

Speech to Yunnan Province Delegation

Meeting at the NSW Department of State and Regional Development MLC Centre, Sydney – Australia

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Welcome to Sydney from the Australia China Chamber of Commerce and Industry of New South Wales. It is also good to see again our friends from the NSW DSRD and the CCPIT Sydney Representative Office.

In recent days we have witnessed the best and worst in the world.

The best has obviously been the joy and harmonious relations of the inspiring Beijing Olympics which has brought China back to its historical and rightful place as a leading culture throughout the globe.

The worst has been the deaths and destruction in Georgia in the military conflict with Russia. Like Serbia in 1914 these small regional wars can escalate, in this case across West and Central Asia into Xinjiang, previously called Chinese Turkistan. Fundamentalism whether Moslem, Christian, Jewish or Marxist is a great danger to the world.

In this context there are many problems arising from the history of western imperialism that will soon require Chinese assistance in resolving.

Yunnan Province in Southwest China has such a role in Indo-China, the playing fields for Indian, Chinese and Indigenous cultures over thousands of years. There is an arc of difficulties both internal and external. We must always remember that Dali was the capital of the Thai Nan Chao Kingdom, and Kunming a secondary capital, during the 8th century.

Internal difficulties in the sense that perhaps a third or 30-35% of the Yunnan's population are from minority peoples – Yi, Bai, Hani, Zhuang, Dai and Miao. This is in addition to the minority peoples in the Tibet Autonomous Province to the West and the Guangxi Autonomous Province to the East. The respective populations are about 3 million in Tibet, 45 million in Yunnan and up to 50 million in Guangxi.

External difficulties in that Yunnan is the geo-political centre for Indo-China re Burma, Laos and Vietnam with considerable impact on Thailand and Bangladesh. These countries have deep, sometimes hostile and sometimes harmonious relations with Han China. At this time Burma is in 'free-fall', Vietnam prosperous and Thailand a little shakey.

Chamber has been monitoring the economic growth of China's border areas since our foundation in 1976. We have encouraged all levels of Australian government, Federal State and Local, to support the Chinese Central Government, Provincial Governments and Municipal Governments to Open Up and develop the prosperity of this historic region. On the whole the

Chinese authorities have done a wonderful job in raising the living standards of all the various nationalities.

In September 2001 ACCCI launched its Website at www.accci.com.au and there you can read material based on 1998 figures on Yunnan's Economy and key cities, which needs to be updated. I urge you to analyse this information on Southwest China in the ACCCI Key Cities Index and provide the Chamber Webmaster with updated statistics on Infrastructure, Agriculture, Energy and Industry.

For many years Kunming has had a Sister City Relationship with Wagga in Southwest New South Wales. This has been a very inspiring example of what can be achieved by people with mutual respect and understanding at the lowest levels without the assistance from State and Federal Governments. It is the focus of Chamber's efforts for economic relations in trade and investment between Chinese cities and ANZ cities and we have brought together hundreds of cities and thousands of private organisations through our Key Cities Strategies as they have evolved since the late 1980s.

Chamber initiates relationships and projects and once they are up and running ACCCI hands them over to better funded organisations. After all we are a private association of company members which has always been non-government, non-profit and voluntary. ACCCI has no paid employees and is based on 'activism', that is all members must be active in a Chamber projects and must pay/contribute to the cost of these projects. Sometimes this is tens of thousands of dollars.

Whilst the company membership is somewhat 'elitist' as we only accept Chairmen of Boards, MDs or Chief General Managers for China and the companies must be Australian Incorporated, we have hundreds of Chinese companies that are Associate Members and literally thousands of organisations, public and private, with whom we work on specific tasks throughout Australasia, China, Japan, USA and EU. In recent times there have even been some Indian companies.

In the immediate future over the next 2/5 years ACCCI will emphasise Policy matters given all the Inquiries/Reports/White Papers on the ACCCI Homepage concerning the 2008 Australian Rudd Federal Government, the prospective 2009 USA Presidential Government and the historic transfer of power from PRC President and CPC General Secretary Hu Jintao in late 2012. President Hu's brilliant speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in Hainan in April 2008 clearly marked the directions of the future.