

Thank you.

Acknowledgements:

- Ambassador, Jan Thomas
- Tracy Colgan, Chair, AustCham
- The delegation from our valued Partners CCOIC led by....
- Tony Qui, Global Manager, JD.Com
- Austcham and CCOIC Members.
- Go8 Alumni
- Ladies and Gentleman

I am very honoured to be able to join you in Beijing today, as the Chief Executive of Australia's Group of Eight universities.

Being back in China is always important to me, and enjoyed by me.

As a board member also of the Australia-China Council, I have always understood the value to Australia of our warm and long-standing relationship with China.

And I see every day as Chief Executive of the Group of Eight, what an important partner you are in education and research, how deep our ties are throughout our universities.

Indeed – in 2015 in Australia, there were 96,867 Chinese higher education students in Australia - almost half of whom were at a Group of Eight university (48 percent).

In the research space - in 2015, Go8 and Chinese collaborations produced at least 3,074 publications.

Of course International students are more than students.

Their presence contributes to the rich environment on campus, to the communities in which they live, and helps to broaden the perspectives of our domestic students.

And they return home as cultural ambassadors for Australian values and our way of life.

They are - quite simply - Australia's brand health ambassadors.

The Group of Eight is made up of Australia's leading research intensive universities.

These eight universities each have a very high global ranking, and so the Group of Eight always makes two statements about how we operate.

First, we have a total commitment to excellence.

Second, and very importantly, we welcome quality students to study with us; and we then deliver the world quality graduates.

These two statements especially resonate today, as we join to launch the Austcham/Group of Eight "Graduate Connect Platform".

I know that in China you refer to our graduates, who return to live and work in China, as "Sea Turtles".

Indeed a 2013 article in The Economist outlined the five waves of sea turtles from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present.

The first in the 19th century, produced China's first railway-builder and its first university president.

The second and third, before 1949, produced many leaders of the Nationalist and Communist parties.

The fourth wave, which went to the Soviet bloc in the 1950s, produced such leaders as Jiang Zemin and Li Peng

The fifth and current wave is - according to the Economist – globalising the country.

In Australia we simply call them our successes.

We appreciate very much, that your young people had the top universities from around the world – including here in China - to choose from when deciding where to study.

And that they chose a Group of Eight university in Australia as their destination.

We are as proud of their study success as their families are.

Because they have become part of our university family.

As well, these graduates are now global citizens.

As Group of Eight quality graduates they are global Ambassadors for both China and Australia.

They are able to find career success anywhere they choose to live in the world.

In Australia we have a phrase that says “the world is their oyster” and indeed it is.

I am sure you are therefore delighted that, with the world to choose from, and to achieve success in, they have chosen to develop a career in China; to return home.....

..... to give back to the country of their birth all that they have learned from their education opportunities with us in Australia.

And they continue to contribute to Australian society, even after they return home.

A survey released in 2013 suggested that over half of Australian-educated graduates keep in contact with their Australian classmates at least once a year (57%), and over a third (36%) keep in contact with Australians in the wider community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/Research-Snapshots/Documents/Graduate%20employment%20outcomes%20-%20China%20docx.pdf>

The Group of Eight universities have always seen it as our responsibility to be there for our graduates well beyond the day of their graduation.

Our graduates always remain part of our community.

We are there for them.

We want to assist them, to stay connected to them.

And we do.

The “Graduate Connect Platform” is another important service we can offer.

It is one that we can provide for our graduates returning home to China.

We want to be there for them, to assist them start their careers.

The “Graduate Connect Platform” provides us with that opportunity.

The Platform enables, with the assistance of our universities, our quality graduates from China to make direct contact with major Australian and global companies operating in China.

The Group of Eight would like to thank those companies for being so enthusiastic about the project, for seeing its value and encouraging its development.

We would not have the “Graduate Connect Platform” without them.

Your involvement is important and valued.

In total this is a partnering of four groups - Business, Austcham, the Go8 and our graduates.

From this partnership we are sure business here can locate the quality graduates they are seeking, and that our graduates can find their career start.

It is enjoyable to have a part to play in a something of so much worth.

To everyone who has made this possible, for all your hard effort and determination, thank you from the Group of Eight.

To our graduates especially we wish you every success.

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