

Speech by CE at Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong 36th Anniversary Dinner and Community Awards (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong 36th Anniversary Dinner and Community Awards today (June 7):

Josephine (Chair of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Ms Josephine Orgill), Mr Gareth Williams Consul-General (Consul-General of Australia to Hong Kong and Macao), Chamber members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you, tonight, for the Australian Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner.

And congratulations on turning 36 years old. It is, I can assure you, a very good year as I have earlier explained to Josephine.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce, over the years, has played a vital role in strengthening the deep and multifaceted ties, between Hong Kong and Australia.

Through thick and thin, it has championed the interests of its 900 members and 240 companies, fostered invaluable commercial and cultural ties, and cemented Australia's reputation as a trusted partner in the region.

Your annual awards, to be presented later this evening, is clear testimony to that. The awards honour excellency among Australian and Hong Kong businesses and individuals with ties to Australia – and in a diverse range of leadership areas.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, if I may add, is the largest Australian chamber outside of Australia. And, of course, the Chamber is an essential element, in one of the largest Australian communities abroad, with some 100,000 Australians living, studying and doing business here in Hong Kong.

Each and every one of you, has been here alongside us, contributing to the success of Hong Kong's economy and community.

With the free trade and investment agreements signed back in 2019 and came into effect, our services trade has ever been soaring, I'm pleased to tell you.

In 2022, Australia was Hong Kong's 8th largest services partner, which

saw a growth of nearly nine per cent in 2021, year on year, and an additional 10 per cent in 2022.

Under the unique "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong maintains unparalleled connectivity with both Mainland China and the rest of the world.

We are bestowed with a free flow of information, capital, goods and people, and a low and simple tax regime. Our workforce is well-versed with both Chinese and English, as well as the practice of both Chinese and international businesses.

We make it easier for Australian companies to do business in the Mainland, and we are blessed with opportunities right here in Hong Kong.

We take a pivotal role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). With some 87 million consumers, the GBA is an integrating, cluster-city development that contributed to one-ninth of the GDP of China last year. It has become an important engine of growth of our country, the second-largest economy in the world, and offers boundless prospects for us all.

We look forward to connecting Australian enterprises with the immense opportunities in the GBA . After all, connecting East and West through business, finance, trade and, increasingly, innovation and technology, is a long-standing Hong Kong strength, as you well know.

In this regard, Hong Kong's early accession to RCEP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, can only enrich opportunities between Hong Kong and Australia.

I am encouraged by the positive response to our accession bid from RCEP members and their respective business communities, including the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.

And I count on the continuing support of prominent business leaders, such as your good selves, in enabling Hong Kong's early accession to RCEP.

Ladies and gentlemen, many hands make light work. We will continue to join hands with Australian Chamber of Commerce, to forge an even stronger, more dynamic partnership in the years to come.

My congratulations again to the Australian Chamber on its 36th anniversary, and to the winners and finalists of the Chamber's 2024 Community Awards.

I wish you all a very enjoyable evening and the best of business and health, in a year of far-reaching promise for us all.

Thank you.