

## ***Chinese Fortunes* – A major bilingual exhibition exploring the stories of colonial Chinese Australians**

Media Release

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The Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka (MADE) presents *Chinese Fortunes*, an exhibition exploring the stories of pioneering Chinese Australians – miners, merchants, storekeepers, furniture makers, detectives, interpreters, gardeners, philanthropists, entertainers and business people - and the rich diversity of Chinese Australian history leading up to Federation.

There are long held stereotypes of Chinese miners in Australia – including the image of thousands of single Chinese men, many indentured labourers, who lived and worked in squalor, whilst surface mining and washing the tailings of gold mines. There are also long held stories about violence, opium addiction and gambling, endorsed by anti-Chinese immigration propaganda, that perpetuated images of the Chinese in Australia, especially during the gold rush era, as a homogenous and unsophisticated group.

Research has clearly shown that this image does not accurately reflect the life of the Chinese communities in Australia during the gold rush era, the diversity and complexities of their culture and the contributions they made to the development of our nation during what is known as the high colonial period during the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

MADE's Curator, Cash Brown, said *'In the past thirty years, our understanding of the history of Chinese Australians has been remade. Thanks to a growing community of researchers and historians we now have new insights into the political, economic and cultural dimensions of Chinese Australian experiences. MADE's aim is to shine a new light on these stories and demonstrate how they have helped shape contemporary Australia.'*

Like miners at the Eureka Stockade, Chinese miners also sought to rally against unfair taxes and restrictions, using protest and civil action including petitions and organised tax avoidance. These were sadly, less successful in bringing about the change in economic and political rights that they sought. Nonetheless, the Chinese in the goldfields continued to make significant contributions to the their broader communities supporting local community projects such as building hospitals, benevolent asylums and schools.

MADE's Chairman Kaaren Koomen said *"We are delighted to bring you our Chinese Fortunes exhibition to shed a new light on how with organisation and sophistication, along with an incredible spirit of determination, many of these pioneering Chinese Australians not only survived the hardships of the goldfields, but in many cases came to prosper and become an essential part of Australia's economic, social and political life. Their story, with its high and low points, is an important part of the Australian story and the path towards creating the democracy that we all enjoy today'.*

*'Opening on Chinese New Year, 28 January 2017, and open until 25 June Chinese Fortunes shares the remarkable contributions made by the Chinese from 1851 to 1901, and their unparalleled spirit of determination. We look forward to welcoming you to MADE for this special exhibition'.*

For more information please visit [www.made.org](http://www.made.org)

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MADE is one of Australia's newest museums and commemorates the role of the Eureka Stockade in shaping our nation. It is located on the site of the 1854 Eureka Stockade uprising in Ballarat.

MADE explores both the evolution of democracy and how it has shaped cultures and countries around the world, and also looks to its future.

Using installations and immersive, interactive content, MADE inspires people to contemplate the issues that are important to them today.

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