



**AUSTRALIA CHINA
BUSINESS COUNCIL**
澳大利亚中国工商业委员会

China Capability Program

ACBC's Flagship National Industry Capability Initiative



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Publisher:

Australia China Business Council
ABN 57 075 909 625
International Chamber House,
Level 5, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

P: 1300 918 836
E: national@acbc.com.au
W: www.acbc.com.au

ACBC Communications:

E: communications@acbc.com.au

The Australia China Business Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia, and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



Australian Government



NATIONAL
FOUNDATION FOR
AUSTRALIA-CHINA
RELATIONS
澳中基金会

ACBC would like to recognise the generous support provided to this project by the Australian Government's National Foundation for Australia-China Relations as a component of funding for the China Capability Program. ACBC is proud to be a National Foundation for Australia-China Relations grant recipient.

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Publication date: July 2026

Report designed by Wallis Brewer



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Committee Chair Tim Watts MP, in the official
announcement launching the House of
Representatives inquiry into Building Asia
Capability in Australia:

**Australia's future
prosperity and security
relies on the Asia
capability of our
people.**





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ACBC's China Capability Program has been created in response to real issues affecting Australian business and future prosperity.

It is informed and created by professionals working in this direct space, at the intersection of business, policy and trade. We've created this specifically for industry bodies to ensure that our national interest is protected.

We want to make sure every industry and person participating in this program is fully equipped to acquire China capability.

Each industry has their own unique challenges, which is why we will be using our pilot program – running in the second half of 2026 – to work with you, and ensure that the program will align with your industry's specific needs and objectives.



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Why now?

Over decades, Australian leadership has recognised that future prosperity and security will depend on the nation's capability to engage with Asia.

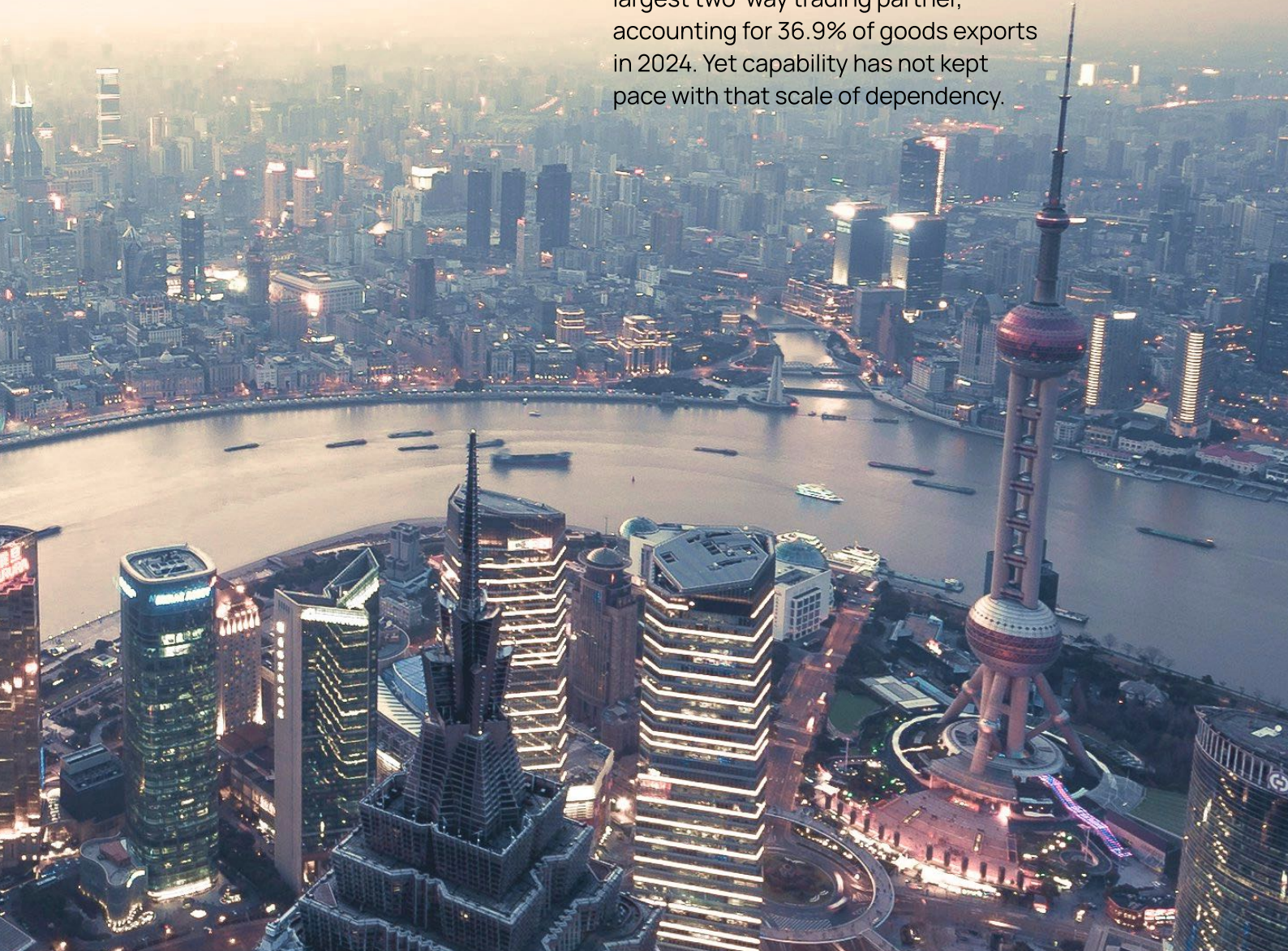
In response, most Governments have invested heavily in education: language programs, university pathways, international student pipelines.

However, the practical pathway that has been missed is **capability** itself: **Australian industry's ability to operate in, with and alongside Asian markets.**

The gap is now serious enough that in September 2025, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education adopted an inquiry into Building Asia Capability in and beyond the education system.

This acknowledgement at a national policy level: that schooling alone has not closed the gap - emphasises that something needs to exist beyond education. It must be on the other side of it: **industry** - where engagement is actively in practice.

China is the clearest example of the capability issue. It remains Australia's largest two-way trading partner, accounting for 36.9% of goods exports in 2024. Yet capability has not kept pace with that scale of dependency.





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The Research

In 2026, the Australia China Business Council (ACBC) commissioned the most comprehensive national study to date of Australian business' China Capability.

The findings were that just 35% of Australian China-engaged organisations are confidently China-engaged, scoring strongly and consistently across all six dimensions of capability. The rest fall into one of three groups:

Tactically Engaged Practitioners

Operationally active, but strategically uneven.

Developing Capability Learners

Early intent, but inconsistent depth.

Low Engagement Onlookers

The least equipped, despite real exposure to China-related risk and opportunity.

Capability did not correlate with company size, with some smaller organisations - with the right mindset and experience - outperforming much larger firms.

That finding informs this program: **Capability can be built deliberately, rather than waited for as a byproduct of scale.**

The research identified six dimensions to explain the capability gap. The China Capability Program operates around them as a backbone to inform structure and content.





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What You'll Gain

Stronger Networks

Relationships that open doors and foster new understandings.

Sharper Decisions

Deeper market knowledge behind more thoughtful, confident calls.

Risk Mitigation

Understanding and foresight of market, regulatory and geopolitical risks.

Cultural Agility

Avoiding missteps, demonstrating respect, building trust.





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Program Design

Awareness

Build awareness and gain knowledge about China's political, economic, cultural and commercial systems.

Understand how these shape business conditions to earn awareness on where your industry and organisation sit.

Understanding

Identify the frameworks governing China's politico-economic changes and Australia-China relations.

Understand how these impact commercial confidence and locate sector-specific opportunities for your industry and organisation.

Interpretation

Accurately assess policy signals from Australia and China to determine their likely impacts.

Evaluate the nature of risk and whether opportunities are commercially attractive, strategically aligned and operationally realistic.

Judgement

Apply the context and toolkit gained through the modules to exercise informed judgement and evaluate China opportunities.

Identify which relationships and directions to cultivate in order to maximise effective execution of your organisation's China strategy.



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Who It's For

The China Capability Program has been developed to equip individuals at **all industries, levels, and backgrounds** to scale their specific skills for successful China engagement.

Phase 1: Pilot Cohort

Late 2026

Peak industry bodies will participate first. This will allow peak industry bodies to shape and refine the program through insights on what different industries require and where capability gaps differ by sector.

Phase 2: Industry Rollout

2027-2028

Following the pilot program, peak bodies will bring the program to their member organisations tailored to industry needs. The program runs free of charge, supported by the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations (NFACR).



Australia's 6-Dimensional China Capability



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Developed through ACBC's national benchmark study and shaped by academic, industry, and government input, these 6-dimensions define what is China Capability. The China Capability Program is built around improving these key competencies.

1



Knowledge

Understanding of China's domestic economy, political and legal environment, international trade policy, green and digital economies, and language/cultural literacy.

2



Networks

Quality of trusted relationships both inside and outside China and Australia covering government, industry associations, suppliers, and customers.

3



Cultural Adaptability

Intercultural communication – understanding their own organisational culture and how that fits within Australia and how that differs from Chinese cultural norms and practices (within a business setting).

4



Leadership & Strategy

The presence and visibility of a China strategy, internal communication, senior executive and board-level engagement, and investment in China capability with the organisation's workforce as well as the engagement of Chinese-Australian staff.

5



Localisation

Level of market research, product/service tailoring, and marketing strategy to suit Chinese market preferences and regulatory frameworks.



In-Market Operation

Physical presence in China, delegation history, and lived operational or partnership experience – whether a business' engagement model suits their market stage.



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Program Details

The China Capability Program will run in industry cohorts, at a time agreed directly with each peak body from January 2027 to March 2028. The cost is completely free, courtesy of NFACR support.

For Peak Bodies:

Register your interest in the pilot cohort.

For Organisations:

Seek access through your peak bodies or contact the ACBC team.

China Capability Program

CHINA-SPECIFIC
KNOWLEDGE & CONTEXT

CHINA-SPECIFIC
SKILLS & TOOLKIT



SPECIFIC INDUSTRY
KNOWLEDGE

You



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CAPABILITY**



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