China expert elected new President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities

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Professor John Fitzgerald FAHA, a leading expert on China, Australia and the geo-politics of the Asia-Pacific region, was elected President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities on 22 November.

Professor Fitzgerald’s broad-ranging expertise and interdisciplinary research includes Chinese-Australian community studies, Asia-Pacific philanthropy and the non-profit (NGO) sector, the history and politics of China, East Asian nationalism, and Asian languages.

“I am delighted to have been elected President of this important institution”, said Professor Fitzgerald. “Australians love reading about our history and archaeology. We enjoy poetry and music and we are keen to learn about other peoples and countries. Preserving and sharing these skills and pleasures is what the humanities are all about.”

“As a country we also face big challenges that call for big thinking”, said Professor Fitzgerald. “We all have a part to play in meeting these challenges. The Academy is here to help.”

Professor Fitzgerald was China Representative of The Ford Foundation in Beijing from 2008–12 until his current appointment as Truby and Florence Williams Chair in Social Investment and Philanthropy, and Director of the Asia-Pacific Centre for Social Investment and Philanthropy, at Swinburne University.

He succeeds Emeritus Professor Lesley Johnson AM FAHA. “As President, Lesley Johnson has led the Academy into fruitful partnerships with scientists, social scientists, and engineers to bring insights from the humanities to bear on the big challenges of the day”, said Professor Fitzgerald. “She has also invigorated the Academy’s collaborations with partners in the region”.

“They incoming Council will carry her work forward in promoting excellence, ensuring that humanities voices are heard, giving policy advice, and building partnerships in Australia and internationally.”

Professor Fitzgerald was formerly Professor of Asian Studies, Head of the School of Social Sciences and Associate Dean (International) at La Trobe University and Director of the International Centre of Excellence in Asia-Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. For seven years Professor Fitzgerald served as the Chair of the Education Committee of the Australia-China Council under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He earlier served three years on the Australian Research Council including a term as Chair of the ARC Committee on National and International Co-operation. His professional roles have included President of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia.

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