



**VISIT TO THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF CHINA**

JUNE 2004

REPORT BY

SENATOR THE HON. PAUL CALVERT

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

[Tabled 10 August 2004]

BACKGROUND

During his official visit to Parliament House in October 2002, the then Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, His Excellency Mr Li Peng, invited the President of the Senate, Senator the Hon. Paul Calvert, to pay an official visit to China, as the guest of the National People's Congress, to further relations between the two institutions.

During his State Visit to Australia in October 2003, this invitation was refreshed by His Excellency Mr Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China.

The President was accompanied on the visit by his wife, Mrs Jill Calvert, and his Private Secretary.

ITINERARY

The party visited China from 5 to 11 June 2004. Cities visited were Shanghai, Xi'an, Beijing and Hong Kong.

SHANGHAI

The party toured Shanghai as the guest of the local government authorities, and attended a meeting and lunch with Mr Gong Xueping, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Municipal People's Congress.

The President was most impressed by the extent of commercial development in Shanghai, and was briefed by the Australian Consul-General on Australians involved in business and commercial activities and joint activities in the city and the surrounding region.

XI'AN

The party visited the ancient city of Xi'an, including the Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses, and was briefed on modern techniques being employed to preserve this World Heritage archaeological site.

The party had fruitful discussions, particularly on dry-land farming and potential opportunities for co-operation with Australian agriculturalists, with Mr Li Jianguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Shaanxi Provincial People's Congress, and his colleagues, and attended a dinner given by Mr Li.

BEIJING

In Beijing, the President and his party, accompanied by the Australian Ambassador to China, were received by His Excellency Mr Zeng Qinghong, State Vice-President of the People's Republic of China, at the Great Hall of the People.

Very useful discussions took place on the extent of Australia-China relations and new initiatives both in trade and in cultural exchanges.

The President attended a dinner given by Mr Ismail Amat, a Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee.

The President and his party visited the Great Wall at Badaling. Subsequently the President gave a Lunch in honour of Mr Zhou Zhenqing, Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Finance Committee and Chairman of the China-Australia Friendship Group. Also attending the lunch were officers of the NPC, a number of business people involved in trade with Australia, representatives of the Embassy and the Australian Trade Commission.

The President visited the Australian Embassy in Beijing and viewed rectification work currently underway on the façade, which is a significant public works project.

The President later visited Si Xiuqing Community Orchard on the outskirts of Beijing, and had discussions about the propagation of cherries and small fruits in dry climates.

The President and his party had discussions at the Great Hall of the People with His Excellency Mr Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee. During the discussions, Chairman Wu highlighted the very warm state of relations between Australia and China, and the many future opportunities for both countries. Chairman Wu later gave an official dinner for the President, his party and senior members of the NPC in the Hong Kong Hall.

The President and Mrs Calvert also had the opportunity to visit the Forbidden City, which is undergoing significant restoration, sensitive to its heritage significance, in preparation for the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.

HONG KONG

The President and his party briefly visited the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region during their return flight to Australia, and were briefed on developments in the Region by the Australian Consul-General.

CONCLUSION

Australia and China enjoy a close trade relationship, which is growing year by year. The amount of Australian investment in China is growing, and interaction is flourishing. Cultural relations are also increasing, as are exchanges of students, especially Chinese students studying at Australian tertiary institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge my indebtedness to my host, His Excellency Mr Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and his officers, particularly those in the International section.

I particularly appreciate the efforts of Her Excellency Madame Fu Ying, Chinese Ambassador to Australia, and her immediate predecessor, Mr Wu Tao, who undertook much of the planning to make the visit interesting and successful in the furtherance of Australia-China relations.

I especially appreciate the arrangements made to support the visit by His Excellency Dr Alan Thomas, Australian Ambassador to China, the Australian Consul-General in Shanghai, Mr Sam Gerovich, and the Australian Consul-General in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr David O'Leary. Our accompanying officer from the Embassy was Mrs Larissa Ashwin. All of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officers reminded me of the high quality of Australia's representation overseas.

PAUL CALVERT
PRESIDENT

August 2004