



PM Albanese, please consider revoking the visa refusal for the sake of a better Australia-China relations.

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Refusing postgraduate visas for Chinese nationals based on national security, started with the Trump administration and continued with the Biden administration. The policy has been costly to America and the question was asked, whether this loss of so many high-quality researchers is a lost opportunity to contribute to US higher education and the American economy,

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2021/08/10/biden-keeps-costly-trump-visa-policy-denying-chinese-grad-students/?sh=4e0e048e3641>

In Australia, the Guardian headline “Chinese professor 'stunned' by Australian decision to cancel his visa.”.

“Professor Chen Hong, an academic in China, says he ‘absolutely refused’ to accept ASIO’s assessment that he posed a security risk. Professor Hong is the director of the Australian Studies Centre at East China Normal University in Shanghai and was a frequent visitor to Australia before his visa was cancelled.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/sep/10/chinese-professor-chen-hong-asio-cancel-australia-china-visa>

This refusal occurred in 2020 during the height of China bashing and the freezing of Australia-China relations. It was not widely reported in the mainstream media. There were no adverse comments, and it was considered another new front created by the new Cold War between the United States and China. With the change of government in Australia, the new Albanese government indicated a change of direction in Australian foreign policy based on our national interests to reset the frozen relations with China and to continue to trade with our No 1 trading partner, China. The good and hard work done by our Foreign Minister Senator Wong in opening the diplomatic door for a dialogue with China’s FM Wang Yi, was considered an important preliminary to warming up relations with China.

There were other events that give the perception that the Federal government is taking one step forward and two step backwards, in attempting to improve Australia-China relations. The recent matter of refusing a visa for a Chinese researcher to be engaged in high level research in a Queensland university could be considered back pedalling of the bilateral relations. This story was reported in the Brisbane (Qld) Times and the Telegraph (NSW)

Absurd: Spider venom researcher banned over fears work could be weaponised

“An international student has been denied the opportunity to continue her research into potential new painkillers because Defence officials feared it could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction. The Chinese national was well-regarded at the University of Queensland and during her undergraduate studies produced six research papers on the potential use of modified spider venom for pain relief.”

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/absurd-spider-venom-researcher-banned-over-fears-work-could-be-weaponised-20230123-p5ceoq.html>



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Chinese student's visa rejected over fears she could make 'weapons of mass destruction' "A Chinese student at an Australian University developing medicines for chronic pain had her visa to undertake a PhD rejected over fears she might develop "weapons of mass destruction". University of Queensland Professor Glenn King has spoken out about the "absurd" decision made by the Department of Defence on a new podcast."

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/technology/innovation/chinese-students-visa-rejected-over-fears-she-could-make-weapons-of-mass-destruction/news-story/8e282b8cc23694a6cff803def8c31fff>

In the context of improving our bilateral relations with China, this type of decision and the reasons for the decision, are outdated and shrouded by a Cold War mentality which former DHA Minister made. The damage to our education section will be similar to that reported by Forbes for the Americans. In addition, this kind of decision is not a sign of goodwill for talks relating to the release of Cheng and Yang's repatriation to Australia.

If the Albanese government is really serious about improving Australia-China friendship, then it should consider reviewing the decision made by the DHA; or for better relations with China, make a new decision to approve the visa application.

We believe, like Professor King, that the researcher has much to contribute to the advancement of pharmacology and medicine, in finding a natural substance suitable for pain relief. Every research is a two-edged sword (ie. DNA and genetic research, atomic energy research). However, most good would come out of research and development if they were guided by moral and ethical principles and NOT by Cold war mentality and misguided by unfounded fear of national security.

Education research has been a win-win strategy for many decades for all global citizens until halted by unfounded fear of national security and misuse against humanity like nuclear weapons. Education exchanges help to promote understanding and peace which is the best way for national security for all global citizens.

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