



PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

MESSAGE: AUSTRALIA-CHINA BUSINESS WEEK FORUM LUNCHEON

I am pleased to extend my best wishes for the Australia China Business Week Forum 2008.

Australia's relationship with China is crucial to our long term prosperity. China is on a path towards becoming the world's largest economy before the middle of the century. Its rapidly growing consumer markets create enormous opportunities for Australia's small and medium size businesses, just as its hunger for mineral and energy resources have helped drive the rapid growth of Australia's resources sector in recent years. China is now Australia's largest merchandise trading partner, our third largest services export market, our largest source of overseas students and our fifth largest tourism market. Two-way merchandise trade increased five-fold in the last decade to \$52.6 billion in 2007.

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening and building our trade, business and cultural links with China.

The Government has taken a proactive approach to facilitating dialogue between government and business communities in Australia and China, and we are committed to continuing efforts to expand access to Chinese markets for Australian businesses and investors. Importantly, China has recently agreed to establish a ministerial services round table to tackle market access barriers between the two economies. Through the roundtable, the Australian Government will be working to expand the opportunities for Australian businesses to capitalise on the natural complementarities between our economies - including Australia's know-how and expertise in financial services, environmental services and climate change technologies.

Events such as the Business Week Forum are an excellent opportunity to build links between Australian and Chinese businesses, and I hope all participants find the Forum productive and useful. A closer economic partnership with China is a critical element of building a modern Australia in the 21st century. Your efforts in broadening and deepening the links between Australia and China are important for now and for future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Kevin Rudd'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

The Honourable Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister of Australia