In 1887 the Australian colonies learned that an official Chinese delegation would shortly arrive in Sydney. It was described as ‘a commission of inquiry into the circumstances, commerce, and condition of [Chinese] resident in the islands of the Malayan archipelago and Australia’. The mission was a Chinese government response to an appeal for official protection originally made by Chinese merchants in the Philippines. The sponsor of the delegation was the Governor-General of Guangdong and Kwangsi Provinces, Chang Chih-tung, with approval from the senior official in Beijing, Li Hung-chang. The delegation left Guangzhou on 26 August 1866 and returned to China in late 1887.

Details of contacts with Australia’s Chinese leaders in the planning of the visit to Australia are limited to Australian reports that the Sydney Chinese doctor, George On Lee, was involved with Mei Quong Tart in the pre-visit organisation. On Lee, who acted as the interpreter for the Commissioners throughout their Australian visit, asked Sir Henry Parkes to receive the Commissioners with dignity, and to waive charges on members of the delegation when entering Australia through Sydney. Parkes replied that they would be received with ‘every possible attention’ and given ‘every possible facility . . . to carry out the objects of their mission.’ The New South Wales (and Victorian) poll-tax was waived and they were accorded full diplomatic honours in New South Wales and subsequently in Victoria and South Australia although Queensland was less welcoming.

1 The Daily Telegraph, June 1887. See Willard, M, (1923), History of the White Australia Policy to 1920, Carlton, Vic, Melbourne University Press. (Reprinted 1967), pp 75. No detailed study of the visit has been identified.
3 Ibid, p 156.
4 The Sydney Morning Herald, 6 May 1887 In the Melbourne Chinese Petition to the Commissioners, written by Cheong, he uses the form: ‘mission of inquiry into circumstances, commerce, and condition of our countrymen resident in the islands of the Malayan archipelago and Australia,’ that probably is a direct quote from the Commissioners Letters of Credence to the colonial authorities.
5 The Australian Times and Anglo-New Zealander, London, 16 September, 1887, p 287, reported that the Commissioners were ‘feasted and complimented in South Australia’.
They were welcomed to Sydney by the Mayor and the Premier, Sir Henry Parkes. The NSW Governor, Lord Carrington, gave a reception at Government House. Similar vice-regal receptions were given in Victoria and South Australia but not in Queensland.

In Victoria Lowe Kong Meng was involved and probably Louis Ah Mouy. In all, the Commissioners spent twelve weeks travelling in mainland eastern Australia. There is no indication in Cheok Hong Cheong’s letterbooks or other archives of any involvement by Cheong in the planning or management of the Imperial Commissioners visit to Australia or Victoria. His favourite newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, reported:

There will arrive in Melbourne about the end of this month two Chinese gentlemen, General Wong and E Tsing, who have been on a tour of inspection through the principal cities where Chinese settlements have been established. They have already visited Batavia, Java, the Philippine Islands, and the Straits Settlements and they are now on their way to Sydney, and after completing inquiries they will in turn visit Melbourne and the other chief cities in the Australian colonies. They have been commissioned by the Chinese Government to make the journey and report on the condition of the Chinese in the various places where they have settled.

The Melbourne press stated that the leader of the delegation, General Wong Yung-ho (Wang Ronghe), held British citizenship from Penang where he had attended the Free School with Lowe Kong Meng. He went to China where he became interpreter to General Charles ‘Chinese’ Gordon who assisted in the defeat of the Taiping rebels by Chinese Imperial forces.

E Tsing (Yu Qiong or Yu Chun-hsien was scheduled to become the Chinese Consul-General in San Francisco after the Australian visit. Chinese-Australian hopes for a consulate in Australia had to wait another thirty years. The arrival of the delegation in Sydney was announced on 9 May 1887. The Daily Telegraph, quoting The Sydney Morning Herald, repeated the common colonial view that the purpose behind the Commissioners

Commissioners were ‘feasted and complimented in South Australia’.

6 The Daily Telegraph, 10 May 1887
7 The Daily Telegraph, 3 May 1887.
8 The Times, London, 27 September 1887.
9 The Daily Telegraph, 2 May 1887.
10 The Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1887. Among others who participated in the wars in China was the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch (see previous chapter). No study has been made of the number of Britons who served or worked in China and subsequently moved to Australia. An investigation might shed new light on some of the approaches adopted towards Chinese emigration to the Australian colonies.
11 The Daily Telegraph, 3 May 1887; 27 May 1887. Yen Ching-Hwang, (1985), Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period, (1851-1911), Singapore, Singapore University Press, p 157, states that Wang's family was from Fukien and that Yu Chun was from Taishan District.
12 The Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1887.
visit was to prepare the way for increased Chinese immigration. The closure of the United States to the immigration of unskilled Chinese labour in 1882 was recalled to whip up fear that the Chinese were about to turn their full and undivided attention to Australia.

A letter in *The Daily Telegraph* reflected the feeling that the delegation aroused among members of the labour movement. The writer admitted to being a cabinet maker:

> It is amazing to me that a horde of Asiatics should be allowed to settle down and destroy the cabinet trade of this city. This Colony was never founded for their benefit surely. . . It is a nice thing that an Englishman should lose his time learning a trade to compete with a lot of slaves, for they are nothing better. . . What chance has a white man, who pays rates and taxes, and keeps a wife and family with them? . . . I am, Victim, March 16.

Cheong followed reports of the Sydney visit in the Melbourne press, especially his daily paper, the Christian owned and managed *Daily Telegraph*. He knew Mei Quong Tart from their common interest in the Chinese anti-opium movement although he never shared a public platform with him.

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13 *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 May 1887. See final report on the visit in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1887.

14 *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 1887.
Quong Tart tried to blunt anti-Chinese attacks in Sydney by arranging a meeting between officials of the Anti-Chinese League in Sydney and the Commissioners. He issued a statement after the meeting:

Upon certain firm and positive facts I declare that their Excellencies General Wong Yung Ho and Consul-General U Tsing did not, as this league (Anti-Chinese League) supposes, visit these shores to spy out the land, and encourage immigration, for it is quite against the high authorities rules to look after a mere sprinkling of their flock like there is in Australia. They were sent through so many complaints about the poll-tax, and other things reaching the ears of His Imperial Majesty, to inquire into and learn for themselves the true state of affairs concerning the treatment in general of all Chinese here before communicating with His Majesty.\(^{15}\)

The Chinese business community in Sydney did its best to add to the status and impact of the first official Chinese delegation to visit Australia. A substantial residence was leased in Macquarie Street and refurnished in Chinese style to accommodate the Commissioners and their servants. A busy schedule of meetings allowed the delegation to meet the leading politicians and businessmen who took enthusiastically, if mistakenly, to the prospect of developing trade with China. The Commissioners visited the Chinese quarter of Sydney for meetings with Chinese business and community groups. They visited the Chinese Anglican Church at Botany, where the Rev. George Soo Hoo Ten was their host.\(^{16}\)

General Wong Yang Ho attempted to establish from the outset that their sole purpose was not furthering Chinese immigration but to look into the condition of the Chinese population.\(^{17}\) But at a picnic in Sydney General Wong let fall an unfortunate remark that journalists present seized upon to show that he and his colleague were scouting Australia as a field for Chinese emigration. A writer in *The Daily Telegraph* editorialised:

> It is well that he should be made acquainted with the fixed determination of Australians to preserve this country for men of their own race. . . The objection to Chinese immigration is not confined to what some superficial critics may describe as the fears and prejudices of the working classes.\(^{18}\)

Although the labour movement did take a prominent role in the anti-Chinese movement, and actively sought wider community support, the concept of ‘White Australia’ was shared across colonial society. Wong’s slip was seized upon by the anti-Chinese pressure groups as a direct Chinese challenge to British ownership of Australia. In the editorial cited above, the paper continued that it was not just an issue for workers but, ‘beyond this

\(^{15}\) Tart, Margaret, (1911), *The Life of Quong Tart*, Sydney, W M McCardy, p 35.

\(^{16}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 December 1887.

\(^{17}\) *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1887.

\(^{18}\) *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1887.
is the imperative duty which rests upon us to preserve the purity of our of our European nationality.¹⁹

The paper did not call for a complete ban on Chinese immigration. By 1887 it was generally understood that this was beyond the constitutional powers of colonial governments although as the previous chapter noted, that did not prevent Victoria or New South Wales from testing the extent to which they could challenge residual British constitutional authority, stopping short only at the point where the colonies might have triggered a crisis with Britain.

The Commissioners arrived in Melbourne on 26 May 1887. The Daily Telegraph was welcoming, noting that the visit was a long-overdue step by the government of China:

> We have been so accustomed to regard ‘John Chinaman’, as the inoffensive alien who supplies us with fresh vegetables and cheap furniture is familiarly termed, with a good-humoured toleration, largely intermingled with contempt and dislike, that it requires some effort of imagination to recognise in him a member of a great and powerful empire, which is slowly awakening to a sense of the responsibility of protection which it owes to those of its people who have gone forth into foreign lands.²⁰

This comment went to the heart of the frustration that Cheong and his merchant colleagues had tried to convey in 1879 (See Chapter 4). How could able men deal with disparaging terms like, ‘inoffensive’, ‘toleration’, ‘contempt’ and ‘dislike’ and retain their self-respect. Chinese leaders resented being subjected to a second-rank status because their homeland was regarded internationally as weak and ineffective (see Chapter 4).

The Commissioners were honoured guests of the leading Melbourne clubs. The most prestigious, the Melbourne Club, excluded Jews, Catholics and Chinese from membership, but saw nothing inconsistent in making the Commissioners honorary members.²¹ Victorian businessmen were anxious to show the Commissioners the resources and wealth of the colony and were not about to allow principles to become obstacles.

Few Australians had any comprehension of the network of relationships, the concepts of family and mutual trust and obligations that are, with some exaggerations and

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¹⁹ The Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1887
²⁰ The Daily Telegraph, 15 May 1887.
²¹ The Daily Telegraph, 28 May 1887.
stereotyping basic to Chinese business dealings. The treatment to which Chinese were exposed had done nothing to encourage Chinese merchants to enter into significant business dealings with Europeans.

The Victorian Chinese Residents Association comprised a small group of men who dominated the Chinese community in Victoria. It included the leading members of the Chinese business community, most of whom were unknown to the colony at large but whose influence was considerable not only within the Chinese merchant network but also through men like Lowe Keng Meng and Louis Ah Mouy, whose connections extended into the wider colonial economy. Similar bodies existed throughout the Chinese diaspora of which the best known was in California, the Chinese Six Companies.

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24 Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, (1877), Memorial: six Chinese companies; an address to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. Testimony of California’s leading citizens before the Joint Special Congressional Committee, San Francisco, CCBA.
The Victorian Chinese Residents Association comprised a small group of men who dominated the Chinese community in Victoria (Chapters 2 and 4). It included the leading
members of the Chinese business community, most of whom were unknown to the colony at large but whose influence was considerable not only within the Chinese merchant network but also through men like Lowe Keng Meng and Louis Ah Mouy, whose connections extended into the wider colonial economy. Similar bodies existed throughout the Chinese diaspora of which the best known was in California, the Chinese Six Companies.

The list of the men who attended a reception for the Commissioners on the 28 May identifies the most important men in the Melbourne Chinese community. Those present included Leong Mow, Yee Shew, Sun Goon Shing, Mee Chin, Moon Mee, Fee Yick, Ti Shing (Tye Shing was a leading furniture manufacturer), Ti Kew, Ah Meng (probably Lowe Kong Meng), Soe Kee, Oh Hong, Chin Lung Ho, Li Mac, Lung Hung But, Kwan Chew, Lung Gee, Kung Hock, Way Yin, Keng Chung, Yen Chung, Hock Li, Wah Ye, and Lee Leong Fung. Cheok Hong Cheong was a notable absentee as were the other Chinese Christian leaders. After the meeting the Commissioners were received by the Governor, Sir Henry Loch. The following day they met the Premier and the Cabinet. A few days later they attended a luncheon at Government House as the guests of the Governor. Cheong and the Christian leaders were not invited to any of these functions either.

Cheong’s exclusion from the inner circles of the Chinese business leadership reflects the complex identity that he had created for himself. Ah Mouy and Kong Meng presented the Commissioners with a petition written by Cheong in his role as the amanuensis for the two merchant leaders. Although useful for his written English skills he was not included in the Chinese merchant delegations that met the Commissioners and/or attended the official receptions. The relationship between Cheong and the Chinese business community from 1879 to the time of Kong Meng’s death in 1888 seems to have been one of practical need rather than close friendship or shared interests.

Little is known about the Victorian Chinese Residents Committee nor is there much information about the role of the merchant-elite in the management of Victorian Chinese

26 Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, (1877), Memorial: six Chinese companies; an address to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. Testimony of California’s leading citizens before the Joint Special Congressional Committee, San Francisco, CCBA.
27 The Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1887. In addition to these men, the names On Sue and Hing Long are also associated with the Melbourne Chinese merchant leadership — The Daily Telegraph, 9 May 1888.
28 Jupp, James, [General Editor], (1988), The Australian People, Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins, Sydney, Angus and Robertson for the Office of Multicultural Affairs.
community affairs. Cheong served as the secretary and later as chairman of the Association for some years but only in its public interactions with the colonial community. There are, for example, no Residents Association letters in his notebooks addressed to Chinese businessmen in Victoria although there are indications of business dealings with, for example, the On Cheong Company in Sydney and an awkward relationship with some Melbourne businessmen (see Chapter 6) in the Melbourne-based Anglo-Chinese Trading Company. Over the years, especially after the death of Lowe Kong Meng in 1888 and the retirement of Louis Ah Mouy, the leadership of the Committee widened to include not only merchants but also Christian leaders such as Cheong and a Chinese Methodist clergyman, the Rev. James Lee Mouy Ling. The underlying public purpose of the organisation and its overseas equivalents was to minimise dissension within the Chinese community over business, employment and legal matters and to coordinate responses to European criticisms. It was in this latter aspect that Cheong was able to exercise a significant role.

As Cheong assumed greater influence within the broader Chinese community he arranged occasional meetings in the name of the Residents Association to discuss matters of general concern. These meetings took place after the death of Lowe Kong Meng (1888) and with the tacit consent of Louis Ah Mouy (died 1917). The Association was briefly reinvigorated during the furniture and laundry trades disputes of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century but was progressively superseded by other groups such as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Young China League (linked to the Chinese Masonic Lodge — The Yee Hing), the Chinese Empire Reform Association and the local branch of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang).

Cheong claimed to have met the Commissioners on at least two occasions although


there is only his record. Given his prominence in the Chinese and Christian community there is no reason to doubt that the meetings occurred. In 1898 he recalled the Commissioner’s visit to his home in Gore Street, Fitzroy:

Had I thought well of it myself I would have accepted the advice of the Chinese Imperial Commissioners who 11 years ago did me the honour of a personal visit to my home & spending the evening with me when they delicately pointed out that there were some 30 vacancies in the Foreign Office at salaries of 1200 to 1500 dollars per month (or £1,500 to £2,000 a year) for men with similar attainments to mine. I did not however choose to accept the advice well meant as it was, not only because I had put my hand to the plough and could not therefore turn back, but knowing as I did the temptation and dangers of such service to one’s spiritual life & well-being I felt constrained to avoid the issue. And what I felt constrained to avoid I cannot in conscience advise my son to follow.32

There is equally little reason to doubt his statement about being offered a position with the Chinese Foreign Office (Tsungli Yamen). There was an ongoing search by the Chinese authorities to find Chinese with the necessary language and education skills for overseas diplomatic postings.33 The subsequent interest of James Cheong in a Chinese diplomatic career, and the willingness of senior Victorian officials, such as Sir John Madden, to assist him points to the matter having been discussed within the family and beyond. (See Chapter 6). Although it seems unusual, in today’s highly professionalised diplomatic context, overseas staff of the Tsungli Yamen had to be recruited where they could be found. It was difficult to find staff and this explains why men like Cheong could be asked if they would be willing to serve in China’s emerging foreign service.

Cheong’s only identifiable public task during the Commissioners’ visit was as the writer of the Petition to the Commissioners on behalf of the Victorian Chinese Residents Association.34 He ensured a copy went to the newspapers on the same day the Petition was sent to the Commissioners. The Petition repeated the complaints made in his 1879 paper about treaty obligations, unfair taxes and restrictions on the movement of Chinese within Australia and the niggling nature of the discrimination experienced by Chinese.35

In an address at a dinner of welcome at Menzies Hotel, attended by the colony’s political, social and business elite, the Commissioners were urged to recommend that

32 Cheok Hong Cheong to Archdeacon Samuel Williams, 4 March 1898.
34 The Daily Telegraph, 31 May 1887.
35 Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, (1879), The Chinese Question in Australia, 1879-80, Melbourne.
China participate in the 1888 Great Melbourne Exhibition. Wong had been told by the Residents Committee of the restrictions placed upon Chinese wanting to tender for the supply of cheap chairs for the 1880 Exhibition and their fears they would be excluded from tendering for the 1888 Exhibition. He carefully avoided that discordant issue and said that he intended advising his government to take part in the Exhibition. Most of his address was about trade matters.\footnote{The Daily Telegraph, 11 June 1887. It was the established position that China would object to any discriminatory practices but not to restrictions applied equally to all countries. See, for example, the remarks of a Chinese diplomat who served in the United States early in the 20th century. Wu Ting-fang, (1914), America: Through the Spectacles of a Chinese Diplomat, New York, Frederick A Stokes.} He made only a passing reference to the poll-tax criticizing the discriminatory nature of requiring it only from Chinese. He expressed the opinion that it was contrary to the Anglo-Chinese treaties. He said that the Chinese Government had drawn attention to the poll-tax in discussions with the British Government.\footnote{Price, Charles, (1974), The Great White Walls are Built, Canberra, Australian National University Press, p 186.} The Commissioners told the Premier that, apart from the tax issue, they thought the Chinese in Australia were well-treated.\footnote{The Daily Telegraph, 11 June 1887. This comment seems to have been ignored. It seems to have been a popular view among Chinese, see Chang Toy Len, (1988), Sailing for the Sun. The Chinese in Hawaii, 1788-1989, Honolulu, The East-West Center.}

Premier Gillies responded that the poll-tax underwrote the cost of supervising the Chinese and that it would be kept in place. Cheong’s response to this assertion was set out in the Melbourne Chinese Petition to the Commissioners:

> We beg to call your Excellencies’ attention to the report in The Daily Telegraph of the 31st ult. of your Excellencies’ interview with the Hon. D. Gillies, Premier of this colony, in which the hon. the Premier is reported as having said that the Chinese cost this country a considerable sum of money in many ways, their protection was a matter of expense, and the poll-tax was imposed for a compensation.

> If that report be correct, we venture to declare that the excuse seems to us as extraordinary as the imposition itself is, in its departure from all the principles of international right and equity.

> But, without questioning the correctness of his premises, or the justice of his conclusion, your Excellencies will please note what the Chinese contribute towards the expenses of Government.

> Mr Hayter’s Year Book shows that the Chinese contribution is greatly in excess of the average contributed by all other nationalities, as the following fact alone sufficiently proves.

> From two out of numberless articles of Chinese consumption, the Customs department levies a duty equal to £3 3s. 11d. per head, whereas no article of European consumption is taxed more than at the rate of 10s. a head, whilst the next highest on the list scarcely reaches 2s. a head.

> Your Excellencies will see from this that the Victorian Government has taxed us
‘liberally’ enough through the Customs and otherwise, without singling us out for such a yoke of national ignominy and dishonour, which, even in the darker days of the Roman Empire, was only reserved for the vanquished, never for the subjects of a friendly power, to say nothing of one in actual alliance.

Then, in regard to ‘cost’ for our ‘protection’, the same undoubted authority in his criminal statistics shows the population of arrests per 1,000 of the population to be — Chinese, 15.73: all other nationalities, 42.516. Of committals for trial — Chinese 0.15; all other nationalities, 0.97.

The excuse of the ‘Chinese cost’, therefore, your Excellencies will see, has no foundation in fact, and it is quite possible — and, indeed, probable — from the tone of the reply to your Excellencies’ request, that we shall have to entreat your Excellencies’ good offices to lay the matter before the Imperial authorities at home, for the speedy adjustment of this international wrong.39

The Petition was consistent with all of Cheong’s other public defences of the Chinese in Victoria and, indeed, with the attitudes of Chinese communities around Australia and in English-speaking North America. At the heart of Chinese concerns internationally was the obvious fact of discrimination. No other ethnic group was confronted by a poll-tax (or arrival tax in modern usage), by restrictive and/or exclusive laws on intercolonial movement, and no other group had its imports taxed at the rate applied to Chinese goods.

The Chinese Residents Committee highlighted the fact that the poll-tax was levied each and every time a Chinese wanted to move between the Australasian colonies in the ordinary conduct of their business although European businessmen and naturalised British subjects, and some Chinese granted exemptions on apparently uncertain grounds, were spared this injustice. Cheong made a special mention of this issue in the Petition he wrote for the Residents Committee to present to the Commissioners:

Secondly, — With the result of further harassing and humiliating our people, the laws have been so made that we cannot go outside of the colony on any business without being re-taxed on our return — unless, indeed, we should choose to expatriate ourselves by becoming naturalised British subjects; or else are so initiated into the mysteries of the law as to know that the Customs department will grant ‘tickets-of-leave’ to those who would beg it of them.40

In the documents he prepared between 1879 and 1888 Cheong demonstrated his capacity to organise ideas and present them in a persuasive manner. He read widely and this is reflected in the many references in his writings. His general line of argument paralleled views advanced by Chinese in California in submissions to an enquiry conducted by the

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39 Victorian Chinese Resident’s Committee, Petition to the Chinese Imperial Commissioners to Melbourne, 3 June 1887. The full text is at Appendix 2.
40 Ibid.
United States and California Senates.\textsuperscript{41} He was also familiar with the views of a former US Secretary of State, George F Seward, on the the Chinese in America.\textsuperscript{42}

In the extract quoted above Cheong repeats the Victorian Government’s own crime statistics that showed that the Chinese were a law-abiding community who, notwithstanding their low incomes, contributed more to Victorian finances than other immigrant groups not required to pay a poll-tax or higher tariffs.\textsuperscript{43} He highlighted the subordinate constitutional status of the Australasian colonies by saying that it might prove necessary for the Chinese to appeal to Britain to use its authority to overrule any discriminatory colonial laws or regulations. This intervention did happen in Queensland and New South Wales when legislation was passed that the British Government vetoed because it had the potential to damage British relations with China.\textsuperscript{44}

Cheong acknowledged that the Chinese received adequate protection from government. He referred to the anti-Chinese movement as a minority and stated that anti-Chinese violence was not characteristic of the community as a whole. These denials should not obscure the humiliations experienced by individual Chinese from time to time nor the contempt in which, through various means and not least discriminatory legislation, the Chinese were held by the majority of colonists.

In his summary of the mission, drawing upon the Chinese text of the Commissioner’s reports, Yen Ching-Hwang reported that the Commissioners included a favourable reference to the condition of the Chinese in the British colonies in Southeast Asia when compared to the administrations of the Dutch in Indonesia or the Spanish in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{45}

\begin{enumerate}
  \item See discussion in Willard, op cit, pp 41-47.
  \item Yen Ching-Hwang, (1985), \textit{Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period, (1851-1911)}, Singapore, Singapore University Press, pp 160-163. The Commissioners evidently gave this opinion while still in Victoria. At a reception given by the Chief Justice, Sir Geroge Verdon remarked that 'it gave him the greatest satisfaction to hear that the Chinese Commissioners found their people here do not complain of the treatment they received.' This is a
\end{enumerate}
After their Melbourne visit the Commissioners travelled to all the main Chinese communities around the colony. With few exceptions: ‘They were welcomed, feted, and made much of, both in Melbourne and Sydney, they listened to complimentary speeches, and spoke in return out of the fullness of their hearts.’

Cheong prepared all the English language material issued by the Victorian Chinese Residents Committee including a request to the government to receive a delegation to present the Chinese view on issues raised during the visit and set out in the Petition. As he wrote to the Premier, that request did not receive the courtesy of an acknowledgement.

Observing that Deputation after Deputation has waited upon you from the Anti-Chinese League, and made such gross misrepresentations against us as a people, would you kindly receive a Deputation from the Chinese and other citizens of Melbourne, who deprecate the unreasonable and unjust spirit of the Anti-Chinese agitation? And please fix a day and hour at your earliest convenience to receive the same. I have the honour to be, Your humble, obedient servant. Signed at the request and on behalf of a committee of Chinese and other Residents.

Footnote in Cheong’s handwriting: (N.B. No reply has ever been received to the above).

At the end of the visit to Victoria, The Age, at this time a champion of the working man, highlighted the immigration question in its review of the delegation’s visit to Victoria. ‘As we expected, the tour of the Chinese Commissioners meant mischief.’ Immigration, in a Chinese community context, was also a key element in the report of the visit in the London Times that said: ‘Wherever the Commissioners went they received the most hearty and enthusiastic reception from their countrymen, who prayed that measures for their protection might be speedily adopted.’

The Commissioners recommended to Peking that a consul be appointed to Sydney. When Chinese consular representatives finally arrived in Australia more than two decades later, in 1911, the Consulate was located in Melbourne, the temporary seat of the new Federal Government. The purpose of the Consulate-General was to assist Chinese businessmen in their activities, to promote trade, and to provide administrative support for travellers. It is not irrelevant to note that the early appointees to the post were

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statement of considerable importance that has been overlooked as the only appraisal made of the situation of the Chinese in nineteenth century Australia by Chinese officials.

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46 The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 August 1887.
47 Cheok Hong Cheong to Premier Duncan Gillies, 22 December 1887.
48 The Age, 19 March 1888.
49 The Times (London), 7 May 1888.
Christians and several became close friends of Cheong.\textsuperscript{50} Had a consulate been established in Sydney in the 1880s or early 1890s, as recommended by the Commissioners, Cheong might have secured the appointment and his future role in Australian society might have been very different. This was not a far-fetched possibility. The first Chinese lawyer in Australia, William Ah Ket (Cheong Mar Shem), a relative by marriage, did act as Consul-General for a time.

General Wong’s remark in Sydney about Chinese emigration to Australia fuelled anti-Chinese polemics but these needed little extra stimulation. Wong made even stronger remarks at his departure from Townsville following a series of difficult receptions in Queensland. Unlike NSW and Victoria, where the two officials and their entourage were welcome, the Commissioner’s reception in Queensland was unpleasant. The Premier of the Colony refused to meet them. \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} reported:

\begin{quote}
In Queensland the Commissioners have encountered nothing but hostility. An official reception was denied them. The Premier went out of his way to tell them that Chinese were not wanted in that colony, and deputation after deputation presented itself with the object of pointing out that Chinese immigration must be stopped so far as Queensland is concerned, or things will be made unpleasant for the immigrants. Anti-Chinese meetings were held at Brisbane, in the Town Hall and in the open air, at which resolutions of a strong character were passed and an Anti-Chinese League was formed, branches of which are to be established in all the colonies.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

\textit{The Times} of London carried the following report:

\begin{quote}
As the Commission was about to leave Australia, the anti-Chinese leagues at Townsville and elsewhere sought interviews with the Commissioners in order to urge them to prevent any more Chinese from coming to that colony. At one place General Wong told a deputation that, in his opinion, the Chinese were better off at home than in Queensland, and as for the complaint that they reduced the wages of Europeans that would be easily remedied if the Chinese had their way, for they would be only too glad to get even bigger wages than Europeans. At Townsville the anti-Chinese deputation stated in their address “that Europeans could not descend to the level of Chinese, or raise the Chinese to their level,” and that if Chinese immigration were not stopped Queensland would become an undesirable place of residence for the Chinese. General Wong appeared annoyed at these observations, and put an end to the interview by remarking that when he got back to China something would be done for better or worse that would be fit for Queensland. After this enigmatical utterance the Commission left for Hongkong, whence it will
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} As the providers of almost all of the Western education in China it is not surprising that so many of the early officials of the Tsungli Yamen, the Chinese Foreign Office, as well as a not insignificant number of those later counted as revolutionaries, were graduates of missionary institutions.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 4 August 1887.
proceed to Pekin to report to the Emperor.\textsuperscript{52}

The circumstances surrounding the employment of non-Europeans in Queensland created a different set of dynamics to the southern colonies. The fear of non-European labour in Queensland was grounded initially in a widely held but mistaken view that Europeans were not able to withstand the demands of heavy physical labour in the tropics. It was, as Griffiths has recently observed, a fear within the labour movement that the interests of capitalists would create a slave-based economy in Northern Australia. Within that concern was the fear of the kind of social division that had generated civil war in the United States.\textsuperscript{53}

The only significant complaint the Commissioners made about Australia was that it was discriminatory to levy a landing tax only on Chinese with the rider that Australia had a right to restrict immigration provided it was not discriminatory. The Report was published in \textit{The Chinese Times} and summarised in \textit{The Daily Telegraph}. Given Cheong’s skill in arguing the Chinese case in the press, he made no public comments about the visit after the departure of the Commissioners, perhaps regarding press statements as lacking material on which to further criticise colonial discrimination against the Chinese.

Although Cheong played a secondary role in the visit of the Imperial Commissioners his participation points to another juxtaposition in his identity. Although he regarded himself, and was widely regarded by European colonists, as a authoritative spokesman on matters relating to China and the Chinese, his minor role in the visit of the delegation to Victoria suggests that he was kept at a distance from the highest level of Chinese internal leadership in Victoria. He was not called upon to interpret, or participate in, the private meetings between the Commissioners and the Chinese merchant-elite. Nor did he take part in the meetings between the Commissioners, the merchant-elite, and the senior ranks of the Victorian government. His only private meeting with the Commissioners had, and appropriately given his place in the Chinese community, taken place at his Fitzroy home where his letterbooks suggest that he was offered a job in the Chinese diplomatic service.

In the closing paragraphs of Chapter 5 a suggestion was made that he was always caught in a gap between his European education and language skills on the one hand, and

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{The Times} (London), 27 September 1887.
his Chineseness on the other. His involvement with the Imperial Commissioners suggest that Cheong, like Quong Tart in Sydney, may have been regarded by leading Chinese as being too close to European ways and views. There was, it seems, some question in the minds of leading members of the Chinese community about where his loyalties and interests really lay.