



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

CHINESE NEW YEAR RECEPTION

Monday 25th February 2019

Mr Steve Dimopolous MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer representing the Premier and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Mr Raymond Fan, Director, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office

Ms Bonnie Shek, Director, Australia and New Zealand Hong Kong Trade Development Council

Dr Luca De Leonardis, Head, Australia & New Zealand, Invest Hong Kong

Mr Thanh Ly, President, Hong Kong Australia Business Association (VIC Chapter)

Mr Long Zhou, Consul-General of the People's Republic of China

The Hon John Brumby, Former Premier of Victoria, and National President, Australia China Business Council

Members of State and Federal Parliaments

The Right Honourable Sally Capp, Lord Mayor of Melbourne

All distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders who are here with us.

I am delighted to join you all this evening.

I admire the work of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Invest Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Australia Business Association - and all that you do individually and collectively to nourish and enhance the relationship between Hong Kong and Australia.

Indeed, it is a long and true relationship.

Last year was the 200th anniversary of the arrival in Australia of the first Chinese migrant. And, as you know, between 1850 and 1870, many people from China came to the goldfields, bringing their language, food and culture to Victoria.

As a result, our Chinatown represents one of the longest continuous overseas settlements in the west.

And what better example could there be, of the connection and respect between Victoria and China than the dragons who are the highlight of Bendigo's iconic Easter Festival. Sun Loong, the successor to Bendigo's first dragon Loong, has been delighting crowds for years and is much loved. And when we were in Hong Kong just last December we saw the creation of Dai Gum Loong, the newest (and longest) papercraft dragon.

For me, the relationship with Hong Kong is also intensely personal.

Tony and I lived there for almost three years. It was effectively in 'the olden days'. The early 1980s. Before some in the room were even born.

It was a wonderful time. Hong Kong was a hive of activity.

Ferries criss-crossed the harbour every couple of minutes. The super-fast and efficient MTR was up and running but still quite novel. Planes flew over buildings to land miraculously at Kai Tak airport. (I still recall standing in a courtroom near to that old airport, with the shadow of an airplane wing regularly crossing over the papers in front of me as I addressed the judge!)

It wasn't only the transport that moved fast. It was the people as well. Central seemed like other leading world cities, only on steroids. Even in the hottest of hot weather, everyone walked fast. There was just so much to be done. So much to be achieved.

And amidst all the exciting commerce was a city that kept its Chinese soul, mixed with a touch of the west. In short, nothing was missing. Except our families, which is what brought us home. Otherwise, we loved the city enough to stay a very long time.

And so we have returned very often indeed. In more recent years, in an official capacity representing Victoria.

So much has changed across the years. As it has everywhere else in the world. And, of course, 1997 heralded a new era in the history of Hong Kong.

But so much is still the same.

The energy and the sense of enterprise are unchanged. Of course, the energy has been diverted into new endeavours. The businesses have new initiatives and products. There were no smart-phones, no start-ups and no tech parks in the early 80s. (We were pretty excited that CDs had just been invented!)

But the people are the same. Clever, hard-working, entrepreneurial. And – something I always particularly loved – so family minded. Something very much to the fore at this time of new year celebration.

What a pleasure it is to see how strong the bonds are between us. We are strong partners in investment and trade.

We are strong partners in tourism.

Your MTR Corporation helps to run our metro trains.

We have strong people to people links. Hong Kong has one of the largest Australian communities abroad, with around 100,000 Australians living in Hong Kong.

We have many strong cultural links, including a significant artists' exchange program from Melbourne's Dancehouse and the West Kowloon Cultural District.

And we have great links between our leaders. Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, has visited us here in Melbourne, and I have been fortunate to meet with her each time I have

travelled to Hong Kong in an official capacity. As has our Premier. And other Ministers and senior government officials have been amongst the recent high level visitors from Victoria to Hong Kong.

What I find most exciting is the strong potential we share for more collaboration.

That was brought into sharp focus for me during our most recent visit to Hong Kong in December last year. We attended to represent Victoria at the Hong Kong Business of Design Week.

What an honour it was that Melbourne was chosen as Hong Kong's partner city at what is such a major design gathering in our region. The first time that a Southern Hemisphere centre was chosen. A gathering that saw more than 200 Victorian designers attend: one of the biggest trade missions to leave our shores. An event that attracted some 130,000 delegates from more than 30 countries.

The opportunities for us to combine our design skills in every sector was crystal clear....whether in fashion, biomedical devices, transport or games technology, just by way of example.

But the opportunities are so much broader.

We visited the Hong Kong Science Park where we saw a hot-bed of brilliant research and innovation, and discussed the likely collaborations between us, particularly in the biosciences. Melbourne is in the proud position of having two universities ranked in the top 30 for bioscience – alongside London and Boston.

We also met with CY Leung, now Vice-Chairman of the 12th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to learn more about the Greater Bay Area initiative, following the meeting that the Premier had with him and with the Chief Executive too.

As I am sure you are all well aware, The GBA initiative seeks to connect Hong Kong, Macau and nine mainland cities, to create a regional economic powerhouse that enables people, capital,

goods and services to flow more freely throughout this region in which some 65 million people reside.

It is clear that as the aspiration to develop a world class economic, business and technology hub are met, there will be many investment and partnership opportunities in infrastructure, urban planning, health and education and financial services just a few areas of mutual interest between Victoria and Hong Kong.

May I conclude with one thought. None of us is strong alone. I thank all of you who work so hard, both in Hong Kong and in Victoria – and I know that you will be aware that our VGTI office there is always willing to assist you in any way that it can – to ensure that we can each prosper through the partnerships between us. Our Commissioner for Victoria to China, Tim Dillon, or Mr Allen Kwok in our Hong Kong Office are both very engaged.

With the dawn of a new year, may our relationship continue to flourish. And, of course, I say ‘Kung hei fat choi’ to you all.