



30 March 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP
DOORSTOP, GARDEN HOTEL, SHANGHAI CHINA**

E & OE.....

PRIME MINISTER:

What we've just seen is a good demonstration that you don't have to be BHP to succeed in China. Here is Sigtech, a small business that employs fewer than 50 people, has found a niche market and is now not only operating successfully in Singapore but also as of now in Shanghai. It's just another illustration that lively, innovative, expansionist small businesses can also do very well in a big market such as China.

JRNLS:

Prime Minister, you're obviously trying to get more concessions to help businesses like that. When you go to Beijing, how do you think you will be treated on that sort of level by the leadership?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think they will be accommodating. The purpose of my visit is twofold. It is to emphasise the importance of the commercial association but also to focus on some of the broader, bilateral issues. I think the way in which we have been able to bring together the Government, or the political and the economic focus by having such a high powered business delegation accompanying me and the involvement of those men and women in the visit, I think that is driving home the point to our hosts that the Governments of Australia and the businesses of Australia are in this thing together which you must be in markets such as China.

JRNLST:

Prime Minister, on the broader bilateral issues, what will you be hoping to achieve in your talks in Beijing?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I will be hoping for my part to make it very plain to the Chinese leadership that we take the relationship seriously. We are different countries, we are different societies but that doesn't prevent us focusing on the things that we have in common and the things that we can do together for our mutual benefit and I believe it is a relationship that has that particular quality. I think we happen to have a balanced, commonsense approach to us. We shouldn't get carried away. On the other hand we shouldn't underestimate the potential, and also we shouldn't underestimate the fact that in the past, Australia has economically stood by China in the commodity trade in particular when political relations haven't been all that flash, and in fact in areas like wool and wheat, our association with China goes back decades and we have kept that consistency and it's something that the Chinese remember.

JRNLST:

What will be the benchmark of your success?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't set benchmarks. Others do that. I'm not setting any benchmarks.

JRNLST:

What will you be telling the Chinese Government about Taiwan and it's...

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we have a one China policy. We've had it since 1972 but we also have strong commercial links with Taiwan and they are important to Australia and I will be making that plain but I will also be making it plain that we respect and will observe the proprieties that ought to be associated with a one China policy.

JRNLST:

Last night you specifically mentioned TNT's joint venture (inaudible) received a favourable response. Will you be undertaking similar representations on behalf of other firms?

PRIME MINISTER:

I will always make appropriate representations for particular firms, yes. That's one of the roles of an exercise involving both the political and commercial leadership of Australia and all of the companies that are here and all of the companies that are represented in the delegation are very reputable, successful, highly regarded Australian companies and we are very keen as a Government to promote their legitimate interests.

JRNLS:

Mr Howard, what were your thoughts on this morning's church service?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I thought it was an impressive reminder of the way in which a group of people who hold a very strong value system have survived through extraordinary difficulties and people in Australia and the United States take freedom of worship for granted. That hasn't always been the case in China so one has a great deal of respect for people who have maintained that and it is also hopefully an illustration that, or a demonstration that there is greater religious tolerance and religious freedom in this country but when you have been through what many of the older people in that congregation must have been through it is a great testament to their faith and their commitment to what they hold dear.

JRNLS:

Prime Minister, given that freedom of worship isn't a given here in China at the moment and Easter is a time of traditional crackdown of some churches, how much consideration did you give to that fact before deciding to attend church today?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, I didn't think that that of itself was a reason not to observe something privately that I like to observe at Easter.

JRNLS:

Prime Minister, will you be bringing up the issue of Australian businessman James Peng with the Chinese leadership?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look I am not going to foreshadow everything that I am going to raise but you can rest assured that I will always represent the proper interests of Australian citizens wherever I go.