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SITTING DAYS—2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>13, 14, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>3, 4, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- **PERTH**: 585 AM
- **HOBART**: 729 AM
- **DARWIN**: 102.5 FM
CONTENTS

FRIDAY, 24 OCTOBER
Welcome to Senators ......................................................................................................... 16723
Address by the President of the People’s Republic of China............................................. 16723
Adjournment .................................................................................................................... .. 16729
At 10.03 a.m.

The SPEAKER (Mr Neil Andrew) and the President of the Senate (Senator the Hon. Paul Calvert) were announced by the Serjeant-at-Arms, and entered the chamber.

The SPEAKER took the chair and read prayers.

WELCOME TO SENATORS

The SPEAKER—On behalf of the House, I welcome the President of the Senate and honourable senators to this meeting of the House of Representatives and the Senate in this chamber to hear the address by His Excellency Hu Jintao, President of the People’s Republic of China.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

His Excellency Hu Jintao having been announced and escorted into the chamber—

The SPEAKER—Mr President, I welcome you to the House of Representatives chamber. Your address today to members and senators is indeed a significant occasion in the history of our federal parliament. I acknowledge the honoured Chinese guests among us and extend a welcome to Mr Wang Gang, Director of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and other senior officials who are in the gallery. On behalf of the parliament, I extend a very warm welcome to our visitors.

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Prime Minister) (10.08 a.m.)—Mr Speaker and Mr President of the Senate, on behalf of the government and on behalf of all members, I extend to His Excellency Hu Jintao, the President of the People’s Republic of China, a very warm welcome to our national parliament. I extend that welcome to his wife, Madame Liu, and to all the other members of the Chinese party.

It would be no exaggeration to say that 10 years ago an event such as this would have been seen as not only unlikely but indeed highly improbable. Equally, I would not have thought 10 years ago that as Prime Minister of Australia and as the leader of a Western, Centre Right political party I would have—as I did in 2002—addressed the cadres of the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing. I think that says a number of things. It says something of the way in which our world has changed. It says something of the commonsense character of the relationship between Australia and China, because that event in 2002 occurred and this event today occurs without either of our two nations in any way abandoning their distinctive but different traditions.

I would characterise the relationship between Australia and China as being both mature and practical and as being a relationship that is intensely built on growing people-to-people links. We are different societies. We have different cultures, we have different traditions and we have different histories. No purpose is served in pretending otherwise. But might I say that has never blinded successive Australian governments of both political persuasions to an endeavour to draw from the relationship those things that can be of great and enduring mutual benefit to our societies. So in those senses it is a very mature and practical relationship.

The people-to-people links are immensely important. I can describe it this way: the most widely spoken foreign language in Australia today is a dialect of Chinese, and three per cent of the Australian population, no fewer than 550,000 people, claim Chinese ancestry. Speaking personally, 13.3 per cent of my own electorate of Bennelong in Sydney claim Chinese ancestry. There are 34,000 students from China studying in Australia. China is now Australia’s third largest trading partner. Last year the signing of the natural
gas contract for the supply, over 25 years, of natural gas to the Guangdong province was a veritable landmark in the evolution of the economic relationship between our two nations. Two-way trade between Australia and China has trebled since 1996.

Let me take the opportunity today of recording, on behalf of the government, our appreciation for the constructive, practical and wholly positive approach that China has taken in helping, in partnership with others, to resolve the challenging issue of North Korea’s nuclear capabilities. No nation has more influence on North Korea than China. The resolution of that issue, which must necessarily involve other nations as well, is very important to the stability and the peace of our region.

Finally, it is self-evident that the relationship between Australia, the United States and China respectively, on a two-way basis—that is, our relationship with the United States and then again our relationship with China—will be extremely important to the stability of our region. Our aim is to see calm and constructive dialogue between the United States and China on those issues which might potentially cause tension between them. It will be Australia’s aim, as a nation which has different but nonetheless close relationships with both of those nations, to promote that constructive and calm dialogue.

Mr President, you and your wife are greatly welcomed to our country. We thank you for coming. We wish you well. We know that you will receive a warm reception from many people in this country who will demonstrate their affection for the important relations between our two peoples.

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Leader of the Opposition) (10.14 a.m.)—Mr President, I have already had the opportunity to welcome you and Madame Liu to this country. I now have the great honour of welcoming you to our parliament. Your historic presence in this parliament—so soon after your inauguration as the President of the People’s Republic of China—testifies to the importance and the continuity of the relationship between our two great peoples. This occasion is, indeed, a celebration of that continuity.

On the visit to Australia four years ago by your predecessor, President Jiang Zemin, he paid tribute to the pioneers of the relationship between our two countries. President Jiang said then:

There is an old Chinese saying: when you go to the well to draw water, remember who dug the well.

So it is with great pride that I note the distinguished presence in our gallery today of one of those well-diggers—former Prime Minister of Australia Gough Whitlam. Australians of course remember his efforts then: his groundbreaking trip to Beijing as Leader of the Opposition in July 1971; the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in December 1972; and the first visit to China by an Australian Prime Minister, 30 years ago this month.

So it is in this context that we do look forward to the further development of the new trade framework agreement signed today. We are also delighted with the $25 billion liquid natural gas deal signed last year, and the prospect of more cooperation on energy security between Australia and China. These achievements, Mr President, are further examples of 30 years of hard work developing relations between our two countries begun by Prime Minister Whitlam and sustained by his successors. Continuing that legacy of course is a priority for Australia, and it certainly is for me.

On this historic occasion, we also remember the indispensable condition on which we established this relationship—our commit-
ment to One China. My father, interestingly, was another one of those well-diggers. As Gough Whitlam’s Treasurer, he accompanied the Prime Minister on that trip in 1973. He had the opportunity to meet with Premier Zhou Enlai, the man who brought about the historic detente in China’s foreign policy with the West. My father described Premier Zhou as a man of natural dignity and obvious strength of character, a man of reason and cultivation. Mr President, they are the qualities of leadership and we must emulate them as we work together to make our region economically stronger, free from the threat of terrorism, and committed to the principles of international law and human rights.

Together we do face some critical issues, particularly on the matters of security. Among them is the threat of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. We see a crucial role for China in progressing initiatives to ensure that North Korea turns away from this destructive path.

On behalf of the parliament and the Australian people, let me also congratulate you, Mr President, for the recent success in manned space flight. The world has marvelled at China’s recent economic development, but this stunning achievement shows your nation’s technological advance as well. It symbolises the sense of purpose driving China and its leadership today, the greatness of your people, and their contribution to world civilisation.

As China seeks to fulfil its destiny as a leader in regional and international cooperation, no country is better placed to assist it and encourage it than Australia. This is something on which there is bipartisan agreement. That is why my first overseas visit as opposition leader was to your country. I am delighted that our relationship is gaining new strength, and I want to turn it to our mutual advantage. Mr President, we are old friends, but there are unlimited opportunities for new partnerships. It is in the spirit of goodwill, the purpose of peace and friendship and the determination to be partners in the development of our region that I join the Prime Minister in the warmest of welcomes to this parliament of the people of Australia.

The SPEAKER—Mr President, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to address the assembled members and senators.

Members and senators rising and applauding—

HIS EXCELLENCY Mr HU JINTAO—(Translation) The Hon. Neil Andrew, Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Paul Calvert, President of the Senate, the Hon. John Howard, Prime Minister, distinguished members of the federal parliament, ladies and gentlemen: I am delighted to have this opportunity of coming to the Parliament House of Australia to meet with you and address such a distinguished audience.

Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the Chinese government and people, my best wishes to you and, through you, to the courageous and hardworking Australian people. Though located in different hemispheres and separated by high seas, the people of China and Australia enjoy a friendly exchange that dates back centuries. The Chinese people have all along cherished amicable feelings about the Australian people. Back in the 1420s, the expeditionary fleets of China’s Ming dynasty reached Australian shores. For centuries, the Chinese sailed across vast seas and settled down in what was called ‘the southern land’, or today’s Australia. They brought Chinese culture here and lived harmoniously with the local people, contributing their proud share to Australia’s economy, society and thriving pluralistic culture.

More than three decades have passed since China and Australia established diplo-
matic relations. Our bilateral ties have stood the tests of time and international vicissitudes and made steady headway. To consolidate and develop its all-round cooperation with Australia is a key component of China’s external relations. We have always viewed our friendly ties with Australia from a strategic and long-term perspective. To cultivate a deeper and all-round cooperation between the two countries is the common aspiration of the two governments and peoples.

This afternoon I will have an in-depth exchange of views with Prime Minister Howard on bilateral ties and regional and international issues of mutual interest. We will also sign a series of bilateral documents on cooperation. This shows that China-Australia cooperation in various fields is going deeper and broader. I am convinced that China and Australia will shape a relationship of all-round cooperation that features a high degree of mutual trust, long-term friendship and mutual benefit—a relationship that makes our two peoples both winners.

How should countries go about their relations with one another in this complicated and diverse world? It is a question that is very much on the minds of many people. We are of the view that, for smooth conduct of state-to-state relations and for lasting peace and common prosperity, all countries should act in compliance with the following principles. First, politically they should respect each other, seek common ground while putting aside differences and endeavour to expand areas of agreement. Our world is a diverse place, like a rainbow of many colours. Civilisations, social systems and development models, different as they may be, should respect one another, should learn from each other’s strong points, amid competition and comparison, and should achieve common development by seeking common ground while shelving differences. By mutual respect politically we mean that the political system and the path of political development chosen by the people of each country should be respected.

Democracy is the common pursuit of mankind, and all countries must earnestly protect the democratic rights of their people. In the past 20 years and more since China embarked on a road of reform and opening up, we have moved steadfastly to promote political restructuring and vigorously build democratic politics under socialism while upholding and improving our systems of people’s congresses, multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party, and regional ethnic autonomy. We have advanced the process of scientific and democratic decision making and promoted grassroots democracy, protection of citizens’ rights and freedoms, democratic elections, and democratic decision making, democratic management and democratic supervision by the people in our country’s political, economic, cultural and social life according to law.

We have stepped up the building of the legal system in China, making sure that there are laws to go by, that the laws must be observed and are strictly enforced and that violators must be prosecuted. As a result, the enthusiasm, initiative and creativeness of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups have been galvanised, providing an immense driving force for the country’s development. In future, we will continue to move forward our political restructuring in a vigorous and cautious manner as our national conditions merit, improve our democratic institutions and legal system and build a socialist political civilisation.

True, China and Australia are different in social systems. This is the result of different choices made by our people in light of their national conditions and the two countries’ different historical evolution. As China-
Australia relations prove, so long as they understand and treat each other as equals and respect their respective national conditions and circumstances, countries with different social systems may very well become partners of friendly cooperation with constantly increased common ground.

Second, economically they should complement and benefit one another, deepen their cooperation and achieve common development. With economic globalisation developing in such depth, no country can expect to achieve economic development goals without going for effective economic and technological cooperation with other countries and actively participating in international division of labour, bringing in capital knowledge, technology and managerial expertise needed for development at home and in return providing products and know-how with comparative advantages for the development of others. This is how countries achieve common development through mutually beneficial cooperation.

Right now, China has entered into a new stage of building a well-off society in an all-round way and accelerating the socialist modernisation drive. We are engaged in developing a socialist market economy and opening the country still wider in more areas, with a higher level of sophistication. While speeding up strategic economic restructuring, we are vigorously implementing the strategies of revitalising China through science and education, of sustainable development, of development of the west and of renewal of the old industrial base of north-east China. China enjoys a vast market, abundant labour, social and political stability and a vibrant momentum for development. A stronger and more developed China will bring growth opportunities and tangible benefits to other countries in the world.

China and Australia are highly complementary economically. Blessed with vast territory and rich resources, Australia boasts economic and technological successes. The potential for China-Australia economic cooperation is immense. Past, present or future, we see Australia as our important economic partner. China-Australia trade has grown rapidly in recent years, from $US87 million in the early years of our diplomatic relations to $US10.4 billion in 2002. China has become Australia’s third largest trading partner and fourth largest export market and, in fact, the fastest growing one. Australia is China’s ninth largest trading partner and biggest supplier of wool. Over the years China has purchased large amounts of iron ore and aluminium oxide from Australia, which has such energy and mineral riches. Last year the two countries signed a 25-year, $A25 billion deal on the LNG project in Guangdong, thus laying a solid foundation for our bilateral energy cooperation.

Also expanding steadily are the bilateral exchanges and cooperation in science and technology, agriculture and animal husbandry. By June 2003 Australia had invested in a total of 5,600 projects in China, with an actual investment exceeding $US3.1 billion. China has invested in 218 projects in Australia, with a contractual value of $US450 million. We are ready to be your long-term and stable cooperation partner, dedicated to closer cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit. The trade and economic framework between China and Australia which will be signed today will mark the beginning of a brand-new stage of our trade and economic cooperation. I am convinced that this framework will help steer our bilateral cooperation in economic, trade and other fields to continuous new highs.

Third, culturally countries should step up exchanges and enhance understanding and mutual emulation. Diversity in the world is a
basic characteristic of human society and also the key condition for a lively and dynamic world, as we see today. The proud history, culture and traditions that make each country different are all part of human civilisation. Every nation, every culture, must have its strong points and advantages. All should respect one another, draw upon each other’s strengths and strive to achieve common progress.

China has a 5,000-year civilisation. Its people, of 56 ethnic groups, have worked together to shape the magnificent Chinese culture. The Chinese culture belongs not only to the Chinese but also to the whole world. It has flourished not only through mutual emulation and assimilation among its various ethnic groups but also through interactions and mutual learning with other countries’ cultures. With reform opening up and a modernisation drive pressing ahead in full swing, we are all the more eager to draw upon the useful achievements of all civilisations. We stand ready to step up cultural exchanges with the rest of the world in a joint promotion of cultural prosperity.

Cultural pluralism is a distinctive feature of Australian society, a feature that embodies ethnic harmony in this country. Just as the national anthem goes, Australian people have come across the seas. Cultural exchanges have long served as important bridges for enhanced understanding and deepened friendship between our two peoples. Last year was the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Australia. While Celebrate Australia 2002 delighted Shanghai citizens, Chinese performing artists had their debut in the famous Sydney Opera House. In recent years people-to-people exchanges between our two countries have grown rapidly, with annual visits well over 100,000. China is the biggest source country of foreign students in Australia now. We should continue to expand our cultural exchanges, giving fuller play to culture’s role as the bridge and bond in the building of friendship between the two countries and their peoples.

Fourth, in security, countries should strengthen mutual trust, cooperate on an equal footing and endeavour to maintain peace. Peace and development remain the dominant themes of our times. Uncertainties affecting world peace and development have been on the rise. Traditional and non-traditional threats to security are mixed together, rendering some regions unstable and turbulent. Terrorism attacks from time to time and cross-boundary crimes have become more pronounced. How to meet these challenges, secure peace and development in the world and create a stable and harmonious homeland for all is a critical question that calls for serious consideration and effective solution.

China advocates a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation and strives to resolve disputes peacefully through dialogue and cooperation. We believe in democracy in international relations. The affairs of the world should be handled through consultation on an equal footing by all countries. Members of the international community should reaffirm their commitment to multilateralism and give full scope to the important role of the United Nations and its Security Council in maintaining world peace and security.

China and Australia respect each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and they stick to noninterference in each other’s internal affairs and enjoy a growing mutual trust in the security field. Recent years have seen increasing exchanges between the two militaries, as evidenced by the annual defence strategic dialogue for six consecutive years and frequent port calls by naval ships of both countries. China and Australia have shared
interests in keeping the South Pacific and Asia-Pacific stable, easing regional tensions and promoting peaceful settlement of hot-spot issues. We are both against terrorism and hope for stronger counter-terrorism co-operation. We are both key participants in the ARF and other regional security mechanisms. China welcomes and supports a constructive Australian role in regional and international affairs. We, on our part, will stick to our independent foreign policy of peace, acting forever as a strong defender of world peace and a persistent proponent of common development. We are ready to join Australia and other countries in cultivating a secure and reliable international environment of lasting stability.

Ladies and gentlemen, Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory. The complete reunification of China at an early date is the common aspiration and firm resolve of the entire Chinese people. A peaceful solution to the Taiwan question serves the interests of all the Chinese people, including our compatriots on Taiwan. It also serves the common interests of all countries in the region, including Australia. The greatest threat to peace in the Taiwan Straits is the splittist activities by Taiwan independence forces. We are firmly opposed to Taiwan independence. The Chinese government and people look to Australia for a constructive role in China’s peaceful reunification.

Ladies and gentlemen, there have been frequent exchanges between our two legislatures in recent years. The Speaker, the Hon. Neil Andrew, and many law-makers here have visited my country and have seen China’s changes and progress first-hand. Here I would like to extend this invitation to all of you: we look forward to receiving more of you in China. Looking back, I am gratified to see the fruitful past of our relations. Looking forward, I feel confident in where the relationship is headed. Let us join hands in writing a more luminous new chapter of the China-Australia relationship of all-round cooperation. Thank you.

Members and senators rising and applauding. His Excellency Hu Jintao left the chamber.

The SPEAKER—Senators and members, may I, on your behalf, thank the President for his address and wish him and Madame Liu a very successful and enjoyable stay in Australia.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—I thank senators and members for their attendance. The House stands adjourned until Monday, 3 November 2003 at 12.30 p.m. I hereby declare this meeting of the House of Representatives and the Senate concluded.

House adjourned at 10.46 a.m.