



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

STUDY MELBOURNE HUB SHANGHAI: THE POWER OF ROLE MODELS

Monday 18 October 2021

Commissioner Brett Stevens, Commissioner for Victoria to Greater China,
Lois Lu, Manager, and **Wendy Mao** and **Erica Gu**, Program Officers, at Study Melbourne Hub
Shanghai
Alumni speakers, and all our distinguished guests

It is a pleasure to be joining you in Shanghai but, like you I'm sure, I wish we were able to travel, so that we could be together in person. It is something that we all miss, and we all look forward to the Federal Government in Canberra finalising the arrangements for international flights.

For me, talking to you at the Study Melbourne Hub in Shanghai, I think of your vibrant and exciting city that I have visited many times – privately as a tourist, and on official visits, representing the State of Victoria.

I would truly love to be there again.

For you, travel will mean finally commencing or completing the dream of studying abroad in Australia. Victoria awaits you with open arms and the warmest of welcomes.

I hope that those who started their studies here before the pandemic will assure those of you who have not yet been, that you are in for a great experience.

You already know that the universities, TAFEs and colleges in which you are undertaking your studies are well regarded, not only in Australia, but as measured in all the important world tables.

The University of Melbourne, ranked number 1 in Australia, is also ranked in the top 35 in the world, in the 2021 Times Higher Education Rankings. Monash University, Australia's largest, joins it in the top 100.

Our other universities are also highly ranked. And we know that our TAFE colleges are ensuring that graduates are job ready for the new industries that will flourish after this pandemic.

Of course, as important as it is to gain top tertiary qualifications, there is so much more to international study.

It is exciting to discover a new city. Melbourne is beautiful, set amidst spacious community parks, and our regional cities each have their own particular features, some surrounded by unique Victorian bushland, others by mountains or gorgeous beaches.

There is so much to see and do, with restaurants, arts, sports and festivals all a prominent part of the city's cultural life.

I admit that I am biased, but as Melbourne has been voted the world's most liveable city on seven consecutive occasions, it is fair to say that many others do seem to agree with me.

I am particularly proud that Melbourne has again been voted Australia's best student city and that, immediately before the pandemic, Melbourne was ranked amongst the top in the world in the QS Best Student Cities, coming in alongside London and Tokyo in the top three.

As I know you are well aware, studying abroad gives you the opportunity to immerse yourself in, and to learn about, another culture.

We have always known that the world is a small place, but the global pandemic has highlighted just how interconnected we are, and how connected we need to be.

We have seen that connection in how far and fast a virus can spread in a world where there is so much movement and travel.

But we have also seen it in how the best and fastest medical and other discoveries are made.

We are all the beneficiaries of cooperation between scientists around the world – including in your country and ours – working together, sharing their information and their expertise. Such genuine collaboration is not possible without a base of respect and friendship that, in many instances, can be traced back to times of study or working together.

As the upheaval of the global pandemic has given rise to economic and political tensions, never has collaboration been more important. Never has mutual respect for skills across borders been more important. And, above all, those trusting relationships have never been more important.

This is the world into which you will emerge from your education. The relationships that you form during your studies will hold you in good stead.

I can speak from first-hand experience when I tell you that although I wasn't fortunate enough to study overseas, I did work overseas in several places, soon after I finished my studies.

My two sons though did undertake some of their university studies outside Australia. Like me during my time away, they formed lifelong friendships and associations that have not left them.

Without doubt, it is these connections that are amongst the greatest advantage of your international studies.

I hope that, even with the frustration of not being in Victoria just for now, the Study Hub is still able to give you some of the experience and flavour of the foreign experience. Perhaps you have even watched the game of Australian football or visited our major Art Gallery online while you have been at The Hub?

I can assure you that, just as we hope that your experience with us in Victoria will expand your horizons, we know that the experience of our Victorian students, and the life of our wider community too, are enhanced by your time with us.

Just as you learn more about us and our ways, our students have the privilege to learn more about yours. The friendships and the lifelong business and professional connections, of which I have spoken, are very much to your mutual advantage.

International engagement on behalf of Victoria is an important part of my role. It means that as well as having the pleasure of meeting with some of our international students when they are studying in Melbourne, I meet many of our alumni when I am on our official overseas visits.

I particularly enjoy hearing the diverse stories of our alumni. They come from so many different countries or from different parts of a big country like yours. They have undertaken many different and interesting university and TAFE courses. And have translated their studies into a wide range of careers when they have returned home.

Can I say – just for a moment, as a mother, rather than as the Governor – how much it warms my heart when I see that these young people have returned to their countries with the confidence and commitment to contribute their business or professional skills at home. I know how proud their parents must be.

But, as Governor, I am particularly pleased to see not only those who have started upon their successful working lives there, but also those who have maintained a significant link to Victoria.

The co-founders of Unicorn fintech, *Airwallex*, provide a great example. Jack Zhang, Max Li, Lucy Liu and Xijing Dai were friends from the University of Melbourne. Having identified a need to build better banking and foreign exchange solutions for cross-border business operations, they founded the company in Melbourne in 2015.

Today, *Airwallex* has networks in 130 countries, and 800 employees in offices in a number of locations, including in Shanghai, and of course in its first one in Melbourne.

On my last trip to China, in 2019, I was fortunate to meet Lucy, and was interested to hear of her continuing involvement in Melbourne life and her particular contributions as a mentor to Victorian start-ups.

Lucy, and a group of other terrific women were brought together for us by Jill Tang, co-founder of *Ladies who Tech*.

Jill is of course with you there today, and it is a pleasure for me to see her again.

Jill is someone who certainly knows her way around our universities in Victoria. I note she has a Bachelor of Commerce from La Trobe University, a Masters of Applied Finance from Monash University and an MBA from the University of Melbourne!

I have mentioned these fantastic alumni who have made and maintained their connections between Victoria and China.

There is though another group of alumni that I especially want to mention to you. Because Melbourne is such a global centre for students, we see that the friendships and connections that form are not only between the visiting and Victorian students.

I recall meeting a bright young Colombian woman who explained her start-up business to us. Her partner in the business? An equally bright young Chinese man. They had met here as students in Melbourne and taken their growing business to the world, starting with their enviable list of combined contacts on no less than three continents. Not a bad start!

All this brings me to this session today. I see that your focus is on 'role models', and I can't imagine better speakers than the cohort you will hear from soon.

Role models are always important, but never more so than when they can describe some of the challenges and doubts – and even the failures – that they may have experienced on the road to success.

We all encounter obstacles at different points, and I think that they can be temporarily magnified when dealing with the complexities of study choices and career decisions in a foreign setting or, perhaps more aptly at the moment – when TRYING/WAITING to study in a foreign setting! So, enjoy hearing from these terrific speakers, and I thank them for participating.

Meanwhile, we all look forward to a more ‘normal’ life again soon, and being able to have you with us in Melbourne.

Until then, I hope that you feel well supported at your Study Hub. I know that our Commissioner, Brett Stevens, his dedicated and expert team at the Victorian Government office in Shanghai and Lois, Wendy and Erica there at Study Melbourne Hub are committed to helping you in any possible way while you navigate these challenging times.

I admire you for your resilience and tenacity in how you have adapted and coped. But I do hope there will be an opportunity to welcome you to Victoria and to Government House very soon.