

Comment from Michael C H Jones

Discussion of China's evolving reform process has kept academics, journalists, politicians and a few businessmen either gainfully employed or amused for nearly 35 years since the end of the Cultural Revolution around 1976, the year that the ACCCI was established. Invariable all have been wrong in their short-term predictions. China just keeps forging ahead regardless.

But whilst I respect the Chinese traditions and understand that they will continue to do things their way, nevertheless the CPC Politburo is not and never has been omniscient. Similarly nor is Westminster or Washington let alone Canberra Australia. Each country where-ever must be loyal to its own traditions and ought not to debase them, as Australia regularly does, in "toadying" to the Great and Powerful.

Human Rights and the various UN Declarations and Agreements are essential aspects of the Australian political system and culture - China ignores this fact at its peril. Just as many Australians would sacrifice the American Alliance on matters of principle, similarly the magnetic pull of China's Economy is not all-powerful. China's political system and especially its future role

in China's global economic relations is a major consideration in our attitudes towards both the country and the people. Democratic forms and processes took hundreds of years and many bloody revolutions and wars to evolve in Western countries, so fair-minded people cut China a lot of slack. For example many including the ACCCI strongly opposed the trade sanctions imposed after the June 1989 "events" irrespective of what name you give them or are allowed to use.

But men such as Liu Xiaobo are held in high esteem in Australia which is not to say people agree with all his ideas and methods. His jailing is an unbridgeable chasm in Australia China Relations that no lure of the almighty dollar can overcome. Chamber welcomes and applauds Professor Liu's award of the Nobel Peace Prize.