



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

# **CHINA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

## **Thursday 31 October 2024**

### **Acknowledgments**

**Mr Ding Zhongli**, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Chairman of the Central Committee of China Democratic League.

### **Distinguished Guests**

It's a pleasure to join you today.

This year marks the 25th China Annual Conference and Expo for International Education – a significant milestone and one worthy of celebration.

Much has changed since the first Conference was held in the year 2000.

At the turn of the century, there were just over 40,000 overseas students studying in the State of Victoria.

Today, that figure has increased fivefold.

Internationalisation and globalisation have permeated education and research across the world.

This brings with it both challenges and opportunities.

Curricula must meet international accreditations and contexts.

Students must be prepared for professional and technical circumstances both domestically for Australia and for countries abroad.

Global rankings systems for universities have made criteria for international quality much clearer.

As a result our education systems look very different to 25 years ago.

What has remained constant is that such international education creates unrivalled capabilities and shared benefits.

This does not happen by chance.

It depends on clear strategy and long-term commitment to, and investment in, what is fundamental to quality university education and research.

And it depends on forums such as this one to build and strengthen the connections across borders.

In speaking to you today, I am reminded of a Chinese proverb:

*Bīng dòng sān chǐ, fēi yī rì zhī hán.*

(Translates to “It takes more than one cold day for the river to freeze three feet deep.”)

To develop strong partnerships requires consistent and ongoing engagement over time.

No country or education system will ever have all the answers by itself.

By sharing perspectives and understanding and collaborating, we've not only moved closer to finding solutions, but also grown closer to each other.

Education exchange is not only about coming to learn from another country's expertise, but about coming into a country so we can learn together and from one another.

Victoria has shown a long-standing commitment to pursuing the opportunities offered by international education.

Our State is outward-looking, supported by our global network of 24 Victorian Government Trade and Investment Offices across the world.

Victoria is the only Australian State with five such offices in China.

Our State is also proud of its global reputation as 'The Education State' – thanks in no small part to the large numbers of international students who come to study at our institutions, as well as the quality and range of our institutions.

These include our world-class universities, dual sector institutions, TAFEs and private vocational education and training providers.

The internationalisation of Australia's higher education sector represents both a strategic, and a cultural, commitment.

It's a commitment to creating a system with a mission to share resources, and build a broad engagement in the world – including China.

Victoria is the only State in Australia that has two sister-state relationships with China.

This pledge in our education relationship with China is reflected from the university level, all the way down to primary school.

Chinese was the most-studied language in Victorian schools this year – taught across more than 200 public primary and secondary schools.

International enrolments from China made up 20 per cent of all Victorian international student enrolments.

And there are 93 Victorian Government schools partnered with Chinese sister schools – the most of any partner jurisdiction.

Following my inauguration as Governor of Victoria in August 2023, one of my first engagements was a meeting with His Excellency Huai Jinping, Minister for Education.

The visit of His Excellency underlined the importance of Victoria’s relationship with China in the higher education sector.

Victoria’s Global Education Network is the largest of any Australian state or territory and includes a Study Melbourne hub in Shanghai.

Study Melbourne has a longstanding partnership with the China Education Association for International Exchange, and I’m pleased to see it also has a presence at this year’s conference.

This is not to mention the many partnerships that exist between Victorian universities and their Chinese counterparts.

These partnerships are emblematic of the importance of the relationship – partnerships in which there are increasing opportunities for us to learn from one another and share in the benefits of knowledge exchange.

There is already a growing list of successes emerging from them.

However, we must ensure that these partnerships are prepared for the future.

This year’s theme, Education for All, the Unknown and the Future, recognises this fact.

As they say, the only thing you can predict with certainty is that there will be uncertainty.

Just as much has changed in the past 25 years, we can be sure that much will change in the years to come.

What we can control, however, is our shared commitment to seeking better futures together.

If we want continued success, we must encourage incentives to experiment and innovate in how education is provided.

Whether through EdTech, research partnerships or transnational education programs – it is important that we continue to think how best we can deliver quality international education.

We should hope for systems that can reach beyond our immediate issues and beyond national borders.

And to do that we need systems with scale and diversity, that can adapt to the unintended consequences in the futures we don't expect.

I welcome the shared value we place on international education, and the commitment to navigating uncertainty together.

And I know Victoria and its institutions will continue to do our part in pursuit of better futures.

Thank you.