



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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A top-level official joint Chinese-Australian co-ordinating group will promote long-term co-operation in the transport sector between Australia and China.

The Australian Minister for Transport, Mr Peter Morris, will have responsibility for transport policy aspects of this important Government-to-Government co-operation programme.

The on-going co-ordinating group will be Co-Chaired by Mr Zhao Weichen and Mr John Dawkins, Australian Minister for Trade.

The establishment of the co-ordinating group at this high level is a major step forward in Australia's relations with China.

Agreement to establish the co-ordinating group was reached last week in Beijing by Sir Peter Abeles, leader of the Australian Transport Mission, and Mr Zhao Weichen, Vice Chairman of the State Economic Commission of China.

The Australian Transport Mission visited China from 23 June to 6 July, in accordance with the understanding I reached with the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, in Canberra in April.

During the visit to China the Transport Mission met General Secretary Hu Yaobang, Vice Premier Li Peng, Vice Chairman Zhao Weichen and other senior representatives of the State Economic Commission, as well as Ministers representing the State Planning Commission, the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Railways, the Ministry of Aviation Industry, the Ministry of Posts and Communications, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, the Civil Aviation Administration of China, the China Foreign Trade Transport Corporation and the China Ocean Shipping Corporation.

The new group will co-ordinate inter-Governmental relations in the transport sector, and will also establish a framework for a wide range of private trade and commercial opportunities.

The establishment of the joint co-ordinating group will open the way to a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and expertise.

This could involve co-operation in transport economics and management, railways, highways and bridges, ports and harbours, transport equipment maintenance services, bulk and container cargo handling and air services.

Within Government-to-Government co-operation, one proposal under consideration is for Chinese air controllers to be sent to Australia for training. Another involves Australia sending experts to China to discuss Australia's relevant experience in low-cost highway construction.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions, which was represented on the Transport Mission, has agreed to co-operate in the training of Chinese transport executives in Australia.

Meetings of the joint co-ordinating group will be held annually, alternately in each country. Australia will host the first meeting, possibly in October this year.

Sir Peter Abeles, Managing Director of Thomas Nationwide Transport Industries and Joint Managing Director of Ansett Transport Industries, leader of the Transport Mission, Mr Paul Barratt, Trade Ambassador for North Asia of the Australian Department of Trade, deputy leader, and other senior members of the Transport Mission will meet with transport industry representatives in the near future. The Transport Mission members will brief industry representatives on the outcome of the Mission and likely future opportunities for co-operation.
