

Australia

# Chinese Australians call for more government engagement amid rising racism and political tensions



The Australian Parliament is seen behind the roof of the Chinese Embassy in Canberra. Source: AAP  
Chinese Australians are calling for more government support and engagement amid rising sinophobia and political tensions.

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Chinese Australians say they have become "collateral damage" amid the increasingly strained relations between China and Australia and are pleading for political leaders to step up engagement with their community.

[In a submission to a Senate inquiry](#) looking into concerns faced by diaspora communities in Australia, the Chinese Community Council of Australia (CCCA) said rising political tensions and the coronavirus pandemic have led to increased marginalisation, including racism.

The CCCA said governments must act to protect social cohesion and increase community cooperation with the Chinese diaspora.

"The seriousness of the problem involving 1.2 million Chinese Australians should not be underestimated as it can have widespread national consequences," the group wrote in its submission.

"We are sending you our voice and plea to help us through this difficult period of changing geopolitical winds."

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While incidents of racism and violence against Asian Australians **have sharply increased since the beginning of the pandemic**, the CCA wrote it did not think Australia was a racist country at heart.

“Despite the increasing racist activities in Australia, we do not believe we are a racist country because there are still so many decent Australians and Australian leaders who have opened the door for the Chinese immigrants from Asia and China in the last 50 years.”

Australia’s diplomatic relationship with China has deteriorated in the last year over a series of political flashpoints.

There has been tension caused by Australia’s call for an inquiry into the origins of COVID-19, disputes over trade tariffs, the cancelling of extradition agreements tied to

political unrest in Hong Kong, and concern about the mistreatment and mass detention of Muslim minority Uighurs in China's Xinjiang province.

China has in turn raised travel warnings and cautioned its nationals against visiting or studying in Australia.

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The CCCA said the rise in anti-China sentiment in Australia was causing “unnecessary stress and trauma” and the federal government has a role to play to assuage it.

“We realise there are always difficulties in dealing with a rising China caused by differences in culture, political biases, misunderstanding and misinformation. We should use constructive diplomacy to solve them.”



In the months since the coronavirus pandemic began, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has condemned the rise in sinophobic incidents and repeatedly praised Chinese Australians.

“It was the Chinese Australian community that actually protected Australia. They led the way and the broader community is now following,” [he told SBS News in April](#).

The prime minister has described diplomatic positions taken by the federal government that have aggravated China as being made in Australia's national interest.

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