benefit from more planned extra-curricular activities that promote deeper connections between Australians and Chinese.

The NCP interviews found that the most common barriers to gaining a higher presence of common goals and co-operation were culture and language. The findings showed that it was difficult for the NCP scholars to have common goals and establish relationships with local students. They found that domestic students did not see any value in investing in friendships with international students due to their transient nature. The literature discusses the common misconception of universities/governments that, simply providing education programs in support of contact will inevitably lead to cultural understanding and cooperation. However, if not structured in a way that promotes cooperation, these programs will be devoid of meaning

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<sup>74</sup> Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*.

<sup>75</sup> Hughes, "How Can International Education Help Reduce Students' Prejudice?."

with the potential to have negative consequences.<sup>76</sup>

It was found that cooperation between Chinese academics, within the ASCs, and Australian academics was limited. The ASC desktop audit showed that most Australian visitors to the Centres were either already working in China or considered Sinologists limiting the influence of the ASCs to those already active in Australia-China relations. This limits the ability of the Centres to expand their influence. Although the Centres may not have a large reach, they remain a vital network of influence for visiting government and private sector officials to host discussions relating to Australia-China relations. Without these Centres, the Australian Government risks losing a structured network for government officials to communicate; Australian academics to present their research findings; private sector visitors to meet with Chinese academics and officials; and for Chinese and Australian students to learn and interact with one another. In addition, the findings showed limited collaboration on research. Most research completed by Chinese academics within the Centres were with their Chinese colleagues. The findings showed that increased incentives through funding or publications in high ranking journals would motivate Chinese academics to increase their research collaborations with Australian academics.

### **7.3.5 Increased mutual understanding and cultural awareness**

A primary assumption behind international education programs is that contact between individuals of different groups will lead to increased mutual understanding between the peoples

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<sup>76</sup> Carlson and Widaman, "The Effect of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes toward Other Cultures."; Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology*; Anderson et al., "Short-Term Study Abroad and Intercultural Sensitivity: A Pilot Study."

of different nations.<sup>77</sup> The NCP and ASCs are programs that have, at some level, increased participants' cultural familiarity and mutual understanding through internships, collaborations and work integrated learning. Each scholar commenced their NCP with personal goals and their own individual experiences. The level of change that occurred for each scholar differed depending on their prior experience and what activities they undertook during their time in China. In addition, more extraverted students, who were willing to attempt interactions with local students in Chinese (no matter their language ability), found their experience more rewarding and are more likely to continue their involvement with China (including language studies).

The NCP scholars' experiences in China did not change all of their stereotypical views. They retained their beliefs that China was a bureaucratic and over-populated country making it a stressful place to live at times. On the other hand, NCP scholars changed some of the negative stereotypes they held about China. Some of the NCP scholars discussed their realisation that, in general, Chinese people are welcoming and they no longer perceived the shy nature of Chinese people, and their reticence to use English, as negative traits. Through their firsthand experience of feeling different, and lacking confidence to communicate with locals, they had changed their perceptions of Chinese students. The NCP scholars had to overcome the culture-shock brought on by crowded spaces, lack of English language, different values, living conditions and environmental issues.

Macrae discusses that some negative stereotypes are so deeply held by an individual

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<sup>77</sup> Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux, "Beyond the Optimal Contact Strategy: A Reality Check for the Contact Hypothesis."; Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux, "Beyond the Optimal Contact Strategy: A Reality Check for the Contact Hypothesis."; Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The 'Contact Hypothesis' Exploded."; Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The 'Contact Hypothesis' Exploded."; Nielsen and Smyth, "The Contact Hypothesis in Urban China: The Perspective of Minority Status Migrant Workers."; I. Nielsen and R. Smyth, "The Contact Hypothesis in Urban China: The Perspective of Minority Status Migrant Workers," *Journal of urban affairs* 33, no. 4 (2011); Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory."; Stangor et al., "Influence of Student Exchange on National Stereotypes, Attitudes and Perceived Group Variability."; Tomovska, "Contact as a Tool for Peace Education? Reconsidering the Contact Hypothesis from the Children's Perspectives."

that they may not, or cannot, be changed in highly prejudiced individuals.<sup>78</sup> Prior to their involvement in these programs NCP scholars and Chinese ASC academics were curious about and, had some interest in each other's countries. Most negative stereotypes were due to misinformation, or lack of exposure, not deeply held within the belief system of the individual. This is in line with Nieli's work that prejudice is based on generalisations of a group formed through a lack, or miscommunication, of information.<sup>79</sup> NCP students and Chinese ASC academics fall in line with Peterson's work in which he suggests that contact programs should focus on moderates rather than highly prejudiced individuals.<sup>80</sup> All NCP students identified that their negative stereotypes were the result of a lack of exposure to Chinese culture and not prejudice. All scholars said they had a positive experience during their NCP program and returned to Australia with a better understanding of life in China.

Exchange experiences are thought to contribute positively towards enhancing and improving the intercultural competence of participants.<sup>81</sup> This intercultural competence includes positive perceptions about the host culture and country<sup>82</sup>, intercultural sensitivity<sup>83</sup>, and tolerance and acceptance for culturally diverse people.<sup>84</sup> This research shows that whilst some transformation occurred for the NCP scholars, there was still some way to go to improve intercultural experiences during the NCP program.

Several scholars referred to the difficulties they had in their study programs because of the local students lack of English. These scholars made no reference to their limited Chinese

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<sup>78</sup> Macrae, Stangor, and Hewstone, *Stereotypes and Stereotyping*.

<sup>79</sup> Nieli, "Diversity's Discontents: The "Contact Hypothesis" Exploded."; Schiappa, Allen, and Gregg, "Parasocial Relationships and Television: A Meta-Analysis of the Effects."

<sup>80</sup> Peterson, "Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism."

<sup>81</sup> Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney, "The High Impact of Education Abroad: College Students' Engagement in International Experiences and the Development of Intercultural Competencies."; Salisbury, "The Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Competence among Undergraduate College Students."; Jackson, "Preparing Students for the Global Workplace: The Impact of a Semester Abroad."

<sup>82</sup> Carlson and Widaman, "The Effect of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes toward Other Cultures."; Bicknese, "Study Abroad Part I: A Comparative Test of Attitudes and Opinions."

<sup>83</sup> Anderson et al., "Short-Term Study Abroad and Intercultural Sensitivity: A Pilot Study." (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard 2006; William 2005; Salisbury 2010

<sup>84</sup> Bettie, "The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy."

as a barrier, reflecting a monocultural view of English as the preferred language in a country in which English is not the native language. Heyward talks about the difference between international education and intercultural literacy.<sup>85</sup> He identified the importance of cultural mediators from their host country with whom they consider to be a close friend that can assist them in navigating a new culture in social situations outside of class.<sup>86</sup> Without having relationships with local students that go beyond classwork it will be difficult for the NCP program to make transformational change in the way Australian and Chinese students interact. However, more needs to be done to convince students of the benefits to becoming interculturally literate, which includes language and cultural understanding. Heyward refers to this process as a phase of learning and explains that this kind of thinking takes time to shift.<sup>87</sup> The findings show that the NCP students were made aware of their public diplomacy roles and the expectation that they would continue to spread their positive experiences in China as alumni of the program and influence the mobility choices of Australian students toward China.

### **7.3.6 Language proficiency and transformational change**

It is an objective of the NCP program that participants gain fluency in Mandarin, develop an appreciation for Chinese culture, and grow to understand other ways of life. In this study, it was found that many students attempted to learn the language; however, students stated that they found it difficult. Their 12 to 19 month program did not give them the time required to reach a level of fluency that would allow them to integrate into the community and impact on them so greatly that they referred to their program as transformational.

Some students did refer to their transformational change and that their experience has led them to a career and life that they had not imagined. The literature discusses a tipping point

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<sup>85</sup> Heyward, "From International to Intercultural Redefining the International School for a Globalized World."

<sup>86</sup> Heyward, "From International to Intercultural Redefining the International School for a Globalized World."

<sup>87</sup> Heyward, "From International to Intercultural Redefining the International School for a Globalized World."

in opinion leadership in which a person is no longer respected for their views as they are no longer relatable. It is far too soon to make this connection to the NCP or ASC participants however, some did refer to this phenomenon. Many scholars reported that, once they had returned to Australia, they were increasingly critical of negative media reporting on China and, were prepared to address conflicting opinions within Australia-China relations. Several scholars reflected on instances when their in-country experience of China had not aligned with the reports in the media. This may in time be a case study for what Bochner calls the passing or captive mind syndrome, where a student changes so much that they are perceived to be too defensive of their host country, or too critical of their home culture upon their return. This effects a person's capacity to influence the opinions of their community as they are viewed as unpatricotic.

Moreover, international experiences on their own do not ensure adequate immersion into a host society.<sup>88</sup> Many of the NCP students explained that they had lacked the time to study Mandarin due to their academic and internship responsibilities. This led to students primarily socialising with other foreign students in their living quarters and failing to get to know local people, which created insufficient and superficial interactions between the participant and their host country.<sup>89</sup> NCP students are currently not collaborating at a sufficient level with Chinese students. There needs to be increased opportunities and incentives to motivate these interactions. This is in line with Yuan's study that revealed students studying abroad befriend students who speak their language and have similar cultural values.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Spaudling and Flack, *The World's Students in the United States: A Review and Evaluation of Research on Foreign Students*; Spaudling and Flack, *The World's Students in the United States: A Review and Evaluation of Research on Foreign Students*; Snow, "Fulbright Scholars as Cultural Mediators: An Exploratory Study."

<sup>89</sup> Spaudling and Flack, *The World's Students in the United States: A Review and Evaluation of Research on Foreign Students*; Spaudling and Flack, *The World's Students in the United States: A Review and Evaluation of Research on Foreign Students*; Snow, "Fulbright Scholars as Cultural Mediators: An Exploratory Study."

<sup>90</sup> Yuan, "Academic and Cultural Experiences of Chinese Students in an American University: A Qualitative Study."

#### **7.4 Future Research**

The limitations in Chapter One are used as a basis for offering suggestions for further research. The NCP scholarship is a relatively recent initiative of the government and, therefore, there has not yet been an opportunity to investigate achievements over a period longer than three years. Future research, undertaking a longitudinal study, is needed to examine the continued involvement of alumni with China, in the medium to longer-term.

There are many assumptions made regarding the transformational change that occurs in people who study abroad. As there are a variety of reasons for students to apply for the NCP, or to study in China, further research is needed to understand how student experiences align with the government's goals, or if students are solely focused on achieving their individual goals. If these goals are not aligned, the scholars may not actively contribute to Australia's public diplomacy at a level the government expects of them.

Some scholars referred to their experiences upon returning to Australia in which their beliefs about China were so different to their network that they felt a need to influence what they perceived to be misconceptions. Chinese students have for a long time dealt with the culture shock of returning to their home culture after an extended period studying abroad. As more Australian students begin studying and working in China this could in time be a case study based on the 'passing' or 'captive mind syndrome'. This theory is based on the situation where the students change so much or are perceived to be too defensive of their host country or too critical of their home culture upon their return.

Given the funding for international education as public diplomacy further investigation is required to identify the link between international education, public diplomacy, public opinion and foreign policy. This research should not only include the depth and breadth of the public's participation in the democratic process, but how this plays a role in the direction and effectiveness of Australia's foreign policy.

Overwhelmingly, the literature has focused on evaluating international education through the lens of inbound student programs; however, for the full public diplomacy benefits to be understood, investigations must include outbound student mobility. Research collaborations, and the overall people-to-people linkages enabled through international education, are other areas of benefit that warrant further investigation. The tensions between international education as public diplomacy and its primary role of teaching and research have yet to be fully reconciled, leaving this topic as a theme for future research in Australia's public diplomacy literature.

Not all writers are convinced that public diplomacy contributes to changing foreign public opinion. There are some - while acknowledging that states in Asia are competing to build and leverage soft power through public diplomacy initiatives - who question the intent behind the investment.<sup>91</sup> This questioning is further strengthened by the limited correlation between Australia's public diplomacy and foreign public opinion. Given so little evidence of efficacy, more research is needed to improve understanding as to why policy makers believe funding public diplomacy is a worthwhile investment.

This thesis limited its investigation to undergraduate scholarship recipients of the NCP and the network of ASCs. An in-depth study of all NCP locations, postgraduate scholarships and other research centres would assist in providing an informed view of Australia's use of education programs as public diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific. Future work is also required to investigate the outcomes achieved from postgraduate students receiving other awards and fellowships.

## **7.5 Policy recommendations**

The findings from this research highlight policy recommendations that should be

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<sup>91</sup> Hall and Smith, "The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition."

considered to ensure the NCP and the ASCs have the necessary conditions of contact to develop a network of opinion leaders. First, NCP scholars require improved Mandarin skills before commencing their coursework or internship. If possible, an immersion course while living with a host family, preferably in the regions, would allow students to progress in their language skills and cultural awareness.

As a strategy to promote collaboration between the NCP and the ASCs, the scholars could perform the role of a teacher's aide in ASCs outside of Beijing and Shanghai. This would help Australian students improve their language skills and knowledge of wider China, while also providing Chinese academics and students in the regions with more interaction with Australian students. Although language difficulty was not as high among Chinese academics, increased collaborations with Australian academics would allow Chinese academics access to native English-speaking academics, and it would provide Australian academics with a large range of research opportunities in China.

Increased support for NCP alumni to remain engaged with the program may go some way to improving the lack of students willing to promote the program upon completion. The ASCs require similar promotion to that of the NCP program, to raise the Centres' prestige among Chinese academics. Increased discussion on the ASCs by DFAT and politicians such as the Foreign Minister, as well as increased funding, would lift the activities and the image of the ASCs. These outcomes have the potential to increase the likelihood of Chinese academics seeking involvement and cooperation with Australian academics. Additional support may also include research opportunities for Chinese academics with the option to travel and present research in Australia. This would assist in removing some of the inequality felt by Chinese academics, in which they stated that opportunities for them to experience Australian culture were not at the same level as Australian academics to experience Chinese culture.

The integration of Australian and Chinese students within living quarters on campus

and extra-curricular activities in China would allow NCP scholars to develop better relationships with locals and improve their cultural and language abilities. If the integration of Australian and Chinese students is not possible on campus alternate solutions, such as homestays, should be considered. This would provide young students the opportunity to gain an intimate understanding of Chinese culture through an immersive experience. These arrangements would also decrease the perceived inequality of treatment between local and foreign students.

To allow Australian students to go beyond a monocultural way of thinking mixed with the importance of Australia's role in the Indo-Pacific, language training should be made a greater priority in the high school curriculum. For Australian students to compete in a highly competitive environment in China they must first be shown the importance of language and cultural awareness skills so that when it comes time for them to undertake an exchange they are willing and able to take advantage of the experience. Asian students commence English language studies at a young age in preparation for their education studies. Student mobility trends are starting to shift and Australian students need to be prepared for the expectations of the evolving global employment market.

The NCP should be extended to include postgraduate students as the selection committee are more likely to identify participants who, through life experience, have demonstrated the desire and willingness to build a career involving China. It is these people who will inevitably go on to establish themselves as opinion leaders. At such a young age, and with differing disciplines and motivations, it is much more difficult to pinpoint undergraduate students who will continue to develop their networks with China. Postgraduate students should also be hosted by academics in the ASCs in collaboration with their home country supervisors, to promote research collaboration and publications.

A longitudinal study of the NCP, and its role in building relations between Australia

and the Indo-Pacific, would highlight the benefits of government-funded scholarships as public diplomacy. Although such a study would not yield results for an extended period of time, by collating this data the government could track students as they begin their careers and take on positions of influence. In contrast to the original Colombo Plan much could be gained from monitoring their career progressions after completing their program.

In the case of the ASCs, which have not yet been evaluated, a clear articulation of the network's objectives, as well as an independent evaluation of outcomes, would provide the necessary evidence to raise the network's profile in relation to contribution to Australian studies and academic collaborations in China. This relates specifically to Chinese academic involvement with Australian studies, and research collaborations as a tool of public diplomacy. The ASCs do organise events that promote a positive image of Australia in China; however, without published collaborative works with Australian writers, it is difficult for the Centres to influence a wide Chinese population.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This thesis has explored the concept of Australia's use of higher education as a public diplomacy tool in China, through the development of a network of informed opinion leaders. This was examined through an investigation of two programs identified in government documents as best practice - the NCP scholarship and the network of ASCs. Firstly, the importance of China to Australia as the country's largest trading partner was discussed. Secondly, the need for traditional diplomacy to achieve a balance between the Australia-China-US trilateral relationship was identified. Also, the rise of interest in public diplomacy from policymakers, politicians and academics was discussed. However, this has not been translated into quality research by Australian academics, nor has it been reflected in rigorous evaluation of the programs. This included recent foreign, education and public diplomacy policies, and

strategies that highlight the Australian Government's focus on public diplomacy in China. Thirdly, the ASCs and the NCP were described, giving an overview of the history of the programs. Finally, through the use of the contact hypothesis and the two-step flow hypothesis, opinion leaders were identified to investigate the influence of NCP scholars and ASC academics on their networks.

The three research questions identified in this study have enabled results to be presented in a logical framework. This thesis has contributed to the body of knowledge in relation to Australia's use of international education as public diplomacy in China. The findings of this research have led to recommendations to improve the public diplomacy contribution of the NCP and the ASCs in China. While not strictly applicable outside the NCP and the ASCs in China, this work also gives policymakers an indication of the issues associated with implementing education programs in China as public diplomacy. The limitations outlined in this thesis provide an opportunity to develop future research. It is only through cumulative studies and longitudinal research that the true impact of these programs can be known. Education programs are long term public diplomacy strategies and policymakers would benefit greatly from tracking participants in an attempt to understand their influence in Australia-China relations as future opinion leaders. However, this thesis has provided a strong platform on which to build this future research.

## Appendix A: Phase One Information and Consent Form

### International education's contribution to Australia's relations with China

#### INFORMATION SHEET

**Who is conducting the research** Professor Andrew O'Neil - Dean (Research) and Professor of Political Science in the Griffith Business School (a.oneil@griffith.edu.au)  
 Professor Ian Hall - Professor, Griffith Business School (i.hall@griffith.edu.au)  
 Brad McConachie - PhD Candidate, Griffith Business School and Endeavour Scholar, Peking University (bradleymcconachie@outlook.com)

#### Why is the research being conducted?

This research aims to investigate the assumption that Australian government funded undergraduate exchange programs contribute to the nation's future capabilities in the People's Republic of China by investing in a future network of Australian professional with experience and knowledge of working in China. This research will contribute to the international education, education diplomacy and Sino-Australian relations literature by providing an historical account of Sino-Australian relations where education and politics intersect in the form of public diplomacy.

#### What you will be asked to do

The researchers would like to interview you for twenty to thirty minutes relation to your role as a professional within government, diplomacy or international education. The researchers wish to get your perspective on how educational exchange programs have been used by the Australian government as a tool of public diplomacy and has this resulted in a network of Australian opinion leaders working within China or with Chinese people or companies?

#### The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants have been identified as any professional that works within international education, government, universities or private sector that promote international education as a tool of public diplomacy. This may include scholarships, support, internships, government policy, management or administrative staff. These professionals have been identified as experts within international education and will be contacted accordingly.

#### The expected benefits of the research

This research is of particular relevance for Australia, as a small to middle power in the Asian region, as it looks to work with the PRC to build a politically and economically stable region. Since the signing of the first Sino-Australian Trade Agreement in 1973, maintaining positive relations has become an integral part of building the economic prosperity of Australia and to a lesser extent the PRC. Since this time, the PRC has become Australia's largest trading partner, source of immigrants, source of overseas students and tourists (Pyne 2014). Although these elements have proven to be economically prosperous for both nations, maintaining positive relations does bring with it some political complications, as often is the case when countries do not share similar ideological, political or cultural values. As a way of mitigating these complications the Australian government has engaged in public diplomacy initiatives by funding prestigious exchange programs. It is the aim of this research to identify how these programs have contributed to Australia's relations with the PRC.

#### Risks to you

We do not anticipate any foreseeable risks to you as a result of your participation in this research.

#### Your confidentiality

Interviews will be recorded with permission of the participant. Once these interviews have been transcribed all data will be de-identified. Participants will not be identifiable in any publication or reporting (unless permission is granted). Any information you provide will be stored securely at Griffith University. Only the research team will have access to this information. Information you provide will be retained for a period of five years post publication and then destroyed.

**Your participation is voluntary**

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will in no way impact upon your relationship with Griffith University. You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime.

**Questions / further information and feedback to you**

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data might be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan>. or telephone (07) 3735 4375. Potential participants are invited to contact members of the research team at any time for additional information about the project.

A summary of findings or full copy of the final thesis will be made available to all participants upon request.

**Email:** [bradleymcconachie@outlook.com](mailto:bradleymcconachie@outlook.com)

**Phone:** If in China – 137 1600 6091 or in Australia 0434 171 940

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics to [07 3735 4375](tel:0737354375) or [research-ethics@griffith.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@griffith.edu.au).

This research forms a component of the PhD candidate's program and led by Professor Andrew O'Neil (Griffith University), and Professor Ian Hall.

**International education's contribution to Australia's relations with the People's Republic of China**

**CONSENT FORM**

**Research Team**      Professor Andrew O'Neil - Dean (Research) and Professor of Political Science in the Griffith Business School.  
Professor Ian Hall - Professor, Griffith Business School  
Brad McConachie - PhD Candidate, Griffith Business School and Endeavour Scholar, Peking University.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

I understand that my involvement in this research will include completing a 20-30 minute interview;

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

I understand the risks involved;

I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;

I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;

I understand that I can contact the Chief Investigator, at Griffith University on (07) 373 55143 (or [a.oneil@griffith.edu.au](mailto:a.oneil@griffith.edu.au)) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

I agree to participate in the project.

I agree to have my interview recorded for transcribing purposes.

- I agree to participate in the project.
- I agree to inclusion of my de-identified information in publication or reporting of the results from this research.

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## Appendix B: Phase One Expert Interview Questions

### EXPERTS IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION INTERVIEW TOOL

Thank you for your time and for volunteering to answer questions to assist with my research. Firstly I will give you some background to the research project. This thesis will investigate the research question, **how have government funded scholarship programs been used by the Australian government as a tool of public diplomacy and has this resulted in a network of opinion leaders?**

Many nations including Australia provide funding support for exchange programs as a tool of public diplomacy as they are thought to build relationships and mutual understanding between the peoples of different nations, and thereby contribute to international goodwill and the cause of peace (Bettie 2014). Public diplomacy, defined for the Australian context is ‘the work or activities undertaken to understand, engage and inform individuals and organisations in other countries in order to shape their perceptions in ways that will promote Australia’s foreign policy goals’ (2007 Senate Inquiry p.42).

Two such programs in Australia are the previous Prime Minister’s Award and the current New Colombo Plan. Using two theories of education as a tool of diplomacy (contact hypothesis and two-step flow hypothesis) how the data will be collected and measured are described in three phases as follows:

1. A systematic review of the literature will provide an historical account of exchange programs funded by the Australian government. This will be followed by interviews with professionals in international education, government, universities or the private sector that promote international education as a tool of public diplomacy. This may include scholarships, support, internships, government policy, management or administrative staff.
2. A survey of alumnus of the Prime Minister’s Award and the New Colombo Plan will be undertaken.
3. In-depth interviews with alumnus identified as opinion leaders to better understand their personal people-to-people links and professional career trajectories will be undertaken.

This research will be the first systematic analysis of Australia’s education diplomacy in the PRC and will contribute to the international education, education diplomacy and Sino-Australian relations literature by providing an historical account of Sino-Australian relations where education and politics intersect in the form of education diplomacy.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name:

Organisation:

Do you mind if I tape your responses?

How would you describe your role?

**Q1.** Does the Australian Government utilise education as a tool of public diplomacy in China? If yes, what are some examples?

**Q2.** What are your thoughts on this new world of new public diplomacy? Do you experience critics of education as a tool of public diplomacy? If yes, how do you respond to these critics?

**Q3.** You have had a long career working with China and I am interested in how you have seen the relationship evolve. When you were first in China what was the relationship like and at that time was there any evidence of public diplomacy or education ties?

**Q4.** How does the (Australian government/embassy/university etc) interact with non-state actors in China and what are the key objectives of engaging with these stakeholders?

**Q5.** This study is examining the contribution that scholarship recipients make towards Australia's public diplomacy efforts in China. How do you see these scholars contributing during and post their program in China?

**Q6.** How does Australian government funded scholarships fit within the Australian government's vision to build people-to-people links as a way to increase the country's influence in China?

*Prompt - what are the drivers behind government funding for Australian students to study in China?*

**Q7.** Recent polls have shown that Chinese people believe Australia have the least trust in China - recent instances in Australian media highlighting tensions in China's involvement in Australian affairs - 2017 has been mentioned by some as possibly the worst year in Australia-China relations. Where do you think things are currently going wrong?

**Q8.** *Explain opinion leadership and two-step flow hypothesis.* These education programs are funded in the hope that these Chinese academics or NCP alumni will go on to become influential within their field and build networks between Australia and China and influence the public discourse around our relationship with China. Being an opinion leader in Australia-China relations do you feel you have an impact in how the Australian public perceives our relationship with China and if so what do you feel has led you to be able to enact this role?

**Q9.** Do you know any influential Chinese academics or Australian NCP scholars who would be considered an opinion leader?

**Q10.** Do you feel these educational programs have any impact on Australian public opinion at large or is it merely engaging an audience that already has an interest in Australia's relationship with China?

**Q11.** How effective do you think Australia's public diplomacy is with China? How about education? How about the current Australian government do you think they successfully implement public diplomacy programs in china?

**Q12.** I am interested in an historical account of the Australian government's involvement in education diplomacy in China since 1973.

*Prompt...*

**a)** What are the key initiatives?

**b)** When was the first government funded scholarships?

**c)** Are there any documents, policies etc I could review or other people you think I should speak with to gain a better understanding of Australia's involvement in education diplomacy (including scholarships) since 1972.

**Q13.** Finally, are there any printed annual reports that I could gain access to?

*Thank you so much for your time.*

## Appendix C: Phase Two Information and Consent Forms

### International education's contribution to Australia's relations with China

#### INFORMATION SHEET

**Who is conducting the research** Professor Andrew O'Neil - Dean (Research) and Professor of Political Science in the Griffith Business School (a.oneil@griffith.edu.au)  
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Brad McConachie - PhD Candidate, Griffith Business School and Endeavour Scholar, Peking University (bradleymcconachie@outlook.com)

#### **Why is the research being conducted?**

This research aims to investigate the assumption that Australian government funded undergraduate exchange programs contribute to the nation's future capabilities in the People's Republic of China by investing in a future network of Australian professional with experience and knowledge of working in China. This research will contribute to the international education, education diplomacy and Sino-Australian relations literature by providing an historical account of Sino-Australian relations where education and politics intersect in the form of public diplomacy.

#### **What you will be asked to do**

You recently completed a survey regarding your scholarship in the People's Republic of China and you have been identified as an opinion leader. This means that since completing your studies you continue to play a role in Australia-China relations either professionally or personally. The researchers would like to interview you for twenty to thirty minutes in relation to your career and people-to-people links with China since completing your studies.

#### **The basis by which participants will be selected or screened**

Participants have been identified as any Prime Minister's Award or New Colombo Plan alumni that continues to have involvement with the People's Republic of China since completing their scholarship either professionally or personally.

#### **The expected benefits of the research**

This research is of particular relevance for Australia, as a small to middle power in the Asian region, as it looks to work with the PRC to build a politically and economically stable region. Since the signing of the first Sino-Australian Trade Agreement in 1973, maintaining positive relations has become an integral part of building the economic prosperity of Australia and to a lesser extent the PRC. Since this time, the PRC has become Australia's largest trading partner, source of immigrants, source of overseas students and tourists (Pyne 2014). Although these elements have proven to be economically prosperous for both nations, maintaining positive relations does bring with it some political complications, as often is the case when countries do not share similar ideological, political or cultural values. As a way of mitigating these complications the Australian government has engaged in public diplomacy initiatives by funding prestigious exchange programs. It is the aim of this research to identify how these programs have contributed to Australia's relations with the PRC.

#### **Risks to you**

We do not anticipate any foreseeable risks to you as a result of your participation in this research.

#### **Your confidentiality**

Interviews will be recorded with permission of the participant. Once these interviews have been transcribed all data will be de-identified. Participants will not be identifiable in any publication or reporting. Any information you provide will be stored securely at Griffith University. Only the research team will have access to this information. Information you provide will be retained for a

period of five years post publication and then destroyed.

**Your participation is voluntary**

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will in no way impact upon your relationship with Griffith University. You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime.

**Questions / further information and feedback to you**

A summary of findings or full copy of the final thesis will be made available to all participants upon request.

Email: [bradleymcconachie@outlook.com](mailto:bradleymcconachie@outlook.com)

Phone: If in China – 137 1600 6091 or in Australia 0434 171 940

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This research forms a component of the PhD candidate's program and led by Professor Andrew O'Neil (Griffith University), and Professor Ian Hall.

**International education's contribution to Australia's relations with the People's Republic of China**

**CONSENT FORM**

**Research Team**      Professor Andrew O'Neil - Dean (Research) and Professor of Political Science in the Griffith Business School.  
Professor Ian Hall - Professor, Griffith Business School  
Brad McConachie - PhD Candidate, Griffith Business School and Endeavour Scholar, Peking University.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

I understand that my involvement in this research will include completing a 20-30 minute interview;

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

I understand the risks involved;

I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;

I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;

I understand that I can contact the Chief Investigator, at Griffith University on (07) 373 55143 (or [a.oneil@griffith.edu.au](mailto:a.oneil@griffith.edu.au)) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

I agree to participate in the project.

I agree to have my interview recorded for transcribing purposes.

- I agree to participate in the project.
- I agree to inclusion of my de-identified information in publication or reporting of the results from this research.

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## Appendix D: Phase Two NCP Alumni Online Questionnaire

### Part A: Demographics and Pre-Program

1. By writing agree below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided to me:

Name (this will be kept separate from your responses and not shared with anyone). No names are used in the research.

Date

Please write agree to participate

2. Approximately what dates did you commence and complete your NCP program?

Start Date

End Date

Did you complete an internship as part of your program?

3. Did you complete an internship as part of your program?

No

Yes (please specify the organisation, length of employment and who organised/found it)

4. Do you consider yourself ethnically Chinese?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

5. What was your Chinese language ability before commencing your scholarship?

Native Chinese speaker (grew up speaking Chinese)

No ability

Beginner

Intermediate

Conversational

Fluent

## 6. What is your current Chinese language ability?

Native Chinese speaker (grew up speaking Chinese)

No ability

Beginner

Intermediate

Conversational

Fluent

## 7. What were your motivations for applying for an NCP?

	Very low importance	Low importance	Neutral	High importance	Very high importance
Spending time in your host country to better understand the culture and language.	Spending time in your host country to better understand the culture and language. Very low importance	Spending time in your host country to better understand the culture and language. Low importance	Spending time in your host country to better understand the culture and language. Neutral	Spending time in your host country to better understand the culture and language. High importance	Spending time in your host country to better understand the culture and language. Very high importance
Academic achievement/experience in order to receive a better job.	Academic achievement/experience in order to receive a better job. Very low importance	Academic achievement/experience in order to receive a better job. Low importance	Academic achievement/experience in order to receive a better job. Neutral	Academic achievement/experience in order to receive a better job. High importance	Academic achievement/experience in order to receive a better job. Very high importance
Building contacts and professional experience to increase your future opportunities.	Building contacts and professional experience to increase your future opportunities. Very low importance	Building contacts and professional experience to increase your future opportunities. Low importance	Building contacts and professional experience to increase your future opportunities. Neutral	Building contacts and professional experience to increase your future opportunities. High importance	Building contacts and professional experience to increase your future opportunities. Very high importance
Share your culture with the locals so they better understand Australia.	Share your culture with the locals so they better understand Australia. Very low importance	Share your culture with the locals so they better understand Australia. Low importance	Share your culture with the locals so they better understand Australia. Neutral	Share your culture with the locals so they better understand Australia. High importance	Share your culture with the locals so they better understand Australia. Very high importance
Become a recognised	Become a recognised	Become a recognised	Become a recognised	Become a recognised	Become a recognised

	Very low importance	Low importance	Neutral	High importance	Very high importance
leader/expert.	leader/expert. Very low importance	leader/expert. Low importance	leader/expert. Neutral	leader/expert. High importance	leader/expert. Very high importance
Travel and enjoy a different country.	Travel and enjoy a different country. Very low importance	Travel and enjoy a different country. Low importance	Travel and enjoy a different country. Neutral	Travel and enjoy a different country. High importance	Travel and enjoy a different country. Very high importance
Money	Money Very low importance	Money Low importance	Money Neutral	Money High importance	Money Very high importance
Prestige	Prestige Very low importance	Prestige Low importance	Prestige Neutral	Prestige High importance	Prestige Very high importance
Other (please specify ranking in brackets)					

8. Please provide examples of support that were provided to you before leaving Australia that helped prepare you for moving to another country.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Example 3:

### Part B: During your program (in-country experience)

9. Did you feel you received adequate support during your time in your host country to ensure you were able to adjust to a new culture?

No

Yes

10. If so who provided this support?

Home university

Host university

Staff at your home university

Staff at your host university

The Australian government

The Australian Embassy in Beijing

The Australian government through an outsourcing agency

Host country internship employer

Australian Chamber of Commerce

In-country local friends  
In-country foreign friends  
Australia China Youth Association (ACYA)  
Other (please specify)

11. Please provide examples of activities that were organised during your program in-country that helped you better understand the people and culture (these may be formal ie. workshops or class assignments or informal host families or cultural events):

Example 1  
Example 2  
Example 3

12. In your friendship groups were you mostly socialising with:

other international students in English  
Local students in English  
A mixture of local and international students in English  
A mixture of local and international students in English and Chinese  
Local students in Chinese

13. How often did you socialise (Chinese or English) with local people outside of class time?

Daily  
Weekly  
Monthly  
Rarely  
Never

14. After spending time with locals in your host country did any of your preconceived stereotypes change?

Yes  
No

15. If you did change any of your preconceived stereotypes please give some examples:

Example 1  
Example 2  
Example 3

16. Did you at any time feel like you were treated differently to local students (positive and/or negative experiences)?
17. Was there a time in which culture-shock led you to feel 'different' during your time in-country? Please provide specific examples.
18. Do you have any examples in which you were made to feel welcomed by local friends, students, colleagues or staff?
19. Did your classes provide situations in which you could regularly collaborate with local students? If yes provide some examples (ie. group work, assignments etc).
20. Did you have any issues working in groups with local students? Provide examples where you had to overcome differences.
21. Where did you learn most about working with local people and their work/study culture? Please provide examples (ie. a mentor in your office, professional development workshop, networking events, meetings etc)

Example 1  
 Example 2  
 Example 3

**Part C: Post-Program**

22. Please rate yourself on the following scales relative to your interaction with friends and colleagues regarding general conversations, Australia's relations with or your professional interactions with your host country.

	1	2	3	4	5
In general, do you talk to your friends and colleagues about your experiences in your host country? (1 = never; 5 = very often)	In general, do you talk to your friends and colleagues about your experiences in your host country? (1 = never; 5 = very often) 1	In general, do you talk to your friends and colleagues about your experiences in your host country? (1 = never; 5 = very often) 2	In general, do you talk to your friends and colleagues about your experiences in your host country? (1 = never; 5 = very often) 3	In general, do you talk to your friends and colleagues about your experiences in your host country? (1 = never; 5 = very often) 4	In general, do you talk to your friends and colleagues about your experiences in your host country? (1 = never; 5 = very often) 5
When you are asked questions by your	When you are asked questions by your	When you are asked questions by your	When you are asked questions by your	When you are asked questions by your	When you are asked questions by your

	1	2	3	4	5
friends and colleagues about your host country, do you ... (1 = give very little information; 5 = give a great deal of information)	friends and colleagues about your host country, do you ... (1 = give very little information; 5 = give a great deal of information) 1	friends and colleagues about your host country, do you ... (1 = give very little information; 5 = give a great deal of information) 2	friends and colleagues about your host country, do you ... (1 = give very little information; 5 = give a great deal of information) 3	friends and colleagues about your host country, do you ... (1 = give very little information; 5 = give a great deal of information) 4	friends and colleagues about your host country, do you ... (1 = give very little information; 5 = give a great deal of information) 5
During the past 6 months, how many people have you talked to about your host country? (1 = told no one; 5 = told a number of people)	During the past 6 months, how many people have you talked to about your host country? (1 = told no one; 5 = told a number of people) 1	During the past 6 months, how many people have you talked to about your host country? (1 = told no one; 5 = told a number of people) 2	During the past 6 months, how many people have you talked to about your host country? (1 = told no one; 5 = told a number of people) 3	During the past 6 months, how many people have you talked to about your host country? (1 = told no one; 5 = told a number of people) 4	During the past 6 months, how many people have you talked to about your host country? (1 = told no one; 5 = told a number of people) 5
Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about your host country? (1 = not at all likely to be asked; 5 = very likely to be asked)	Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about your host country? (1 = not at all likely to be asked; 5 = very likely to be asked) 1	Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about your host country? (1 = not at all likely to be asked; 5 = very likely to be asked) 2	Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about your host country? (1 = not at all likely to be asked; 5 = very likely to be asked) 3	Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about your host country? (1 = not at all likely to be asked; 5 = very likely to be asked) 4	Compared with your circle of friends, how likely are you to be asked about your host country? (1 = not at all likely to be asked; 5 = very likely to be asked) 5
In a discussion of news relating to your host country, would you be most likely to ... (1 = convince your friends of your ideas; 5 = listen to friends' ideas)	In a discussion of news relating to your host country, would you be most likely to ... (1 = convince your friends of your ideas; 5 = listen to your friends' ideas) 1	In a discussion of news relating to your host country, would you be most likely to ... (1 = convince your friends of your ideas; 5 = listen to your friends' ideas) 2	In a discussion of news relating to your host country, would you be most likely to ... (1 = convince your friends of your ideas; 5 = listen to your friends' ideas) 3	In a discussion of news relating to your host country, would you be most likely to ... (1 = convince your friends of your ideas; 5 = listen to your friends' ideas) 4	In a discussion of news relating to your host country, would you be most likely to ... (1 = convince your friends of your ideas; 5 = listen to your friends' ideas) 5

	1	2	3	4	5
your friends' ideas)					
In a discussion relating to your host country, which of the following happens most often? (1 = your friends tell you about news relating to your host country; 5 = you tell your friends about news relating to your host country)	In a discussion relating to your host country, which of the following happens most often? (1 = your friends tell you about news relating to your host country; 5 = you tell your friends about news relating to your host country) 1	In a discussion relating to your host country, which of the following happens most often? (1 = your friends tell you about news relating to your host country; 5 = you tell your friends about news relating to your host country) 2	In a discussion relating to your host country, which of the following happens most often? (1 = your friends tell you about news relating to your host country; 5 = you tell your friends about news relating to your host country) 3	In a discussion relating to your host country, which of the following happens most often? (1 = your friends tell you about news relating to your host country; 5 = you tell your friends about news relating to your host country) 4	In a discussion relating to your host country, which of the following happens most often? (1 = your friends tell you about news relating to your host country; 5 = you tell your friends about news relating to your host country) 5
Overall in all of your discussions with friends and colleagues, are you . . . (1 = not used as a source of advice; 5 = often used as a source of advice) relating to media articles on your host country.	Overall in all of your discussions with friends and colleagues, are you . . . (1 = not used as a source of advice; 5 = often used as a source of advice) relating to media articles on your host country. 1	Overall in all of your discussions with friends and colleagues, are you . . . (1 = not used as a source of advice; 5 = often used as a source of advice) relating to media articles on your host country. 2	Overall in all of your discussions with friends and colleagues, are you . . . (1 = not used as a source of advice; 5 = often used as a source of advice) relating to media articles on your host country. 3	Overall in all of your discussions with friends and colleagues, are you . . . (1 = not used as a source of advice; 5 = often used as a source of advice) relating to media articles on your host country. 4	Overall in all of your discussions with friends and colleagues, are you . . . (1 = not used as a source of advice; 5 = often used as a source of advice) relating to media articles on your host country. 5

23. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Disagree
I usually rely on being successful in everything I do.	I usually rely on being successful in everything I do. Agree	I usually rely on being successful in everything I do. Disagree
I am rarely unsure about how I should behave.	I am rarely unsure about how I should behave. Agree	I am rarely unsure about how I should behave. Disagree
I like to assume responsibility.	I like to assume responsibility. Agree	I like to assume responsibility. Disagree
I like to take the lead when a group does things together.	I like to take the lead when a group does things together. Agree	I like to take the lead when a group does things together. Disagree
I enjoy convincing others of my opinions.	I enjoy convincing others of my opinions. Agree	I enjoy convincing others of my opinions. Disagree
I often notice that I serve as a role model for others.	I often notice that I serve as a role model for others. Agree	I often notice that I serve as a role model for others. Disagree
I am good at getting what I want.	I am good at getting what I want. Agree	I am good at getting what I want. Disagree
I am often a step ahead of others.	I am often a step ahead of others. Agree	I am often a step ahead of others. Disagree
I have many things others envy me for.	I have many things others envy me for. Agree	I have many things others envy me for. Disagree
I often give others advice and suggestions.	I often give others advice and suggestions. Agree	I often give others advice and suggestions. Disagree

24. Here is a list of activities that indicates continued involvement with your host country since completing your scholarship. Have you done any of these activities after completing your program?

	Daily	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Written to or called any personal or professional contacts in your host country.	Written to or called any personal or professional contacts in your host country. Daily	Written to or called any personal or professional contacts in your host country. Regularly	Written to or called any personal or professional contacts in your host country. Sometimes	Written to or called any personal or professional contacts in your host country. Rarely	Written to or called any personal or professional contacts in your host country. Never
Attended an	Attended an	Attended an information	Attended an information	Attended an	Attended an

	Daily	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
information session, workshop, conference or professional meeting relating to your host country or held in your host country.	information session, workshop, conference or professional meeting relating to your host country or held in your host country. Daily	session, workshop, conference or professional meeting relating to your host country or held in your host country. Regularly	session, workshop, conference or professional meeting relating to your host country or held in your host country. Sometimes	information session, workshop, conference or professional meeting relating to your host country or held in your host country. Rarely	information session, workshop, conference or professional meeting relating to your host country or held in your host country. Never
Attended a meeting to discuss work with and/or about your host country.	Attended a meeting to discuss work with and/or about your host country. Daily	Attended a meeting to discuss work with and/or about your host country. Regularly	Attended a meeting to discuss work with and/or about your host country. Sometimes	Attended a meeting to discuss work with and/or about your host country. Rarely	Attended a meeting to discuss work with and/or about your host country. Never
Attended a social gathering with people from your host country.	Attended a social gathering with people from your host country. Daily	Attended a social gathering with people from your host country. Regularly	Attended a social gathering with people from your host country. Sometimes	Attended a social gathering with people from your host country. Rarely	Attended a social gathering with people from your host country. Never
Work in a profession in which you have visited your host country or interacted with your host country's professionals.	Work in a profession in which you have visited your host country or interacted with your host country's professionals. Daily	Work in a profession in which you have visited your host country or interacted with your host country's professionals. Regularly	Work in a profession in which you have visited your host country or interacted with your host country's professionals. Sometimes	Work in a profession in which you have visited your host country or interacted with your host country's professionals. Rarely	Work in a profession in which you have visited your host country or interacted with your host country's professionals. Never
Served on a committee relating to Australia's	Served on a committee relating to Australia's involvement with host country. Daily	Served on a committee relating to Australia's involvement with host country. Regularly	Served on a committee relating to Australia's involvement with host country. Sometimes	Served on a committee relating to Australia's involvement with host country. Rarely	Served on a committee relating to Australia's involvement with host country. Never

	Daily	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
involvement with host country.					
Served in a club or organisation relating to Australia's relations with your host country.	Served in a club or organisation relating to Australia's relations with your host country. Daily	Served in a club or organisation relating to Australia's relations with your host country. Regularly	Served in a club or organisation relating to Australia's relations with your host country. Sometimes	Served in a club or organisation relating to Australia's relations with your host country. Rarely	Served in a club or organisation relating to Australia's relations with your host country. Never
Written a blog post, social media status/comment, letter to the editor or called a radio or TV show to express an opinion on a topic relating to your host country.	Written a blog post, social media status/comment, letter to the editor or called a radio or TV show to express an opinion on a topic relating to your host country. Daily	Written a blog post, social media status/comment, letter to the editor or called a radio or TV show to express an opinion on a topic relating to your host country. Regularly	Written a blog post, social media status/comment, letter to the editor or called a radio or TV show to express an opinion on a topic relating to your host country. Sometimes	Written a blog post, social media status/comment, letter to the editor or called a radio or TV show to express an opinion on a topic relating to your host country. Rarely	Written a blog post, social media status/comment, letter to the editor or called a radio or TV show to express an opinion on a topic relating to your host country. Never
Worked for or closely with a company from your host country.	Worked for or closely with a company from your host country. Daily	Worked for or closely with a company from your host country. Regularly	Worked for or closely with a company from your host country. Sometimes	Worked for or closely with a company from your host country. Rarely	Worked for or closely with a company from your host country. Never
Made a speech in which you refer to your time in your host country or to an audience from your host country.	Made a speech in which you refer to your time in your host country or to an audience from your host country. Daily	Made a speech in which you refer to your time in your host country or to an audience from your host country. Regularly	Made a speech in which you refer to your time in your host country or to an audience from your host country. Sometimes	Made a speech in which you refer to your time in your host country or to an audience from your host country. Rarely	Made a speech in which you refer to your time in your host country or to an audience from your host country. Never
Been an active member of any group that tries to	Been an active member of any group that tries to influence	Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public policy or	Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public policy or	Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public	Been an active member of any group that tries to influence public

	Daily	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
influence public policy or government regarding Australia's relations with your host country.	public policy or government regarding Australia's relations with your host country. Daily	government regarding Australia's relations with your host country. Regularly	government regarding Australia's relations with your host country. Sometimes	policy or government regarding Australia's relations with your host country. Rarely	policy or government regarding Australia's relations with your host country. Never

25. The researcher would like to follow up with a very quick telephone interview to hear about your experience studying in your host country and what you have done since completing your program. If you agree to a fifteen minute telephone call please provide your contact details below.

Name

Email

Telephone

26. Would you like to make any comments about your time studying in your host country or your experiences since finishing your program?

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