



Sydney, 15 November 2019

China Matters postpones third Study Tour to Beijing

China Matters has led two study tours to Beijing. The goal of these tours is to facilitate free-flowing, off-the-record and informal discussions with citizens of the People's Republic of China (PRC) about a diverse range of topics. No issues have been left unaddressed, including our concerns about the plight of Uighurs in Xinjiang and the ongoing protest movement in Hong Kong. True to the objectives of China Matters, business executives and politicians from both sides of the political aisle have been invited to join the three-day intensive program (The Hon Chris Bowen MP and Mr Julian Leeser MP on the 1st study tour in 2018; and The Hon Richard Marles MP, Mr Ted O'Brien MP, and The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP on the 2nd one in September). See details of the tours: <http://chinamatters.org.au/events/study-tours/>

It is with regret that we now announce that the third China Matters study tour, planned for 9-11 December, has been postponed. Mr Andrew Hastie MP, Shadow Minister for Resources Mr Matt Keogh MP, and Senator James Paterson had accepted our invitation to join the study tour led by China Matters CEO Mr Alistair Nicholas. We regret the decision of the government of the People's Republic of China, conveyed to China Matters via the PRC Embassy in Canberra, that at this time Mr Hastie and Senator Paterson are not welcome on a China Matters study tour to Beijing.

It is most unfortunate that the names of the politicians who had accepted our invitation to join the study tour in December became public in advance ("Outspoken China critic Andrew Hastie to visit Asian superpower on parliamentary fact-finding mission. Enter the Dragon." *West Australian* 23 Oct 2019). We believe that these politicians accepted our invitation in good faith with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the PRC and of sharing their views with PRC interlocutors. Disappointingly, the media attention that ensued created an environment which was no longer conducive to our goal of facilitating low-key discussions and exchanging differing points of view behind closed doors. A guiding principle of these study tours has been that one publicly shares one's study tour experiences upon return to Australia.

Since its inception China Matters has strived to bring nuance into discussions about the PRC in Australia. We are well aware of the challenges of engaging with the PRC. Regardless, we will continue to work toward providing opportunities for Australian politicians, public servants, businesspeople, and university leaders to engage on critical issues related to Australia's relationship with the PRC, and to simultaneously gain a balanced and comprehensive understanding of developments in the PRC as well as to express and explain their views.

Media enquires: Mr Alistair Nicholas, CEO, mobile 0419 290578
email: alistair.nicholas@chinamatters.org.au