



## AuSI secures \$1M to support Australia-China relations

The ANU Australian Studies Institute (AuSI) has been awarded four-year grant funding of \$1 million from the National Foundation for Australia China Relations (NFACR) to continue the prestigious Stephen FitzGerald Scholars Program.

Named in honour of Australia's first ambassador to Beijing (then Peking), the SFSP provides high-performing students from Greater China who are studying at Australian universities, with insights to Australian history, culture and our diverse society. This initiative has been funded through NFACR in its 2024 – 25 grants round.

Calling the SFSP a *"visionary idea and a delight to be involved with"*, Academic Convenor, Mark Kenny said *"this 4-year funding represented a most welcome vote of confidence in the Institute and ANU at a time of considerable funding uncertainty"*.

The Stephen FitzGerald Scholars Program was piloted in 2023 with 30 scholars from 20 Australian universities. In 2024 the Program welcomed 33 scholars from 18 Australian universities. The next four years will see an increased intake to 45 selected from universities across the country each year. It is estimated that by the end of 2028, the SFSP alumni network will comprise some 240 SFSP graduates, each with a richer appreciation of this country and of the benefits of peaceful and productive Australia-China relations.

The three-day 45-student program comprises visits to civic, scientific and cultural institutions and grants access to leading experts and public figures and senior government officials. Among the institutions visited are Parliament House, the High Court, the National Museum, CSIRO, the National Press Club, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Arboretum, Old Parliament House, and others. The program attracts the highest-level of speakers such as senior ANU experts and outstanding academics from other universities, along with senior politicians, eminent High Court judges, and others.

Professor Kenny said the SFSP speaks to a maturing confidence in the vast and long-running relationship between the peoples and economies of the two nations.

*"Chinese international students are an integral part of Australia's world-class higher-education sector, and this program recognises those who excel in their fields and rewards them with an even greater knowledge of Australia to take back with them,"* he said.

*"They will leave Australia with a deeper understanding of what makes this country work and why strong bilateral relations are in the interests of both countries in the decades ahead."*

*"It's also great fun with many friendships established between scholars and across institutions."*

Professor Mark Kenny, said it was common for other nations to provide similar cultural and political familiarisation programs for journalists, students, academics and even MPs, and it made good sense for Australia be in this, also.

*"We have a powerful story to tell about our robust and independent institutions, our observance of universal human rights and about the respectful accommodation of internal differences,"* he said.

*"In a fracturing and unstable world, our two nations are bound together by geography, history, trade, and by warm people-to-people ties. Yet for all that, we are two very different cultures with two very different political systems. Therefore, much is to be gained by building our shared literacy in each other, and in taking the strengths of each to build our parallel futures,"* he said.

Scholars who have participated in the 2024 and 2023 Stephen FitzGerald Scholars Program also speak highly of the Program's delivery and the lasting effect of the relationships formed and ideas discussed during the Program.

*“Participating in the 2024 Stephen FitzGerald Scholars Program has been a truly memorable and inspiring experience. For the first time since coming to Australia, I had the privilege of connecting with so many remarkable Chinese scholars, exchanging ideas and building lasting connections with bright minds from my home country. This program offered us a unique perspective on the evolving Australia-China relationship, a platform to share our insights on communication and global trends, and an unparalleled opportunity to explore the intricacies of Australia’s parliamentary decision-making process... Reflecting on this incredible journey, I feel more determined than ever to contribute to cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration. I look forward to seeing future cohorts of Stephen FitzGerald Scholars embark on this transformative journey, united in our mission to foster deeper trust and understanding between Australia and China. Together, we can build bridges that strengthen this vital relationship and shape a better future for both nations.”*

– Yifei Xu (University of Adelaide), 2024 SFSP Scholar

*“I am deeply thankful for your role in this enriching chapter of my life. Your hard work and dedication have not only made this program a success but have also provided a valuable perspective for one of the most important international relations. Moreover, it encourages young generations who can grasp the rally baton from Dr Stephen FitzGerald AO.”*

– Jack Li (The Australian National University), 2023 SFSP Scholar

The SFSP is supported by the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations. The ANU Australian Studies Institute is proud to be a National Foundation for Australia-China Relations grant recipient.

**WATCH:** [Stephen FitzGerald Scholars Program: Enriching international students’ understanding of Australia](#)