



## Rethinking China with John Yu

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 sixth lecturer was Dr John Yu AC together in conversation with Ms Lisa Murray.

Below are some of John's key observations:

"Until Chinese [in Australia] acknowledge the importance of politics then governments really won't take much notice of us and how we feel."

"My arrival [in Australia] was not documented. My mother and my sister were appropriately processed, but I wasn't. And so, I had the trifecta – I was a refugee, I was a boat person, albeit a passenger liner, and I was an irregular arrival."

"I was heartened by the fact that recently, some years ago, the Chinese government acknowledged the errors they had made with the one-child policy... I would like to think they were prepared to look at other errors they have made, particularly in the west of China and the southwest... But they need time, and I don't think the west, certainly Australia and the US, are prepared to give them time."

"I suspect that the Chinese government might have considered ways of looking at a different approach in the west and southwest [of China] if it could be done without a loss of face."

"One of the things that China has done well in is improving the health and welfare of the Chinese people and I'm really proud that I spent a period of time as the Chairman of the Board of the George Institute of Global Health where we worked very closely with our colleagues in China."

"There is a lot of goodwill for Australia in China, and I'm talking about medicos and scientists, I'm not talking about politicians. I think we need to look at how we might be able to exploit that and to help our peoples understand each other better."

"I often hear statements made with a domestic audience in mind seeing political approbation and advantage in the lead-up to the next election. But so often the wider Australian public is not paying attention. But people overseas do pay attention and do listen and do note what is said.. I'm not suggesting our leaders avoid the truth but words do matter in relationships with Asia."

"Politicians must be wary of threatening the multicultural diversity which is the linchpin of contemporary Australian success. Winning a few racist votes today may result in an avalanche of dissent tomorrow."

"To me it is not just about what our approach to China should be but about what sort of Australia we want to be in an Asian region, proud but strong from our confidence in ourselves. An Australia who feels right about itself and who trusts our leaders."