

Professor Penny D Sackett
Chief Scientist for Australia

10 minute address to the
China-Australia Remote Sensing Symposium
Monday 24 November 2008
The Lobby, Parks ACT

Introduction

Check against delivery

- Good evening (*To acknowledge:*)
 - Professor Lu Yongxiang, President, Chinese Academy of Sciences
 - Professor Guo Huodong, Director-General, Centre for Earth Operations and Digital Earth, Chinese Academy of Sciences
 - Prof Kurt Lambeck, Australian Academy of Sciences
 - Mr Peter Laver, Vice President, Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering
 - Ladies and Gentlemen

- Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be able to be here this evening and to have the opportunity to speak to this collection of great minds.
- The annual symposium of the Learned Academies of China and Australia are of great benefit to our two countries, and strengthen our long term cooperative research relationship.
- We live in a globally connected world
- Decisions made in either of our countries affect the citizens living in the other.
- This interconnectivity brings new challenges --- but it also gives us a new way to meet those challenges, by working together as global citizens to solve our problems together.
- A way of working that suits both China and Australia.
- As my Minister noted this morning, China is now our third largest partner for joint scientific publications, which is no small milestone.

- Science, and scientists from our countries have a special role in international engagement for the common good, and this Symposium is an excellent to this end.
- Many great things have come from our two countries working together. Two in particular come to mind.
- The first being the Australia-China Centre on Water Resources Research, which is doing fantastic work on a topic of significant national importance to both our countries: managing our precious water wisely.
- This Centre, as many of you know, came about from work done at the first China-Australia Symposium.
- That work continues even now at this event, with research presented at this symposium on water resource management with remote sensing and ground water redistribution using satellites.
- A second splendid example is the China-Australia Centre for Phenomics Research.

- As you are aware, the Australian node at the Australian National University was officially opened this afternoon. Through collaboration, pivotal studies into Avian influenza as well as many other areas of genetics will be undertaken.

Remote Sensing and astronomy

- The work you are discussing today and tomorrow here in Canberra is of equal importance.
- Now I must admit that remote sensing of the earth isn't my area of scientific speciality – as an astronomer, I prefer to cast my gaze skywards.
- To my great admiration, China has a strong history of gazing upwards. Prof Lu – Astronomy truly is an ancient science in your country.
- Chinese astronomers began to observe the skies a very, very long time ago and in 2296 BC were the first to observe a comet.

- The first human record of a solar eclipse was made in China in 2136 BC, in what I believe was the Year of the Pig.
- Indeed, Chinese culture has a longer, continuous record of astronomical observations than any other.
- With such a history in intellectual pursuits, China can contribute much to our collaborative research efforts, and I am confident this will prove true in remote sensing of a familiar cosmic object: our own planet Earth, home to both China and Australia.
- The common challenges faced by our two countries, challenges like water scarcity, land management for agriculture, planning for natural disasters, energy and mineral exploration, and climate change, make us highly suitable research partners.
- With a 'bird's eye view' that remote sensing provides, we may just be able to create the tools to solve some of these challenges.
- For these reasons, I wish you all well and the very best in your continued discussions, and I look forward to

hearing about the outcomes of this meeting and the further research it will engender.

- Thank you.