



Rethinking China with Louise Edwards

In China Matters' monthly lecture series: 'Rethinking China', speakers with diverse expertise and background are asked to describe how they see the People's Republic of China, why they see it that way, and on that basis share their thoughts on what kind of China strategy Australia should pursue in the medium to long term. Our fifth lecturer was Professor Louise Edwards together in conversation with broadcaster and journalist Hamish Macdonald.

Below are some of Louise's key observations:

"China is a place that has demonstrated in the past, and continues to demonstrate today, [the] capacity for self-critique and courageous change...Myriad people in that time have dedicated themselves to thinking about ways to improve their country. It is not just top-level stuff...it is actually really deep changes, in the way that families are formed, in the way that individuals interact with each other, how workplaces are organised. Some of the experiments have been disastrous, but really good things have been achieved as well. "

"My perspective on China today is that it is drawing on this rich well of capacity for taking their country seriously and taking risks to reflect and improve in order to make a better China. "

"For much of the twentieth century women were the emblems of change. It was in their image, that of the modern woman, that the reformers marketed their plans to the broader population. Sex could sell modernity, democracy, communism, militarism just as well as it could sell cigarettes. "

"One immediate and urgent thing we need to do is walk back from the path of thinking that we are somehow responsible for saving China and saving the Chinese people from the CPC. "

"We need to develop a broad-based informed approach to China and diversify our public debates beyond the security and military perspectives. We need to hear about how Australian businesses are operating in China and how they work with their Chinese counterparts. How educators and researchers collaborate and how cultural organisations exchange talent. "

"We can't just drift along thinking that China is the arena only of the foreign parts of our government and institutional structures. China is so big, so important in so many arenas that it can't be left just to Defence, or just to Trade. It requires a much bigger vision than we've had to date. "