

## **Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victoria Chapter)**

**Media Release**

**8 March 2017**

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### **2017 Conference “Beyond the New Gold Mountain”**

From Australia’s 19<sup>th</sup> century gold rush days to the present, the Chinese have played an important role in Australia’s settlement and economy. Yet, this is not fully reflected or recorded in the annals of Australian history. This conference is one of the events in the Victoria Chapter of the Chinese Community Council’s 2017 project to highlight the role of the Chinese in Australia’s history. How difficulties were managed and the Chinese Australian contributions to Australia’s culture, development and economy will be featured in the conference presentations.

For nearly 120 years the Chinese were not welcome in Australia. To restrict the number of Chinese coming to the goldfields, the Victorian colonial government passed legislation in 1855 which imposed a head tax and limited the number of Chinese a ship was permitted to carry. To overcome these restrictions, passengers disembarked in Robe, South Australia, and made the walk overland to the Victorian goldfields. Other colonial governments such as South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland soon followed with similar anti-Chinese legislation.

On Federation in 1901 one of the first acts of the new parliament was the infamous and discriminatory Immigration Restriction Act, commonly known as the White Australia Policy and it was not until 1973 that the last vestiges of this Act were removed.

The trials and tribulations of the early Chinese must not be forgotten for they paved the way for those who have come in more recent years. From the descendants of those who came from the counties of Guangdong’s Pearl River delta to those who have come via another country and to the latest arrivals from all over China; today, those of Chinese descent comprise about one million or approximately four per cent of Australia’s population.

The conference keynote speaker from China is Dr Selia Tan, Heritage Conservationist and Historian at Guangdong Qiaoxiang Cultural Research Centre, Wuyi University.

This will be followed by five sessions of speakers from academia and the community.

Each session has 3-4 speakers with presentations in English.

Session 1      The New Gold Mountain: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Colonial Australia

Session 2      Federation and the Immigration Restriction Act 1901

Session 3      Beyond the White Australia Policy

Session 4      Chinese Australians: Contributions and status

Session 5      Looking Ahead: Action and Challenges

The aim of this conference “Beyond the New Gold Mountain” is to increase understanding of the history and heritage of the Chinese in Australia and the many and varied contributions they have and continue to make both within and beyond Australia. With the increasing importance of the China - Australia relationship, this should be a stimulating and thought-provoking conference.

**Conference Title:** “Beyond the New Gold Mountain”

**Conference Date:** Saturday 24 June 201

**Time:** 9.00am to 6.00pm

**Venue:** RMIT Melbourne

**Registration Fee:** \$50pp, \$30 Student/concession

(Registration form and speaker details will be posted to the CCCAV website)

[www.cccavic.org.au](http://www.cccavic.org.au)

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