



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

**AUSTRALIA CHINA BUSINESS COUNCIL VICTORIA GALA DINNER**  
**Friday 24 November 2023**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**Tim Pallas MP**, Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Economic Growth, *representing the Premier*

**John Pesutto MP**, Leader of the Opposition, and **David Southwick MP**, Deputy Leader of the Opposition

**Jianhua Zen**, Acting Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Melbourne

**David Olsson**, National President, **Tom Parker**, National CEO, **Rhys Roberts**, Victorian President and **Virginia Birrell**, Victorian CEO, Australia China Business Council

**Sponsors and members of the Australia China Business Council**

**Distinguished guests**

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this building stands – the Wurundjeri people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to represent Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, this evening for the fiftieth Anniversary of the Australia China Business Council Victoria.

Unfortunately, Her Excellency is unwell this evening, but she asked me to pass on her best wishes on this important milestone.

The relationship between Australia and China is a long and enduring one.

China is home to Victoria's oldest and newest sister-states in the provinces of Jiangsu and Sichuan.

Next year, Victoria and Jiangsu will celebrate their 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of sister-state ties.

China and its people have also played an important role in Victoria's history, contributing to the development of the community we know today.

The discovery of Gold in Victorian towns like Bendigo and Clunes, created an unprecedented migration boom.

The diversity of our population increased significantly, including Chinese miners who brought their music, food and traditions to the Victorian goldfields.

The role of these miners in our State's Gold Rush did not go unnoticed and in May 1887, a delegation of Chinese officials arrived in Melbourne.

The visit was part of the first formal visit to Australia from the Chinese Government.

Their mission, which also took them through the Malayan archipelago, was to gain an insight into the status of Chinese migrants living abroad.

Led by General Wong Yung-ho and Consul-General U. Tsing, they met with leading members of the Chinese business community based in Victoria.

They were also received by the Victorian Governor of the time, Sir Henry Loch GCMG KCB, attending a luncheon at Government House.

Sir Henry was obviously keen to give a good impression, offering his private carriages to the delegation as they visited Ballarat and Sandhurst during their stay.

While this event is not the anniversary you are celebrating today, it is an important one to note.

Prior to the 1887 visit, Australia had little or no formal engagement with the Chinese government.

The delegation played an important role in laying the foundation for the strong and interdependent relationship that would develop over the following years.

Initially, this development was slow.

It would take another 22 years before a Chinese consulate was established in the now-federated Australia, based in Melbourne which was then the home of the Federal Government.

And, it wasn't until 1973 that a permanent Australian embassy was opened in Peking by the Whitlam Government.

Fortunately, despite a slow start, the relationship between our two nations has flourished in more recent years.

I'm conscious that the success of this relationship can be credited to many of you in the room this evening.

Established in 1973, the Australian Chinese Business Council has spent the last 50 years facilitating greater collaboration between businesses and investors from each country.

Through networking events, the hosting of delegations and individual consultations, the Council has played a significant role in creating the collaborative relationship our two nations enjoy.

Indeed, when reflecting on the history of this Council, I'm reminded of a particular Chinese proverb by Lao-Tzu, "*A thousand-mile journey begins with a single step.*"

The success of that journey is clear in the trade relationship our two nations enjoy.

China is Australia's largest two-way trading partner in goods and services.

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement has facilitated that two-way trade, creating greater opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration.

The commercial success made possible by that collaboration is exemplified by many of the businesses that won at the 2023 Governor of Victoria Export Awards.

Victorian businesses like Duratray International and Care Essentials sell their goods in Chinese markets while Melbourne Polytechnic delivers training and education to Chinese students.

Of course, the relationship between our two nations is beneficial to both nations.

Leading companies including Hisense, Qenos and Alibaba are headquartered in Melbourne or run significant operations in the area.

As our societies grow and develop, so too will this relationship.

Victorian Treasurer, Tim Pallas' recent trip to China recognises that fact.

Government House was also delighted to host His Excellency Mr Huai Jinping, Chinese Minister for Education in August this year. The meeting was an opportunity for us to discuss the educational ties between our two nations and the developing opportunities in this area.

I have no doubt that – just as it has for the last five decades – this Council will be at the forefront of realising those opportunities.

Congratulations on reaching such an important milestone.

And thank you, for your important contributions to the Australian-Chinese relationship.