



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Australia-China 2.0

Address to officials and business delegates

Chongqing Reception

9 August 2011

InterContinental Hotel, Chongqing

Vice-Mayor Wang, Director-General Wang, all of our distinguished Chinese guests, Parliamentary Secretary Richard Marles, ladies, gentlemen, delegates, business people, friends.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Mr Wang and to the official delegation of Chongqing.

This is the final day of our five-day formal mission to Australia.

About half of the Australian business representatives will join me for a sixth day tomorrow in Shanghai.

This will be my last opportunity to thank you as our business representatives for all your fine work; for having the interest and the foresight to join this exciting mission to China.

I think it is fair to say that we have had a good time and a lot of fun, but a very productive time with counterparts here in China.

When we flew into Chongqing yesterday I was truly astonished at the skyline.

And I have to confess that I had no idea of the size and the pace of development of Chongqing.

I had a 10-minute power nap on the way from Chengdu to Chongqing.

When I awoke I thought that perhaps I was in Singapore or Hong Kong or New York or all three.

In one moment of awakening I was able to appreciate that indeed we had made a wise decision in coming to Chongqing.

The honourable city of Chongqing is the sister city to my home town of Brisbane.

But I use home town advisedly. Because in Brisbane we think we are big with about two million people, but here in Chongqing there are 30 million.

So perhaps it is more appropriate to think of the city of Chongqing as big brother and the city of Brisbane as little sister.

My own electorate is in Brisbane, just outside the boundary of Brisbane City, and we have a very large ethnic Chinese population.

So I have great fondness for the Chinese community in Australia.

Today I met Party Secretary Bo Xilai and we had a very engaging discussion, that I think was planned to go for about 30 minutes but went for around 60 minutes, because we had so much to discuss.

It is difficult to summarise 60 minutes of discussion in a short speech, but I will touch on a few of the main points that we did discuss during our time together.

Party Secretary Bo is very proud of Chongqing, pointing out that Premier Wen visited Chongqing in 2008, and assigned to Chongqing the responsibility of being the economic heart of China.

Indeed, just last year Chongqing grew at an astonishing rate of 17 per cent.

It may interest our Australian business delegates that Chongqing is the only part of western China that is under Central Government control, and therefore can benefit from funding from Central Government to make investment decisions here in Chongqing.

These are investment decisions that can be in collaboration with other countries.

Secretary Bo invited Australia to increase its engagement and investment - two-way - between Australia and Chongqing.

This ability to attract Central Government funding from the large investible surpluses that China has accumulated gives Chongqing a special advantage in terms of its relationship with businesses in Australia.

We discussed the range of opportunities available in Chongqing's booming financial services industry; its tourism industry; its position as a transport hub; the value of education exchanges between Chongqing and Australia, and so the list goes on.

I invited Party Secretary Bo to come to Australia next year for a China Forum. The invitation was extended by Kevin Rudd. This forum is to be held on the Gold Coast in late February.

Party Secretary Bo also talked about the great potential for collaboration in agriculture, and talked about the advantages of working in animal husbandry, particularly in areas of beef and sheep meat.

And although the Parliamentary Secretary Richard Marles is shaking his head - saying 'please don't do it' - I will convey to you a confidential discussion we had at Mr Marles' expense.

The compromise that I have reached with Mr Marles is that I will ask you all to keep this to your closest 1,000 friends.

Party Secretary Bo volunteered that Parliamentary Secretary Marles was a very good example of a product of eating lots of beef and sheep meat.

I am sure that Parliamentary Secretary Bo meant the highest compliment.

I responded on Mr Marles' behalf that Mr Marles said that his body mass index had increased substantially during his visit to China, and I estimated the increase at around 20 per cent - seasonally adjusted.

To close, there is no doubt that there is unbounded potential between Chongqing and Australia, as Chongqing itself diversifies its economy into the services area.

The opportunities are bounded only by our imagination.

And that imagination was excited in me when I did descend in the plane yesterday.

Parliamentary Secretary Bo invited me to stay another day, which I cannot do due to previous commitments to go to Shanghai and on to Indonesia.

But I certainly have to return in the near future to bring another delegation to Chongqing.

And having embarrassed Mr Marles, our Parliamentary Secretary, I will now seek redemption by asking Mr Marles to come up and propose a toast to Australia and Chongqing.

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