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MEDIA RELEASE

CCCAV Statement on Senator Abetz's Targeted Questioning of Loyalty of Chinese Australians

During a hearing on issues facing diaspora communities in Australia by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on Wednesday 14 October three Australians with Chinese heritage Ms Wesa Chau, Mr Osmond Chiu, and Ms Yun Jiang were singled out by Senator Eric Abetz to "unequivocally condemn" a foreign ruling party. We are deeply concerned and displeased by Senator Abetz's insinuation of disloyalty of these three distinguished Chinese Australians. We regard this targeted questioning as unfair and racially prejudicial.

One of the terms of references of the enquiry by the Senate committee is the "barriers to the full participation of diaspora communities in Australia's democratic and social institutions, and mechanisms for addressing these barriers". Senate Abetz's questioning highlights exactly why a lot of Chinese Australians are scared of seeking public offices because of constant suspicion or smears of disloyalty. This tactic also reminds us of U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy and his inquisition tactic at the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Considering that no one else at the hearing were asked the same question, by this targeted questioning Senator Abetz is making the presumption that there was some likelihood of disloyalty because of our heritage. Australia is one of the most successful multicultural countries with people of different heritages treating each other respectfully and working together to make this country an even more harmonious and prosperous country. Indeed no Australian should be singled out to be questioned about their loyalty to this country because of their heritage.

We may have Chinese heritage, but we are Australians like all other Australians with various heritages. Chinese Australians, as part of the Australian community, have made continuous and significant economic, social and cultural contributions to Australia for more than 200 years. We call this beautiful country home. We should be treated the same way as all Australians.

As ordinary citizens, we should not be forced to take a political position regarding a foreign government, nor should we be required to prove our loyalty. Treating people prejudicially based on their background is against Australian values of respect and equality.

We appeal to politicians and Australian society to treat 1.2 million Chinese Australians the same way as all Australians so that more of them can participate in Australia's democratic process without fear of being intimidated.