

Melbourne and Tianjin's 30 Year Relationship

Melbourne – Tianjin Sister Cities

In 1980, Melbourne and Tianjin established a sister city relationship – the first such relationship between an Australian city and a city in the People's Republic of China.

Since the relationship was established many significant exchanges, events and partnerships have taken place in the areas of cultural, educational and business cooperation. Melbourne and Tianjin share respect, contacts and on-the-ground intelligence developed over 30 years of friendship.

The City of Melbourne has been working closely with various stakeholders in Melbourne to develop and promote trade and investment opportunities between Melbourne and Tianjin, including the Australia China Business Council (which has provided extensive assistance and support), DIIRD, the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade and numerous businesses and organisations representing a variety of different industries.

Recently, the Tianjin Municipal People's Government highlighted the strength of its connection with Melbourne by ranking our sister city relationship first among some 22 other international partnerships.

About Tianjin

Tianjin is located on the coast 120km south-east of Beijing and is the largest port in northern China. The population of 11.2 million (2007) is spread across 18 country-level divisions, in an area of 11,920km².

Administratively it is one of the four municipalities that have provincial-level status, reporting directly to the central government. Economically, it is the origin of modern Chinese industry and is the major industrial base for the country. Tianjin's geographic location and economic importance have long made it a communications and logistic hub for northern China, and the region's largest financial centre.

Tianjin has undergone rapid development in recent years due to the rapid growth in infrastructure and other fixed asset investments. Per capita GDP amounted to RMB 55,473 (AU\$8,805) with a 13.2 per cent increase in 2008.

With a view to strengthening Tianjin's position as the economic centre of the Bohai Bay region, priority has been given to the development of the Binhai New Area in China's 11th Five-Year Plan. Preferential policies including the establishment of a free trade zone and pilot reforms in the financial sector have been given by the State Council to support the development of the Binhai New Area.

Tianjin Binhai New Area has become the growth engine for north China and it is expected to match the economic miracle achieved by Shanghai's Pudong in the 1990s and the Pearl River Delta's development in the 1980s.

Melbourne Office Tianjin (MOTJ)

The Melbourne Office Tianjin (MOTJ) was founded in 1998. The City of Melbourne is the only Australian local government to have an established business office in an overseas country.

The MOTJ has developed into a vital stepping stone for businesses entering the northern Chinese market. The MOTJ has progressed in recent years as a leader in facilitating two-way exchange in business, education, culture, civic, government and sporting opportunities between the two cities.

MOTJ's major strength is access to and understanding of Tianjin's highest levels of business and government networks through the close sister city relationship and on-the-ground presence.

As China continues to emerge as the greatest economic power in the world, the MOTJ will maintain its strategic position as a key facilitator for Melbourne and Tianjin's business, government and education communities to continue in their endeavors and exchanges.

Major Achievements

The partnership with Tianjin fosters cooperation in business, trade, education and culture between the two cities. Many projects and programs coming out of the sister city relationship have benefited both Melbourne and Tianjin business community.

- One of the most important projects to come out of the sister city relationship is the Tianjin Government Leaders Training Program. The Program has been successfully running for eight years and has become a flagship project for the relationship between Melbourne and Tianjin.

To date, over 190 Tianjin leaders have participated in the Program. Alumni of the program have been fast tracked into key decision making roles, including the current Executive Vice Mayor of Tianjin. These alumni provide easy access for Melbourne and Victorian businesses.

The Program has been regarded as an outstanding model for bi-lateral business and education exchange. Other government agencies in China have expressed interest in setting up similar programs with the City of Melbourne.

- The sister city relationship has assisted with the 20% equity investment by ANZ into the Tianjin Commercial Bank. MOTJ maintains active relationships with ANZ executives in Tianjin to assist with their interaction with Tianjin government.
- Through the sister city relationship, a total of \$11.5 million in education export has been generated through onshore training programs and Tianjin students studying in Melbourne.
- A number of Melbourne design companies secured design deals in Tianjin through the Melbourne-Tianjin relationship. Key projects includes Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area Stadium, Tianjin Binhai AFL Ground, Tianjin Fortune Lake Golf Club new course, Tianjin Haihe River Redevelopment project and Tianjin Astor Hotel retrofit design project.