

Tuesday, 16 September 2025

VICTORIA'S CHINA STRATEGY SETS US UP FOR A NEW GOLDEN ERA

Transcript of Premier's speech at the launch of *Victoria's China Strategy: For a New Golden Era* – Beijing, China

Good evening and da jia hao.

I am honoured to welcome:

- Vice President Lu Xiangdong from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.
- Mr Xu Jianhui, Deputy Director General of the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange
- Mr Leigh Howard, Victoria's new Commissioner to Greater China
- and Brett Stevens our outgoing Commissioner

I also welcome the leaders in Victoria's Chinese community who have travelled here today – for your support over many years, and your contribution to my China Strategy and my visit.

This is my third visit to China and my first as Premier of Victoria.

Over the next five days, I'll be introducing myself to people in five cities.

Allow me to introduce myself to you.

My name is Jacinta Allan and I come from Big Gold Mountain – the city of Bendigo.

The world where I grew up was shaped by Chinese migrants.

Chinese people performed in street parades in Bendigo a century before I was born.

Two special residents of my city live at the Golden Dragon Museum:

Loong, the oldest imperial dragon in the world, and *Dai Gum Loong*, the longest imperial dragon in the world.

Children from across Victoria meet these dragons and are marvelled by their might – and in that moment, they are woven into a story that began long ago.

A story about two old friends: Victoria and China.

Victoria today looks very different from the 1850s, but after all those years, there's one thing it still has in common.

Around 1 in 15 Victorians are Chinese.

The proportions have not changed, but the numbers have.

In Victoria today, 427,000 people have Chinese ancestry and more than 300,000 speak a Chinese language at home.

China, today, is Victoria's number one source of visitors, and our number one trading partner, producing more value than Victoria's next three export partners combined.

Two-way merchandise was valued at almost \$200 billion Yuan in 2024.

Once the ships were filled with tea and textiles.

Today they are filled with the goods that support our lifestyles and our livelihoods.

And outbound, we are proud to share our wheat, wool and barley, our wining and our dining – and our world-class international education.

Today, Victoria is the only Australian state with two Chinese sister-state relationships – Jiangsu, since 1979, and Sichuan, since 2016.

They're supported by our sister-city relationships: there are 20.

And our sister-school relationships: there are 86.

And more partnerships between universities and research institutes than I could count.

We have five in-country Trade and Investment Offices. They are our trading posts.

And our product is our people.

Our biggest strength is our giant, multicultural family.

Almost half of Victorians are either born overseas or have a parent born overseas.

We speak more than 200 languages, and 20 per cent of our students learn to speak mandarin.

My daughter is one of them.

Victoria has grown up alongside China.

The China Strategy I launch today renews that friendship, so it makes the most of the opportunities before us – opportunities we embrace with open arms.

Our goal is to become the first port of call for Chinese business to innovate and invest, and the destination of choice for Chinese people to visit and study.

That's a win for jobs and stability in an increasingly uncertain world.

That benefits everyone in our state – including our Chinese community, who honour us as our navigators.

My China Strategy has three big differences with its precursor.

One: it elevates regional Victoria – spreading the benefits of trade across our whole state.

Two: it empowers our local Chinese community – because their success is our success.

Three, above all, it's about education – because nothing is more important to our economy.

My China Strategy guides our China engagement for the next five years.

It expands our horizon – to Shandong, Zhejiang, Guangdong, Chongqing and beyond.

And it focuses on six sectors where Victoria stands apart.

The first is agribusiness.

Victoria is just three per cent of the Australian landmass, but we produce 27 per cent of Australian food and fibre export value.

Whether it's our Goulburn fruit or our Gippsland beef, our brand is fine, fresh and premium, and it's found a market in China – a land so renowned for its food.

We had 62 companies on show at the China International Import Expo last year.

It was one of these expos that first took me to China in the year 2010, when I hosted a food promotion called *Put Victoria on Your Table*.

Today, my China Strategy focuses on e-commerce food promotion: putting Victoria on your phone.

We're also targeting AgTech.

Melbourne is one of the few cities in the world with mRNA manufacturing capability – for vaccines.

We're now going to explore how we use RNA technology – for agriculture.

The next priority in my Strategy are the health and life sciences.

Pharma is the focus, but we have a secret weapon: Beauty, Wellness and Personal Care.

I want Victorians to get used to those words because they're going to create a lot of jobs.

We already dominate Australian exports, and my China Strategy says we're ready to take it even further.

Two Victorian vitamin companies – Swisse and Life-Space – are two of the biggest wellness brands on Alibaba.

And the biggest beauty store in the world, Mecca, has just opened its doors on Melbourne's main street.

It's Victoria's homegrown beauty success story.

I went picked up a few bags of Mecca products at Bourke St this week, and I'll be proud to share them with some people I'll be meeting on my journey through China.

Next on our priority sectors is creative industries and sport.

There are few things we're prouder of in Victoria than our status as a global sporting capital.

Melbourne is the only city in the world that hosts both an F1 grand prix and a Tennis grand slam.

In the next 12 months, we'll host the NFL and the NBA – and last year, we hosted Yao Ming and the Chinese national team.

There are six international-standard sporting venues in the heart of Melbourne.

It was at one of them when I had the honour of meeting President Xi when he visited our state in 2010.

China's sports sector is valued at \$4 trillion Yuan, and Victoria wants to play on that court – especially in SportsTech and digital games.

And on the creative side, we want more partnerships with China's cultural institutions.

A KPI for my visit is to return home with a new one.

Another sector where we stand apart is our visitor economy.

China is Victoria's most valuable international tourism market.

Chinese travellers stay twice as long, and they spend twice as much.

They travel on one of around 70 non-stop flights per week.

They get a real taste of Melbourne – the coffee, the culture – and then head out to regional Victoria for our wine and our wildlife.

My China Strategy has a goal: in five years' time, we want one in every five international visitors to Victoria to come from China.

And we want more of those Chinese visitors seeing the regions, where they will be welcomed with open arms.

I'll have more to say about those plans over the next few days.

I'll also have more to say about investment.

The story of Victoria over the last ten years can be told in two ways: investment in public transport and investment in clean energy.

I have come to China to seal the deal on both.

China is the world's clean energy superpower.

60 per cent of all global renewable capacity installed from now until 2030 will come from China.

It installs 100 solar panels every second.

China's extraordinary energy transition has changed the world forever – and Victoria is benefiting.

Envision Energy is building a first-of-its-kind wind and battery hybrid energy facility in Victoria.

The world's largest wind turbine manufacturer, Goldwind, is building one of Australia's biggest wind farms outside Ballarat.

My China Strategy will help business drive hard at deals like those – and I'm looking squarely at clean energy and public transport.

I have listed many priorities tonight.

I want to be clear about my top three:

Education, education and education.

Victoria is the Education State – that's what it says on the numberplates of our cars.

Education has been our largest services export for 23 years running, and Melbourne has again been voted Australia's best student city.

Our international students hail from 175 countries.

And one in every five is from China.

From primary school to PhD, every single level of our public education system reaches out to your own.

Victoria's public universities and TAFEs have 142 different partnerships with Chinese institutions.

Last year, I launched the *Yes To International Students Fund*.

Today, seven of our 16 public higher-ed institutions are using it to deliver Victorian education within China.

The Victorian Certificate of Education – our secondary school qualification – is delivered at 23 schools across 13 Chinese provinces.

8,000 Chinese students have graduated with it.

Almost all of them received offers to attend an Australian university.

Just like your country, Victoria will never compromise its ambition for our children.

I want us to build the best education system in the world, together.

That's my project here in China.

Today, I also had the privilege of meeting His Excellency Huai Jinpeng, Minister for Education, to discuss the progress of a special partnership to benefit Chinese and Victorian students alike.

It's called the Education Working Group.

It's our chance for two-way exchanges between teachers and students, joint vocational programs, sharing of language and culture, supporting students with a disability, and more.

In that meeting, I can confirm that Victoria and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding to officially establish that Education Working Group and take our partnership to the highest level.

Minister Huai was pleased to hear about another announcement I'm making today.

Many years ago, Victoria first launched the Hamer Scholarships, giving Victorian students the life-changing opportunity of six months' immersive study in Asia.

Many Hamer recipients have gone on to become company founders and leading teachers.

The scholarship was their edge.

I have a vision for the future of this program, and it came to me while I was thinking about my own experience.

I didn't go to university in the big city of Melbourne.

I'm from out of town and I went to La Trobe Bendigo.

I loved it and I wouldn't change a thing, but as a country kid in the 90s, I still felt locked out from some of the chances boys and girls had in Melbourne.

Studying in Asia and immersing myself in a language was an opportunity that didn't feel within reach to us back then.

But it should now.

Regional kids deserve a clear shot at experiencing something that will profoundly shape their lives.

So I am announcing that Victoria will officially revive the Hamer Scholarship Program.

It will support students with \$10,000 to study in China.

And for the first time, it will only be available to students from regional Victoria, so they can have that edge.

If there is one common thread throughout Victoria's China Strategy, it is Victoria's Chinese community.

They are our neighbours, friends and family – our workers, leaders and investors.

And within the China-Victoria relationship, they are our navigators.

We turn to them not in transaction, but in trust.

Together, we have formed an enduring partnership for growth – and it's uniquely Victorian:

Our Chinese community is the Qi that keeps us moving, and our policy of multiculturalism is the Li that keeps us whole.

One third of my China Strategy is dedicated to this community of almost half a million Victorians.

They have the seat of honour at this table and we want to listen.

The community helped me design this Strategy.

They will also help us design and develop a *China Capability Framework* for industry and government.

A way to understand culture, improve communication and reduce risk.

A way to get Victoria China-ready – and make the most of the opportunities before us.

In Victoria, we have not turned our backs to China – we have turned to face it.

We trade our shared strengths.

We invest in shared projects.

In an uncertain global economy, that means jobs, stability and confidence – and a better future for our families.

I am honoured to present *Victoria's China Strategy: For A New Golden Era*, with Dai Gum Loong as its cover model.

This Strategy is a new chapter of an old story.

A story about a long and enduring friendship.

Just like gold paved the streets of my hometown in the 1800s, today we enter a new golden era of prosperity – together with the people of China.