

# Chinese delegation investigates closer ties with Newcastle

A delegation from Wuhan in China visited Newcastle on 11 July to investigate the possibility of forging closer economic ties with Newcastle and the Hunter region.

With a population of around 8.6 million, Wuhan is the sixth largest city economy within China. It experienced economic growth of 14.8% in 2006 and investment growth for the period 2002–2006 of some 22.1% pa. Wuhan has built close ties with a number of cities around the world, including a mutually beneficial relationship with Christchurch in New Zealand, and is now interested in the possibility of a similar arrangement with Newcastle.

Organised by ACCCI (the Australia-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry of New South Wales) and in particular Chamber President Michael C H Jones, the visiting delegation contained a number of high ranking representatives of the Wuhan Municipal Government, including Vice Mayor Hu Xu Kun.

The visit included a very productive meeting in the morning with the City of Newcastle Deputy Mayor Cr Marilyn Eade, Mr Eddie Bernard -Infrastructure Project Manager for the Hunter Economic Development Corporation, and Mr Garry Hardie - Publisher, Hunter Business Review. Cr Eade witnessed by signature the Memorandum of Understanding signed in English by Vice Mayor Hu Xu Kun and Mr Jones on behalf of the ACCCI City of

Newcastle and Hunter Region Chapter. The wording of this historic MOU, some 25 years after initial discussions and 5 years after Mr Jones' Australia Day speech in Wuhan City on 26th January 2002, is very exact and meets the requirements of both sides and particularly the structural situation of Local Government and Councils in New South Wales and Australia.

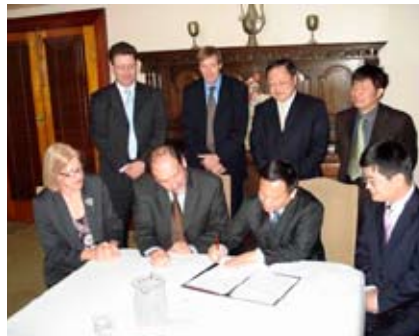
This new friendship relationship was reinforced over lunch by the Mayor of the Port Stephens Council, Cr Ron Swan, Cr Bob Westbury, General Manager Peter Gesling and Group Manager Business & Support Stewart Murrell. The Maitland City Council was represented by Mr Roger Stephen, Executive Manager - Economic Development and Marketing and there were apologies from four other councils in the Hunter Region.

In the afternoon the Wuhan delegation met Professor William Purcell, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) for The

University of Newcastle, and his Director, Business Development and Chief Representative - China Operations, Mr Leo Mian Liu. Earlier this year Professor Purcell was able to meet in Sydney a senior representative from Wuhan University and visited Wuhan City a week after the meeting.

Ms Sharryn Brownlee, a Member of the Council of the University of Newcastle, has been a strong supporter of the work of the Chamber and the development of a stronger institutional and organisational linkage with the City of Wuhan. In consultation with Ms Brownlee and other prominent citizens, the ACCCI Executive/Board and its Newcastle and Hunter Region Chapter will commence the process of bringing together the Newcastle side of 10 prominent persons for the agreed 'Joint Newcastle Wuhan Committee'.

*For further information contact Michael CH Jones at [chamber@accci.com.au](mailto:chamber@accci.com.au).*



The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. Front row: Cr Marilyn Eade, Deputy Mayor of Newcastle; Michael C H Jones, ACCCI President; Hu Xu Kun, Vice Mayor of Wuhan; and Howard Tsao from the Wuhan Foreign Affairs Office. Back row: Garry Hardie, Publisher of the Hunter Business Review; Eddie Bernard, Project Manager, Hunter Economic Development Corporation; Zhou Bin, Vice Director of Wuhan Court of Justice and Senior Judge; and Mi Xinqiao, Vice Director of Wuhan City Administration Bureau.