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## End of year concert and 40 year anniversary celebration



On Friday 29 November, families and friends of the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre (CAECC) gathered to watch the children perform in the annual end-of-year concert.

The children entertained the crowd with a variety of songs and dances. This was followed by a graduation ceremony for the children moving to Kindergarten next year. Thanks to the CAECC for organising this wonderful event.

### Upcoming events in

# 2025

### 2025 Chinese New Year Celebrations in Canberra

- Saturday 1 February 2025 10am-10pm.
  - Woolley Street, Dickson

### 2025 Lantern Festival

- Saturday 15 February 2025 6pm-9pm
  - Canberra Beijing Garden, Lennox Gardens, Yarralumla

*See page 7 for more details about these  
upcoming events.*



## Note from the ALMA President Celebrating 40 years: 1984-2024

A truly remarkable milestone has been reached in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre (the Centre) and its outstanding contributions to the Canberra community.

The Chinese Australian Schools Association (CASA), now known as the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia (ALMA) was founded 40 years ago in 1984. It was set up by a group of dedicated parents who wanted to operate a bi-lingual early childhood centre which uses both Mandarin and English.

For the past four decades, the Centre has been a beacon of excellence, providing bilingual education to young children and nurturing a diverse and vibrant community. In an increasingly globalized world, the importance of bilingual education cannot be overstated, and the Centre has been at the forefront of fostering a deeper understanding of both Chinese and Australian cultures, languages and values.

As we reflect on the Centre's journey, it's important to recognize the immense dedication, passion, and hard work of the staff, the families, and the many volunteers who have supported the Centre through its many years of operation. Their collective commitment has helped shape not only the educational experiences of countless children but also the broader Canberra community.

For the children who have passed through the Centre's doors, the gift of bilingual education has opened doors to new opportunities, strengthened their cultural identity, and prepared them for a future where cultural fluency and adaptability are more important than ever. The Centre has not just taught language; it has taught a sense of belonging, a respect for diversity, and an understanding that the world is interconnected in ways we can often only begin to appreciate at a young age.

On a personal note, it was with great pride as we watched my son perform at his final end of year concert in both Mandarin and English. For me, this moment was a reminder of the long-term benefits of raising a bilingual child, it isn't just about mastering two languages, it's about giving my son the ability to explore two cultures, to embrace diversity, and to see the world from multiple perspectives. Seeing him effortlessly switch between Mandarin and English, is a testament to the flexibility and depth that bilingualism brings.

*Continued on the next page*

## Note from the ALMA President (continued)

Therefore, I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the current Centre Director Annette Chemin, Assistant Director Norah Chen, and all the Centre's Educators for their hard work and dedication in providing high quality care and education to the children at the Centre now and into the future.

Lastly, In October, we held the ALMA Annual General Meeting (AGM). Thank you to all who attended and a special thank you and welcome to all our new and continuing committee members.

The new ALMA Committee for 2024-2025 is:

President: Ms Adelina Tan

Vice President: Dr Matt Brazel

Treasurer: Ms Rachel Qiu

Assistant Treasurer: Ms Laura Wellman

Secretary: Dr Brendon Gittins

General committee members: Ms Katrin Praseli, Ms Chiew Yi Lian, Ms June Cheah, Ms Joanne Van Ngo, Ms Jennifer Eather, Ms Margareta Sugianto and Ms Tina Jong.

I look forward to working with the new committee over the next year and continue to promote opportunities for parents to create a learning environment for their children to learn Mandarin.

If you are interested in joining the ALMA Committee, please email [canberraalma@gmail.com](mailto:canberraalma@gmail.com), we warmly welcome any new members.

*Adelina*

## ALMA / CAECC meet and greet



On 16 November 2024, members of the ALMA committee met CAECC management and staff for a meet and greet over lunch. It was a great opportunity for the committee to get to know the hard working and dedicated CAECC team.



## Note from the CAECC Director

Another year has gone, and it has been such an exciting year.

With great support from the ALMA Committee, in January we started off with our Lunar new year celebrations, in June we genuinely enjoyed our mid-autumn celebration, and the crescendo was our end of the year concert encompassed by our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> November.

We would like to thank all our special guests who came that Friday, especially Ian Maclean and his wife Minh. Ian is a former member and President of the ALMA committee and his wife a founding member of CAECC. Also attending were Judy Kuzma, a former Director and other the other former educators, Boshu (Laura), Jie (Jenny), Yongmei, Rachel and Hoa.

The children are always a joy to watch at the concert and this is where they show the Mandarin language that they acquire whilst at CAECC.

The children going off to school next year are Maryam, Nick, Jemima, Jude, Bodhi, Esme, Eddie, Charlotte, Edward, Spencer, Finnegan, Athena, Chloe, Nicholas, Collette, and Levi.

We express our fond farewell to the children who will go off to school next year, and wish them all the best in their learning journey.

A BIG thank you to all our educators who work extremely hard, to ensure that the children have the best education and care, and a special thank you to Norah, our Assistant Director/Educational leader who always provides excellent mentorship and support to myself and the educators.

Our utilisation rate for 2025 is looking exceptionally good with only a few places available.

I wish everyone Happy Holidays

假期快乐.

*Annette*

## Welcomes and farewells

### New ALMA members

We welcome the following new ALMA members, Kayla-Sky Filby and family.

### New ALMA committee members

#### Deputy Treasurer, Laura Wellman

My name is Laura Wellman, and my name before marriage was 金洛合。I am a Certified Practising Accountant and work in the Australian Public Service. I studied master of professional accounting at Australian National University from 2009 to 2011. I left Canberra and worked in Perth for 4 years after graduation. Then I moved back to Canberra and sponsored my parents to live in Australia permanently in 2015. I met with my husband in Canberra and now I am a mother of two boys, one is attending CAECC this year and will start his preschool in Mawson Primary next year; the other one will attend CAECC next year. I am the only translator in our house now (my husband doesn't speak Mandarin and my parents don't speak English) and I have been trying to raise two more translators to backfill my position.

#### Committee member, Katrin Praseli

Katrin is a proud mother to Kaiya. Born in Indonesia, Katrin has studied in Michigan, Indonesia and Shanghai, before moving to Canberra to complete her Master's in Translation and Linguistics at the Australian National University. Katrin currently works at NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters). Prior to working at NAATI, she was an Indonesian tutor to Australian DFAT officers in Canberra and Army officers in Sydney, preparing them for their postings.

Other new committee members will be introduced in future issues of the Newsletter

### Departing Committee members

Our sincere thanks and gratitude to the departing members of the ALMA committee:

- Cindy Lee;
- Shirley Lin; and
- Ruth Chau

## ALMA Activities

### Mandarin Community Tutoring Project

This is a free project coordinated by ALMA. It links adults in the ACT area who are learning Mandarin or who have learned the language in the past with fluent speakers who would like to make more local contacts and have volunteered to share their knowledge of Chinese language and culture. If you are interested in becoming involved – as either a tutor or learner – you can find more details on the Tutoring page on the ALMA website.

### Mandarin radio program on community radio 2XX

ALMA continues to co-present this weekly program, which aims to promote the use and learning of Mandarin and to keep Chinese-speaking listeners informed about local events and other information they may be interested in. The 30-minute program usually includes a short story in Mandarin - a fable, a child's story, or an idiom (成语). The presenters discuss the content bilingually to aid language learning and comprehension.

To hear the program, tune into Community Radio 2XX on 98.3fm on Friday evenings between 7pm to 7.30pm or listen online - live or later as a podcast - at [www.2xxfm.org.au](http://www.2xxfm.org.au).

## Opportunities to maintain or develop your Mandarin

### Chinese conversation for intermediate-level speakers

10.30am-11.30am every Friday at the Canberra Southern Cross in Woden. There is no set program, the group, which includes native speakers, chats about topics of interest that week. Free and coordinated by volunteers.

For more information, phone Claire at 0412 305 538 or email her at [pingsingdandan8@gmail.com](mailto:pingsingdandan8@gmail.com)

### University of the Third Age (U3A)

Beginning and Continuing Mandarin classes for adults aged over 55. A Thursday online class for slower paced learners and a Monday face-to-face group for faster learners.

Contact Claire for more details on 0412 305 538

## Opportunities to maintain or develop your Mandarin (continued)

### Mandarin Friendship Hub 中文之友会

Organised by a small group of experienced Mandarin teachers from Australia, the aim is to provide a safe and comfortable space for intermediate and advanced learners of Mandarin to come and practise spoken Mandarin with professional teachers and other learners who share a common passion for Mandarin learning.

Free and meets online every Thursday 8-9pm Melbourne time. Attendees must have proficiency level in Chinese at least HSK 4 or above.

More information <https://sites.google.com/view/zhongwenzhiyouhui/home>

### Upcoming events

#### 2025 Chinese New Year Celebrations in Canberra

Lunar New Year celebrations will return to Woolley Street, Dickson on Saturday 1 February 2025 from 10am to 10pm.

This family-friendly event will bring together community to enjoy performances, delicious food, music and the beautiful fusion of traditional and modern elements. All welcome to join this vibrant celebration of the Year of the Snake!

For program details in mid-January see <https://www.act.gov.au/cityrenewal/whats-on/>

#### 2025 Lantern Festival

Organised by the Australia-China Friendship Society (ACT Branch) this annual celebration includes Chinese classical music, dances, martial arts, dragon and lion dances and a lantern parade. Bring your own picnic – only bottled water for sale – and enjoy the colour and ambiance.

- Saturday 15 February 2025 6pm-9pm
- Canberra Beijing Garden, Lennox Gardens, Yarralumla
- Free entry

For more details email [acfsevent@gmail.com](mailto:acfsevent@gmail.com) or ring Carol on 6247 8231

For more information about the Australia-China Friendship Society see <https://acfs.org.au/>

## The History of ALMA and the CAECC

### The Beginning

As the President said in her note on page 2, the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc. (ALMA) was founded in 1984 as the Chinese Australian Schools Association (CASA) by a group of parents who envisioned an innovative childcare centre where Mandarin could be taught. This passion for bilingual education eventually led to ALMA becoming a cornerstone of Mandarin language promotion in Canberra and beyond. These achievements reflected ALMA's commitment to fostering bilingual education and promoting Chinese culture in Canberra.

### ALMA's role as an advocate for Mandarin language education

ALMA has long participated in discussions with ACT education bodies and contributed to the Canberra Region Languages Forum, advocating for Mandarin language education at both local and national levels. In the mid-1990s, ALMA partnered with Mawson Primary School to help establish its Mandarin program. In 2018, ALMA worked closely with Mawson Primary School, providing input into the design of the new Mandarin Immersion Program, which remains the only primary school Mandarin immersion program in the ACT.

Since its inception, ALMA has been actively involved in shaping language education policy, contributing feedback to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the ACT Languages Policy, and collaborating on a two-year Blueprint to enhance Mandarin education and cultural understanding in the ACT.

### The Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre

ALMA has operated the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre (CAECC), a bilingual childcare facility, since 1984. The CAECC began operations in the YWCA building in Corroboree Park, Ainslie, in November 1984 with 14 children and a staff of two. In early 1985, the CAECC was offered the use of a building in Mawson Primary School, where it remains to this day. The building has been gradually upgraded and expanded since then, with the pre-school sunroom added in 2008, and a new reception area and director's office added in 2010.

### ALMA's and the CAECC's community engagement

Since its inception, ALMA has hosted various cultural events, including barbecues, workshops and cultural celebrations. ALMA has also regularly participated in external events such as the National Multicultural Festival, the Canberra Chinese New Year Festival and the Mawson Primary School Fete, holding cultural performances and stalls at these events. In June 2005, ALMA even held an exhibition of Chinese prints and ceramics at the Canberra Museum and Gallery.



## The History of ALMA and CAECC (continued)

Between the January 2020 hailstorm, poor air conditions due to the bushfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been a challenging start to the 2020s for ALMA and the CAECC. The pandemic in particular forced the ALMA and the CAECC to develop new models of service delivery to keep the CAECC running, while ensuring the continued safety of children and staff. This included creating a restricted access “bubble” inside the centre, with all drop-offs and pick-ups being managed at the front door. Measures such as this placed increased pressure on staff during an already difficult time. The pandemic also saw the end-of-year concert performed without a live audience in 2021, broadcast to parents and friends on StoryPark instead.

Despite these challenges, ALMA and the CAECC have continued to thrive, thanks to the dedication of the many ALMA members who have served on the management committee over the years, our wonderful hardworking CAECC educators and staff, and the support of families and friends. We are in a good position, heading towards our 50 year anniversary in 2034.



*Preparing the infants and toddlers for the 2024 Annual CAECC concert.*



*Good luck to all our graduating children, off to kindergarten next year!*