Delegation Study Tour to China for SA Parliamentarians

16 to 31 August 2010

Hosted by the Confucius Institute at the University of Adelaide

(A joint partnership between the University of Adelaide, the Office of Chinese Language Council International and Shandong University)

Participants:

Hon Carmel Zollo, MLC
Mr Martin Hamilton-Smith, MP
Mrs Leesa Vlahos, MP
Dr Duncan McFetridge, MP
Mr Steven Griffiths, MP
Mr Lee Odenwalder, MP

(Mrs Zollo and Messrs McFetridge and Griffiths were accompanied by their spouses).

The following people from the Confucius Institute went as Tour Leaders.

Prof. Mobo Gao, Director, Confucius Institute, Chair of Chinese Studies.
Hon Lea Stevens, Ambassador for the Confucius Institute.
Mr Mike Stevens, Education and Study Tour Consultant.

On the 27th May, 2010, Members of Parliament were invited to a lunch time meeting and briefing at Parliament House to introduce the work of the Confucius Institute at the University of Adelaide. The Institute was represented by the Hon. Lea Stevens, Ambassador for the Confucius Institute, Prof. Mobo Gao, Director, Confucius Institute, Chair of Chinese Studies and Prof. John Taplin, Pro Vice-Chancellor, International.

All Parliamentarians were subsequently invited to take part in a study trip by letter from Prof Mobo Gao.

The tour was one of a series of activities organised by the Confucius Institute at the University of Adelaide to increase the level of understanding of Chinese language and culture in the South Australian community. The Institute describes itself as promoting the “learning of Chinese language and culture, a broader and more informed understanding of China, both across South Australia and beyond.”
The aim of the delegation was to provide parliamentarians with a unique opportunity to deepen their understanding of China and to be better informed on China – “a country which will play an increasingly important role in the lives of South Australians in coming years.”

This parliamentary delegation was the first, with the Institute in the past focussing on educationalists. This was the first tour of various centres in China, mainly in Shandong Province, for the purpose of introducing our State Parliamentarians, to the culture and language of China.

Because of the need to hold the tour in a break in the State Parliamentary sitting schedule, the most appropriate time was in August.

Preceding the delegation tour and as part of on-going briefings, the Confucius Institute organised a number of information sessions, delivered through the sponsorship of the University of Adelaide and Ernst & Young. Bringing together experts in the fields of trade, labour, employment and economics, among others; these briefings shed light on issues and challenges facing modern-day China and its development, and provided an invaluable insight to delegation members.

The program followed an itinerary that allowed the members of the delegation the opportunity to participate in meetings, briefings, visits, formal receptions, lectures and discussions with tour leaders, Chinese academics and Australian Government representatives about China’s past, present and future.

The delegation visited the key cities of Shanghai and Beijing, as well as South Australia’s sister province, Shandong. In Shandong we visited Jinan, its capital and Qufu, Confucius’ home town. Most of the significant cultural sites in those areas were visited and we were also privy to two world class performances from the Beijing Opera and Acrobatic Troupe in Jinan and an ensemble interpreting Confucius’ life in Qufu.

South Australia has a close relationship with China in both the cultural and business spheres, and has maintained a sister-state relationship with Shandong Province of China since 1986. South Australia and Shandong celebrated their 20th anniversary sister-state relationship in 2006. The main purpose of the special relationship with Shandong is to foster trade and investment activities for the mutual benefit of South Australia and Shandong, and to utilise Shandong as a base to enter into other parts of China. Shandong has more than 90 million people and its overall economic strength ranks third among China’s 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

Chairman Gao, Executive Deputy Chairman of the Shandong People’s Congress Standing Committee, made particular mention of our special relationship during the formal reception in Jinan.

In addition, South Australia has two overseas representative offices in mainland China. The main office is in Shanghai with a satellite office in Jinan.
China is South Australia’s number one source country for overseas students. In 2010, SA registered 10,301 Chinese enrolments in South Australian institutions. China is also an important source of tourists for the State. The number of Chinese visitors to the State was 14,000 in the year ended in March 2010.

In 2008-09, South Australian exports to China were worth $1 billion. The major export commodities during the period were iron ore, refined copper and refined lead. Other South Australian companies which export goods to China include: ABB Grain Ltd; Coopers Brewery Ltd; D’Arenberg Pty Ltd (Wines); Raven Products Pty Ltd and Seeley International Pty Ltd.

In 2008-09, South Australian imports from China were worth $1.1 billion. The major import items from China in the period were clothing and footwear and part and accessories for vehicles.

Most recently, in September 2010 we were privileged to host Mr Chen Yuan, President of the China Development Bank, and Chinese Vice President Mr Xi Jinping, at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Bank and South Australia. In addition to other joint ventures between Chinese and South Australian companies, it is hoped that these ties will strengthen the economic bond between China and South Australia and increase investment opportunities in resources, infrastructure and agriculture.

Another economic link with China was highlighted in South Australia’s participation in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo (held from 1 May to 31 October) through contribution to the Australian Pavilion at Silver partnership level, contributing to the three programs supporting a national presence at the Pavilion: the Cultural Program, Communications and Media Program, and Business Program.

Our delegation took the opportunity to attend the World Expo and visited both the China Pavilion (and in particular the Shandong pavilion) and the Australian Pavilion. We were also hosted by Australian officers and briefed at the Australian Pavilion.

The Chinese Pavilion was styled as a modern pagoda and featured the latest in creative technology. The Australian pavilion was also constructed in a distinct architectural style and was very well patronised. At both the Chinese pavilion and Australian, new interactive and dimensional communication was very much at the fore. It was both professional and exciting and captured the attention of all. In particular, the Australian pavilion promoted our environment, resources, lifestyle and our multicultural population mix.

The Australian Ambassador to China, Dr Geoff Raby, spent over an hour with the delegation providing a good overview of the Chinese economy, culture and China-Australia relations.

During our visit, China was confirmed as the world’s second largest economy. Dr Raby expressed his concern that there were not enough visits to China by politicians and business heads. He particularly made that comment in relation to heads of large companies, who do business with China, but have never personally visited. The importance of public relations and affirmation of one’s commitment by personal presence is most important in the Chinese culture.
Dr Raby was complimentary to the South Australian Government in its regular delegations and our sister state relationship, which sees many benefits at the economic and cultural level. Special mention was made of the benefits at the educational level, with China being the number source of overseas students for South Australia. Our frank and open discussions with the Australian Ambassador were much appreciated by all.

The South Australian Government regularly encourages trade missions to China headed by the Premier and other ministers, most notably in the areas of mining and the promotion of our wines. In May 2010, Governor Kevin Scarce visited China to host the State’s Shanghai World Expo events. During our visit, Minister Paul Holloway, Minister for Mineral Resources Development hosted two forums promoting South Australian mining opportunities.

On our return, a trade mission from Shandong Province visited South Australia to discuss business and investment, particularly in the resources sector. The delegation included Shandong Governor, Mr Daming Jiang, who made his inaugural visit to Adelaide.

A recent report in The Australian of October 4th, 2010, by Asia-Pacific Editor, Rowan Callick, is worthwhile recounting: “China’s irresistible power surge - Beijing has begun exercising its clout as it develops to superpower status. China has broken out……But the past few weeks have seen something new: the most important shift so far in the 21st century. History in the making China has made its move.

In August it leapfrogged Japan as the world’s second biggest economy. And it has started to make that strength tell, beyond the world’s factories, foreign exchange and trade, which it has already ruled for a decade.

During the past few years, Beijing has talked of projecting its soft power, its cultural influence. But that was either a feint or was destined to be a flop.

Instead, China is now exercising its influence in the world of hard power, where it makes other countries behave in the way it wants – and this is especially apparent in the seas surrounding China’s 14,500km coastline.

These are the waters through which more than half of Australia’s traded goods have to sail. And Australia in the Western country most enmeshed economically and socially with China. There is thus no strategic issue of greater weight for Canberra…….” Given the value of our exports to China and its number one source country for overseas students, we as a State are equally ‘enmeshed economically and socially with China’ and we recognise its importance.
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<td>Walking tour of the Bund and surrounds</td>
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<td>Chinese and Shandong Pavilions at EXPO</td>
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<td>Visit Yu Yuan Gardens district</td>
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<td>Informal meeting and discussions with visiting South Australian Minister</td>
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<td>Travel to Jinan (overnight)</td>
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<td>Friday 20 August</td>
<td>Visit to Baotu Springs, Central Square and Daming Lake</td>
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<td>Shandong Acrobatic and Peking Opera troupe performance</td>
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<td>Saturday 21 August</td>
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<td>Meeting and debate with Prof. Peter Zhang, Qufu Teachers University</td>
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<td>Sunday 22 August</td>
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<td>Performance on Life and Time of Confucius (evening)</td>
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Notes on Shanghai sector 16 – 19 August

The majority of the delegation travelled together, departing Adelaide Airport 6.00 am and arriving in Shanghai, via Sydney, in the early evening.

We were met at Shanghai Pudong Airport by Mr Gui Xinjian of Shandong University, as well as Prof Mobo Gao and Mr Lee Odenwalder, MP, who had travelled separately. Mr Gui was the organiser on the ground in China and his assistants were Mr Wang Bin (Ben) and Ms Shan Xiao Wei (Claudia). These two young people are students of the College of International Education at Shandong University. They were chosen as volunteers to assist the delegation and became part of the study tour. They both had very good English, were bright and personable and willing in every way to ensure our stay was as smooth as possible. They interpreted for Mr Gui and assisted the group as a whole and on a one to one basis when required.

A decision was made in transit from the airport to visit the World Financial Centre that night as the weather forecast for Tuesday was for poor visibility. The view was exceptional. Shanghai is China’s financial centre, boasting some of the most impressive buildings in the world around the Bund, not the least the World Financial Centre building, which is built in the shape of a bottle opener. It allowed the delegation the opportunity to appreciate what a modern and expanding city, Shanghai is. With a population of around 23 million people, it is fast and dynamic.

A walking tour of the Bund and its surrounds was organised for the delegation on the Tuesday morning. We were able to view many of the interesting and historical buildings in and around the Bund, including the restoration work at the Roosevelt Foundation. The foreign influence on China at different times in its history is being embraced in its architecture revival and will continue to be a major tourist attraction.

We visited the House of Roosevelt’s wine cellar (on the first floor) and were impressed by the quantity and range of South Australian wines; far out-doing the contributions from the other states of Australia. Our South Australian flagship wine, The Grange, was one of the wines which we were told was exhibited in a private viewing room.

South Australia is making special attempts to tap into China’s burgeoning wine market; wine is South Australia’s fifth largest export to China, worth some $49m. In June this year, the Government announced that 12 South Australian wine companies were being represented on a mission to China, including Shanghai, where a Wine Showcase Dinner for influential wine distributors and wholesalers was held. The delegation noted that whilst we are often reminded that there are many hundreds of millions of potential wine drinkers in China, the majority of Chinese don’t have a culture of drinking wine with their food. Their preference is for beer and “white wine” which is a clear, high alcohol spirit. Nonetheless, it is important to tap into this expanding Chinese middle class to create further export opportunities for South Australia, as this is clearly one area where we are and should continue to target.
The tour included the most significant historic buildings and their history. The HSBC bank foyer with its pre-revolution murals was very impressive. The artisan work to compliment the architecture is of extraordinary quality. The tour enabled us to appreciate the historic significance of Shanghai and the role it played pre the communist era and more importantly the financial role it now plays, in part, thanks to its past.

In the afternoon we attended two briefings and presentations in Government buildings:

Firstly, at the People’s Congress building to meet with Mr. Zhang Zai Yang, the Vice Chairman of the Urban Construction and Environmental Protection Committee and a Member of the Shanghai Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress, and Mr. Luo Jie, Executive Deputy Director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Congress. Mr. Luo Jie had visited Adelaide and was particularly welcoming. The Hon. Carmel Zollo, MLC, represented the group. The discussion was fairly formal but a deal of friendship was evident. The major issues that the municipality faces are transport, housing and the environment. At the delegation’s request, arrangements were made for us to view the meeting hall or - “parliamentary” Chamber – which was very impressive!

A meeting with Mr. Huang Guorong, the Deputy Chief Economist with the Shanghai Municipal Transport and Port Authority, as well as two of his senior staff, followed. There was a good question and answer session and we subsequently gained an excellent appreciation of the scale and size of Shanghai during our visit to the Shanghai Urban Planning Building later during the visit. We were told that some 6 million people alone are transported by the urban rail system every day. The comment was made amongst ourselves that every politician should visit Shanghai to gain an appreciation of the management of large populations.

A walk along the Bund after dinner was arranged for the delegation. This was well received and appreciated. The weather was very humid and the walk was shared with many thousands of people who flock to Shanghai in the summer months to visit one of their major highly developed cities. Several members of the delegation were asked to pose with the Chinese tourists as we understood the majority would have been from rural China, not used to seeing very many westerners.

Delegation members were eager to experience the Shanghai underground and the Maglev train to Pudong airport. On Wednesday morning we walked to the East Nanjing Road underground station (about 20 minutes from the hotel), caught the metro train to LongYang Road station and changed to the Maglev train for a return trip to Pudong International Airport.

Maglev (derived from magnetic levitation), is a system of transportation that suspends, guides and propels vehicles, predominantly trains, using magnetic levitation from a very large number of magnets for lift and propulsion. It has the potential to be faster, quieter and smoother than wheeled systems.
The Maglev was designed to connect Shanghai Pudong International Airport quickly to the outskirts of central Shanghai where passengers could interchange for their final destinations in the city centre. Construction of the line began in March 2001 and public service commenced on January 1, 2004. The top operational commercial speed of this train is 431 km/h, making it the world’s fastest train in regular commercial services since its opening in 2004. The train set and tracks were manufactured using the German-originated Tran rapid technology. The journey takes about seven and a half minutes to complete the distance of 30 km. The train can reach 350 km/h in 2 minutes, with the maximum normal operation speed of 431 km/h reached thereafter, averaging 250 km/h. The Chinese authorities are keen to see an extension of the line in the very near future, initially to also connect Pudong airport to Hongqiao airport.

The afternoon was spent at the Chinese and Shandong pavilions at the EXPO. We received VIP treatment, arranged by Mr Ken Xu, SA Government Representative in Shanghai and escorted by Mr Aaron Duff. Both pavilions were of exceptional quality and displayed China and Shandong to perfection. The Shandong display had Confucius as a focal point and we were made particularly welcome by officials.

The technology, life style improvements, construction development that was evident in the Pavilions’ exhibition was “arrived at” as a focal point by demonstrating the China of the past, compared to what China now is. It demonstrated the enormous progress that China has made in particular in the last 70 years, of which the Chinese are justifiably proud of. The Chinese are placing great store on interactive digital technology, with Shanghai being identified as a city where light development is occurring in Shanghai’s Innovative Yangpu district.

Prior to the study tour, Members of Parliament were invited by the Confucius Institute at the University of Adelaide to a public seminar, Creating China’s Future: Innovation and Urban Development in Shanghai...the Confucius Institute and the Media Discipline of the University of Adelaide as we explore China’s attempt to transform its image from “Made in China” to “Created in China”. The guest presenter was Professor Fan Zhou, the Director of the Institute for Creative Industries at the Communication University of China, Dean of the Institute for Cultural Industries and Chief Editor of the magazine “China’s Cultural Industries”. He was appointed “Global Innovation Economy Consultant” by the United Nations in 2009. The seminar was well attended and it was then interesting to see the modern and expanding city that Shanghai is and the further economic expansion that is already identified.

A visit to the Yu Yuan Gardens district in the early evening gave us an opportunity to look over the ‘old Shanghai’ and this was followed by a meeting and informal discussions with Minister Holloway who was visiting the EXPO to lead two forums in his capacity of Minister for Mines.

Our final day in Shanghai included visiting the Shanghai Urban Planning & Exhibition Centre. The Centre featured a huge scale model of Shanghai, as well as interactive displays.
We were hosted as a group with briefings and explanations provided of the future forward planning and expansion for the city and its port. The guide was happy to respond to questions from the delegation.

Visit to the Australian Consul-General's residence - the meeting with Mr Tom Connor, the Australian Consul-General in Shanghai was very informative. He and his wife were very welcoming; he passed on valuable information about the Australia/China relationship and freely answered the many questions. Mr Ken Xu, SA Government representative, was also present.

From the Consul's residence, we travelled to the general admission gate of the EXPO and walked through to the Australian Pavilion. Mr Adam Coin was an excellent guide and host. He showed us through the display and explained the purpose of the total experience. The audiovisual presentation was extremely well presented and well pitched to the Chinese audience. It picked up on the Shanghai theme of "Better City, Better Life" and related it to the Australian situation. It promoted the Australian environment and rural Australia, our industries and our city lifestyle and multicultural society. We were taken to one of the VIP reception rooms and experienced the service provided to guests. Our questions were freely answered by the facility's manager. We were also fortunate in having arranged for us quick access to the Indonesian Pavilion.

In the evening, delegation members transferred to the railway station for the night trip to Jinan and we experienced negotiating our way through the large Shanghai Railway Station. Getting everyone and their luggage onto the train proved uneventful as was the whole trip. Everyone was pleasantly surprised after hearing many horror stories.

Notes on Jinan – Qufu sector, 20 – 22 August

We arrived in Jinan in the morning, were taken to the Shandong University main campus hotel for breakfast and then onto the accommodation. The delegation took part in several hours' discussion and Q&A, led by Prof. Mobo, in the Hotel's Lobby Lounge.

In the afternoon, the delegation visited the main cultural sites of Baotu Springs, Central Square and Daming Lake.

In the evening, the delegation attended a public Acrobatic Troupe performance by the Beijing Opera. It was a top quality act and we were fortunate in having the opportunity to see such talent.

A guided tour of Taishan Mountain, outside of Qufu, a spiritual and revered site was organised for the morning. Mount Tai is a major cultural and world natural heritage site that attracts many thousands of people on any one day. The mountain visit is considered a must for all those who aspire for success in life.

In the afternoon, the delegation continued by bus onto Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius, with many travelling there to pay their respects.
Professor Peter Zhang, Professor of English at the Qufu Teachers University, and Prof Mobo of Adelaide University, gave the introduction to the Confucius talk which led onto a lively and insightful Q&A session, by members of the delegation. Discussion focussed on Confucius as the teacher and ethicist and not someone who challenged the political and social norms of his time. The delegation appreciated the opportunity to discuss with a Chinese academic the teachings of Confucius and the influence on the education system.

A walk through the old walled town was organised in the evening. Qufu gave us a glimpse into regional and a more simpler lifestyle.

The following day our delegation guide in Qufu, Michelle, guided us around the Confucius Temple, Mansion and, after lunch, the Confucius Cemetery. Given the reverence that Confucius is held, all the cultural sites are well maintained and visited by thousands of people at any one time. It was not unusual for our group to attract extra people who would listen in to gain a greater appreciation of English during any visit to cultural sites.

In the evening, the Confucius Performance was appreciated and the thunderstorm outside arriving at just the right time to coincide with lots of water on the stage! Given its political system, China has the ability to very quickly construct its public buildings and places once a decision has been made. The large performance centre provided the opportunity for very large scale productions to be performed with maximum use of props – the size of which many a western city, dependant on the public purse for most of its funding, would love to have.

Notes on Jinan sector 23 – 25 August

On return from Qufu to Jinan, we were accommodated into the hotel opposite to the Jinan Olympic Sports Centre - a series of four stadiums of stunning architecture representing the willow tree and lotus flower and the main venue for China’s 11th National games held in October 2009. Even though we appreciated that comparisons, given the size of China, were not appropriate, the size of the complex and technical construction of the four different style stadia, brought discussions in Adelaide about our Adelaide Oval redevelopment into perspective.

Lunch was provided to us by the Shandong University Hotel and followed by a look over the College of International Education facilities and the Decade Achievement of New Shandong University. Shandong University is rightly proud of its International Education facilities and its standing in the community.

The afternoon visit to the Jinan Central Hospital was interesting and informative to the delegation. Our hosts were Ms Yang Denghua, Director of the Jinan Public Health Bureau, and Dr Su Guohai, Vice President Director of the Cardiology Department. The Hospital is affiliated with the Shandong University. We were initially shown the very best in accommodation for patients - as we would do - but our hosts were accommodating in showing us a more spartan general ward.
Discussion centred on the different types of health systems, funding for medical services, delivery of medical services, as well as who had access to medical services. The hospital has had some exchanges with interstate hospitals in Australia.

The Shandong University Welcome Banquet was held that evening. Our hosts were Dr Zhang Yun, Vice President for International Relations and Clinical Medicine, Professor Huang Deputy Dean of the College and the Party Secretary Professor. Dr Yun was gracious and hospitable to the delegation and appreciated our visit and demonstration of commitment by the Confucius Institute at Adelaide University towards the Shandong University, and to the South Australian Government in sending political representatives. The delegation expressed its appreciation in the very many ways Shandong University had facilitated our visit.

The first school visited was the Jinan Licheng No 2 Middle School, requiring a bus trip into the country side. It is a boarding school with over 7,000 students and some 500 teachers. It was founded in 1958 from a small village school and has become quite a desirable school with most students coming from some distances, with the majority taking an entrance exam to be admitted.

At the group meeting, the following people answered our questions.

Li Xinsheng, Deputy Director, Bureau of Education in Licheng District
Pan Guangdong, Instructor of Teaching and Research Section in Licheng District
Zhang Huaiyin, Principal of Hongjialou High School in Licheng District
Chen Dongbo, Director of Hongjialou High School in Licheng District
Wang Dongjun, Dean of No. 2 Licheng High school

Q: What are the most important subjects for modern China compared with the popular subjects? In Australia, students would rather do Arts type subjects than Technical.

A: Students prefer Technical because they count towards Tertiary entrance, but behaviour is also considered e.g. some Sports scholarships are given.

Q: Is there a private education system as there is in Australia?

A: Majority is public however the Junior part of this school is private. There are entrance qualifications for the school.

Q: Do students come from all over China?

A: No - just Jinan. Parents want to send their children to this school so there are over 60 students per class, thus need to limit numbers with entrance examinations.

Q: What are school level ages?

A: At 3 they go to reception, at 6 Primary, 12 Middle, 15 Senior and at 18, Tertiary.

Q: Girls do better in Australia - what about in China?

A: Almost the same.
Q: How many study English?
A: All - it is compulsory.

Q: How many go on to University?
A: Almost all.

Q: What is your sex ratio?
A: 40% are female (in the whole of China there are 46.3% girls).

Q: Where does funding come from? How much do students have to pay?
A: Teachers' salaries are from the Government, administration cost come from tuition fees. The fees are ¥1,600pa (AUD280), ¥700 (AUD120) for books. A place can be bought for ¥18,000 (AUD3160) and 25% do this. There are no scholarships although some students receive school assistance. Teachers are paid around ¥48,000pa (AUD8,400) and the Principal around ¥60,000 (AUD10,500). Some of the graduates are famous.

The delegation was shown around the school campus, including the art and innovation/invention centre. It was obvious that the school has a proud and distinguished history with a strong ethos of learning and expectations of the students high. One interesting observation in looking through the school buildings were doors with such signs in both English and Chinese as 'Trade Union Secretary's Office, Party Secretary's Office.'

We then travelled back into the city to visit the LiCheng No 1 Experimental School, which is already in a relationship via email with Ridley Grove Primary School. The Principal is Gu ChangXin. The school was in the summer vacation so there were no regular classes and students. It is a smaller school in numbers and area because it is in the suburbs of the city. The school community is looking forward to knowing more about South Australian education and teaching methodologies. Coincidentally, Ridley Grove was the school attended by the spouse of a delegation member – six degrees of separation!!

The school's common purpose is to educate talented people. There are 2100 students in an area of 5200m² with 36 classes giving about 60 students per class. Mr Gu is aware that Australian class sizes are less and acknowledges that that is a better educational model and that there are disadvantages with bigger classes. Mr Gu and his colleagues were happy to respond to questions from the delegation:

Q: How do they play sports or at lunch time?
A: The areas are small but the students play appropriate games. A community playground is available and there is space between the buildings. They get 1 hour of play time per day - Mr Gu knows that really is not enough.

Q: What is meaning of "Experimental"?
A: It is a Chinese name resulting from the opening up and reformation of China. The school trials new methods as a pioneer - it is equivalent to a SA Demonstration school.
Q: What happens with children with disabilities?
A: Each district has a special school for special children. They are encouraged to go to normal schools so they can integrate. At this school, there are 1 to 2 such children per class.

Q: What is the minimum leaving age?
A: 15

Q: How do students get to come to this school?
A: There is a zoning system but there can be exceptions.

Q: Are there school fees?
A: It is free up to Year 9, then have to pay. Children outside the catchment area have to pay.

Q: What is your sex ratio?
A: 47.6% girls.

Q: Do you have after school care?
A: There is a limit of 6 hours schooling per day. Classes start at 8:10am and finish at 4:30pm, 5 days a week. There is a 2 hour break (siesta). After hours classes occur at the community centre, which is where after school care also happens. The school does not have a canteen or sleeping areas because of insufficient space - food is arranged for by the parents and/or the community. Children do not go home for lunch.

Q: Is there a governing council?
A: There is a parent committee but it does not have a role in governance. However, they can make suggestions. They also help with the introduction of changes within the school.

A very hospitable Mr Gu invited the group to dinner that evening. He also ensured that some students and teachers were present for our visit and organised a performance by some children, as well as some arts and crafts demonstrations. It was great to see that a relationship already exists between a South Australian school and Jinan Licheng Experimental No 2 Middle School.

The following morning was taken up with a visit to a community centre associated with Shandong University, followed by a visit to a local housing cooperative. It was interesting to contrast the two approaches with the first having much more involvement with and by the community.

In the afternoon, a local craft specialist in traditional Chinese knotting visited the hotel to demonstrate the techniques. This craft work has special significance in Chinese culture, with different colours and knots having different meanings.

The work is taught and produced widely in China as a source of cultural knowledge, as well as being sold commercially not only for its significance in traditional folklore but also for its artistic beauty.
The South Australian representative in China, Mr Ken Xu, organised a meeting and dinner at the Shandong Hotel with the Executive Deputy Chairman of the Shandong People’s Congress Standing Committee, Mr Gao Xinting, for the evening. It was a very formal traditional Chinese style meeting and the Hon Carmel Zollo, MLC, acted as the delegation’s leader. The formal meeting was followed by an hour long banquet with the requisite number of toasts. With Chairman Gao were Ms Zhang Wieling, the Director General of the Foreign Affairs Office, Mr Fei Debao, the Director of the American and Oceanian Affair Division of the Foreign Affairs Department and Ms Rachel Qiwei, the Vice Director for Oceania and Latin America. Ms Fion Jia from Ken Xu’s staff in Jinan assisted with translation. The last two had been to Adelaide previously and we were told would be accompanying the Governor of Shandong Province, Mr Daming Jian, on a scheduled visit to Adelaide later in the year.

The meeting reinforced the strong Sister Province Relationship between Shandong Province and South Australia and the many benefits that occur at the economic and social level.

Beijing sector notes 26 – 29 August

We travelled by fast train from Jinan to Beijing, a 3 hour journey, and by bus through the Beijing traffic jams to the Sheraton Great Wall hotel. It was built some 20 years ago and reflects the architecture of that era.

In the afternoon, a visit to the headquarters of Hanban was scheduled to discuss the setting up of several Confucius Classrooms in South Australia. Hanban is the world headquarters of the Confucius Institute organisation. The Institute facilitates the teaching of Chinese throughout the world.

The delegation met Mr Zhao Guocheng, the Deputy Director General and responsible for setting up new classrooms, and Mr Jiang Yandong, the Director of the Division of Planning, who looks after existing ones. They conversed with us in English which made the explanation of why we were there and what we were hoping to achieve much easier. The delegation was provided with a presentation, given by Mr Huo Fuhai that outlined the idea behind Confucius Classrooms and gave the up-to-date proposal requirements.

Prof Mobo Gao introduced the delegation and was pleased to point out that the politicians were there to demonstrate their support. Mr Zhang mentioned that a lot of work had been done recently in Australia particularly in Victoria through the Confucius Institute at the University of Melbourne. In New South Wales and Western Australia, the majority of the work has been undertaken by the Education Departments. The relationship dates back to the mid 1990s and Hanban have sent people to assist with the teaching of Chinese.

There are now more than 300 Confucius Institutes and Classrooms around the world, with the USA having the majority. The first ones were in America and Korea in 2004. The problem now is to control them.
The Hon Lea Stevens spoke about the Confucius Institute’s Adelaide’s activities with the Business Briefings, leaders’ and teachers’ tours, student and teachers’ study trips to Shandong University, and the ongoing work to encourage our schools to take up Chinese language teaching.

We were told that Edmonton is already undertaking a bilingual class in preschool and that in Oregon, there is a “flagship” program. With regards to the training of teachers of Chinese, Melbourne has an established program and discussions are underway between QUT and Hanban and the Queensland Department of Education. Similar steps are being taken in New South Wales.

We were then shown over the Cultural display and it was noticed that there was a “School of the Air” classroom in one of the states of the old USSR!

A visit to the Australian Embassy was scheduled courtesy of the offices of the South Australian Government representative. Dr Geoff Raby, the Ambassador, and two of his staff spent some time with the delegation briefing us and raised many issues that exist in our relationship with China. The Ambassador was frank and questions raised by members of our delegation were ably answered. He was pleased with the commitment demonstrated by South Australia towards our sister state relationship with Shandong Province and also pleased to see that a bi-partisan parliamentary delegation was visiting. He stressed the importance of good relationships between China and Australia, whether it be at the economic, educational/research or aspects of foreign affairs. Discussion occurred in relation to the importance of China’s role in the Asia Pacific Region.

In the afternoon the delegation was visited the Temple of Heaven and the city centre.

On Saturday morning a guided visit to the Great Wall at Badaling was organised, followed by a tour of the Summer Palace in the afternoon. On Sunday there was a guided tour of Tiananmen Square and the Palace Museum and in the afternoon a guided tour to the Forbidden City.

All the cultural sites were well presented, with the Beijing Olympics providing the impetus for the major cultural sites to be cleaned and often painted prior to the opening of the Olympics.

What really stood out to the delegation members was that the overwhelming majority of the many thousands of tourists we saw in China were intra and inter province visitors, either making their pilgrimages to the spiritual sites or visits to their main cultural sites. Given its population, all sites were always very crowded.
Issues and other observations:

China is now well established as not only Australia’s but also South Australia’s largest trading partner. It has now become Australia’s largest export market, overtaking Japan, which held that status for the last 35 years. As well, China is Australia’s second largest service export market.

The scale that is China was at first somewhat daunting. After two weeks, one got used to the crowds and the cultural negotiation that goes with living in China, as indeed it is part of many other countries worldwide.

The official population of China is still around 1.3 billion. At the time of our visit, an official census was being advertised as it is widely acknowledged that the population would be greater, given the shift of the migrant workers between rural China and urban China, as well as the number of children in urban China who are not part of the official statistics. The newspapers were also widely advertising an amnesty for those parents in urban China who had not registered their children, advising that the fine would be reduced substantially, but not stating how much by. We were told that China’s one child policy for urban cities is often flouted, with parents simply not registering the birth of subsequent children and then not being able to take advantage of the free medical services and other welfare benefits that follow. The obvious preference of male children and resulting gender imbalance was also widely reported as posing problems for China in years to come.

The emergence of China as the world’s second largest economy and its importance to our State’s and country’s economy, is not something that we can ignore. Yes, there are large cultural differences, yes their governance system is different from ours, but seeing for oneself the fervent infrastructure spend and the insatiable demand for our raw resources that goes with it, there is no doubt that China will remain our major trading partner for many years to come. As well, our established reputation as an education city offering overseas students a high quality education coupled with a good lifestyle will hopefully see this area set for further expansion. The links with Shandong Province are well established and respected and opportunities for our State to continue and expand this relationship will see many benefits. Our South Australian Government presence in China also provides us with the opportunity to expand into other provinces for the mutual benefit of all.

The sheer scale of development in China that one saw in every direction is something that the delegation had not experienced before. It is no wonder that it has now become the second biggest economy in the world. We understand China has the biggest savings rate in the world. The network of fast trains is expected to double in the next few years. It is predicted that China will have a nine percent growth rate for the next 30 years and in 18 years it is expected that its economy will quadruple and likely to overtake the USA by 2030, but on the other hand, it still has a very unbalanced economy. For example, there was a 20 million jobs loss in manufacturing due to the GFC and there still is a great deal of inequality between rural and urban China.
The Communist regime was the subject of number of discussions within the group. It was interesting to hear that China doesn't necessarily see itself as communist but rather a system that is less regulated at the micro level but much more regulated at the macro level. Several discussions within the group centred on China having a welfare system inferior to western 'capitalist' economies and another on a comparison in inequalities between China and India. One got the impression that as long as groups or individuals did not openly organise mass protests or opposition to government policy, one-party rule and control was subtle and not pervasive. However, 'life' was probably a little more serious in Beijing as the bureaucratic/diplomatic capital and centre of government.

As infrastructure expansion continues and given the sheer size of energy use, there is a necessity to increasingly focus on environmental issues – two thirds of the economy is still dependent on coal and a major focus is needed to develop cleaner technology. We observed that the major cities we visited all had good road structures in place (including toll ways) and increasing use and development of fast trains. It is not the lack of good road networks that is providing a challenge to the Chinese but the sheer size of the population and number of vehicles. For example, Beijing is the third largest city with 20million people but has 4million cars. These issues are being addressed by restricting the use of cars on particular days or through increased taxation penalties. It was suggested that given the sheer size of the consumer market, China is likely to be the first country to develop a mass clean car industry.

The issue of road safety was one that was always topical especially when we were on foot, with all motorists thinking they had precedence over all other forms of transport. However, in terms of technology the delegation observed use of all “norms” that assist in road safety, e.g. speed restrictions, cameras, etc.

The spread of wealth and development is not equal throughout China and the wealthiest and highly developed Chinese cities are generally along the coast, for example, Shanghai. Nonetheless, it would appear that the divide between rich and poor is not as great as other comparable sized countries, for example, India.

Tourism is always a two way street and the delegation appreciates the efforts of South Australia in attracting more tourists to South Australia, as well increasing cultural exchanges between our two jurisdictions.

There was some discussion as to whether China’s ethnic, cultural, language, and economic divide would enable it retain its status as a united and strong power in the longer term. There was however no doubt that in the medium term China will remain a power house of the world’s economy and of critical importance to Australia.
Acknowledgements and thanks

The delegation felt it was a privilege to be able to be part of this inaugural study tour with very many valuable insights and lessons learnt. All members wish to thank the Confucius Institute at the University of Adelaide and in particular, Prof. Mobo Gao, Director, Confucius Institute, Chair of Chinese Studies, the Hon Lea Stevens, Ambassador of the Confucius Institute, Mr Mike Stevens, Education and Study Tour Consultant, for their invitation and for engaging us in a tremendous learning experience.

It was pleasing to see on our return Prof John Taplin, Vice Chancellor and Prof Mobo Gao, Director of the Confucius Institute, welcoming His Excellency Mr Jiang Damin, the Governor of Shandong Province to the Confucius Institute, during his visit in September to South Australia. The University of Adelaide reported on its website:

"Mr Jiang and his delegates inspected the Confucius Institute and its resources before speeches from Governor Jiang and Professor Taplin. Both of them expressed their desire to further strengthen the relationship. Mr Jiang was very pleased to hear what the Confucius Institute has already achieved. He hopes that the Confucius Institute will continue promoting the learning of Chinese language and culture in the coming years....and agreed that further collaboration was necessary in order to strengthen the relationship between Shandong, the University of Adelaide and the Confucius Institute."

We also would like to place on record our appreciation for the organisational effort of the team from Shandong University, Mr Gui Xinjian and his assistants, Mr Wang Bin (Ben) and Ms Shan Xiao Wei (Claudia) for facilitating our visit. We also place on record, our appreciation to our South Australian Government representatives in Shanghai and Jinan, in particular, Mr Ken Xu.

Hon Carmel Zollo MLC
8 November, 2010

Dr Duncan McFetridge MP

Mr Steven Griffiths MP

Mr Martin Hamilton Smith MP

Mrs Leesa Vlahos MP

Mr Lee Odenwalder MP