

21 July 2020

Notice of Motion – Cr Jackie Watts. Hong Kong citizens

Motion

That Future Melbourne Committee:

1. Supports the Australian Government statements reassuring Hong Kong citizens fearing political persecution that they can apply for protection under Australia's humanitarian program.
2. Congratulates the Australian Prime Minister for that announcement and further calls upon the Commonwealth Government to:
 - 2.1. Immediately grant those Hong Kong citizens presently in Australia, and who apply for asylum, the ability to work and study in Australia, while exploring ways by which they may be offered an expedited path to Australian residency and citizenship.
 - 2.2. Explore ways by which Hong Kong citizens in the following circumstances may be offered a path to Australian residency and citizenship:
 - 2.2.1. Citizens who neither hold nor are entitled to British National Overseas Passports, and are not presently in Australia but are otherwise entitled to live or study in Australia
 - 2.2.2. Citizens not presently in Australia but who hold, or are entitled to hold, British National Overseas Passports.
 - 2.2.3. Citizens fearing persecution are eligible to apply for entry on humanitarian grounds and if they meet the criteria, apply for residency in due course.
3. Requests the Lord Mayor to forward a copy of this Motion to the Ambassador of China, Consul General of China in Melbourne, the Australian Prime Minister and Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Background

1. Council has long enjoyed a cordial and mutually productive relationship with China, including a Sister City relationship with Tianjin since 1980.
2. While acknowledging the extraordinary economic development in China, lifting of hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty, Council also acknowledges the centrality, in any civil society, of staunch support for the development and application of human rights. The development of these human rights will contribute to the wellbeing and advancement of the Chinese people and to peaceful coexistence of China throughout the world.
3. Recognising that recent extension of Chinese security laws to Hong Kong is clearly contrary to supporting human rights and are inconsistent with the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, a prima facie contravention of Hong Kong's Basic Law and the '*one country, two systems*' principle.
4. China is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and this Council supports the full implementation for the Chinese people of the human rights set out in the UN Declaration including civic rights, labour rights, religious rights and ethnic rights.
5. By 2016, the Hong Kong-born community of Victoria had grown to 21,638. Today, Melbourne is the second-most popular Australian destination city for the Hong Kong-born community. The

majority of the community is Cantonese speaking, ethnic Chinese. A third of the community is Christian; 6% is Buddhist. Half of those working occupy professional roles; many others work in trade, clerical, sales and service roles. (Source: *Hong-Kong-Community-Profile-2016-Census*).

6. In 2017, there were 17,772 student enrolments from Hong Kong to Australia, representing a 1.5% growth (national figures)
<https://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Education/Countries/hong-kong>
7. Hong Kong citizen status overview:
 - Those already in Australia: The condition of applying for asylum is similar to that Australia adopted post-Tiananmen Square, the fall of Vietnam and (recently) Syrian refugees
 - Those born on or after 1 July 1997: After the end of British rule, so not British National Overseas Passport holders.
 - Those born in Hong Kong under British rule and entitled to a British National Overseas Passport: Are still in Hong Kong or elsewhere but not in Australia.

Moved by: Cr Jackie Watts

Seconded by: Cr Beverley Pinder