



City of **HOBART**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

6 January 2017

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### **Hobart signs friendship city agreement with Fuzhou**

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Hobart has formalised a friendship agreement with the Chinese city of Fuzhou this week in Fuzhou, China.

Fuzhou is a city of 8 million people and is an emerging powerhouse of new technology and growth in the Chinese mega economy. Capital city of Tasmania's sister State, Fujian province, the city has a close connection with Chinese President Xi Jinping who was governor of the province before moving onto become President of arguably the world's most influential country.

The Lord Mayor of Hobart, Alderman Sue Hickey said: "This relationship will see our two cities build on our existing ties developed over the last 2 years and work together on areas of common interest and opportunity, building a mutually cultural and economic beneficial relationship."

The official signing between Deputy Lord Mayor Alderman Ron Christie and Acting Mayor YOU of Fuzhou, coincided with Hobart City Council Aldermen joining the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra on part of their tour of eastern China.

The head of the Council delegation, Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Ron Christie said the formalisation of the relationship was the culmination of two and a half years of building on foundations first laid when the Mayor of Fuzhou wrote to the City of Hobart in 2014.

"In late 2014 the City of Hobart hosted a delegation from Fuzhou and it was during this visit that the Vice Mayor of Fuzhou communicated the intent of Fuzhou to pursue a friendship agreement with Hobart.

"With the Council's desire to underpin a broader economic strategy for the future of the city, and with the State's sister-state relationship with Fujian Province, the council considered a relationship with Fuzhou as highly-important.

"Now that our relationship has been formalised, it creates a very positive platform upon which we can explore how our two cities can mutually benefit each other on a cultural, economic and educational level.

“As well as the opportunities in education, science, agriculture, aquaculture and tourism, there is great potential for us to explore each other’s diverse cultures, creating a vibrant dialogue and positive exchange of ideas.

"Already on this visit, we have been informed about students here in Fuzhou that now intend to come to study at UTAS this year as a direct result of the friendship city agreement. These linkages are clearly immediate and long lasting,” said the Deputy Lord Mayor.

Over the last two days the delegation toured a hi-tech research and development park where they were introduced to the latest technology in classroom electronics as well as Chinese natural medicine.

The group also toured Fuzhou number 18 middle school which is seeking a sister school relationship with a Hobart school and held high-level meetings with Fuzhou officials to work through ensuring the Friendship Agreement will deliver results for both cities.

The Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Briscoe and Aldermen Denison said they were all immensely proud to be present at not only the friendship agreement signing but also at the TSO performance to a packed house at the Fujian Grand Theatre.

Presenting the TSO is an important step in cultural diplomacy between the provinces and the cities and is a show of sincerity towards our Chinese counterparts that Hobart and Tasmania place great importance on the relationship.

The visit has attracted significant Chinese media coverage in both print and television.

The Lord Mayor concluded that the Council was excited at the prospect of continuing to develop the relationship over the coming years and ensuring that both cities remained focused in delivering cultural and economic value for their communities.

The official City of Hobart delegation, in China between the 2 and 10 January 2017, is being led by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Ron Christie and comprises Alderman Jeff Briscoe and Alderman Tanya Denison. Ald Christie’s wife is accompanying the delegation and acting as an interpreter for the group at all formal functions.

**END**

**For interview:**

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