

Speech: BIT Conference

Vice-Chancellor Professor Linda Kristjanson

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Ladies and gentlemen – distinguished guests all – it is an honour indeed to open this conference, which is a joint collaboration between Swinburne University of Technology and Beijing Institute of Technology.

I would like to welcome our guests from China. Thank you also to those of you who have travelled a great distance to be here today.

For centuries, universities have played the leading role in extending the boundaries of knowledge – introducing new perspectives, new cures for disease, new materials for construction and new insights into our origins and development.

Swinburne has a clear vision to build a new benchmark for modern universities in our region. We will do this by creating a critical mass of research strength around core areas and by devoting resources and our energy to make those areas stand out.

We have a proud history of rapid growth and extensive achievements especially in the area of research. Our aim is to be Australia's leading university in science, technology, innovation, business and design.

So it is fitting that the theme of today's conference is in fact *Leadership in Science, Technology and Innovation*.

Swinburne offers courses in many key disciplines, from business, design and biotechnology to engineering and information technology.

Swinburne is ranked as one of the world's top 400 research-intensive universities in the Academic Ranking of World Universities. This places Swinburne as one of the top three universities in Melbourne.

The ARWU also named Swinburne in the top 100 research universities in the field of physics.

We have invested \$250 million in research infrastructure, in particular the Advanced Technologies Centre and Advanced Manufacturing Centre, which sets the university up for future research and industry links.

The ATC was opened last year and construction is already underway on the Advanced Manufacturing Centre. This new building will build strong links across the Higher Education, research, vocational training and manufacturing sectors, as well as being the new home of the Design Faculty.

Research and teaching activities have been growing so quickly that Swinburne needed a significant investment in space.

The research conducted by Swinburne staff and postgraduate students is playing a significant role in the transformation of society.

Our researchers have produced numerous innovative breakthroughs and assisted in the commercialisation of products that has resulted in successful new enterprises.

One example of our collaborative work is in the field of advanced electrical vehicle research, where Swinburne researchers have been working with colleagues at Hefei University here in China.

Mostly funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Advanced Automotive Technology, the collaboration includes specific research in battery-charging, control systems and retrofitting, through the exchange of PhD students and research staff between the universities.

The challenge is to develop a strong but light electric car that can cover longer distances at acceptable speeds.

One of our top researchers in the area of electric vehicles, Associate Dean (Research) Faculty of Engineering and Industrial Sciences, Professor Ajay Kapoor, is with us today and will be speaking at this afternoon's conference.

Swinburne sees world-class research as essential to a world-class university.

Quality research enriches university culture and provides the intellectual basis for a knowledge society.

Swinburne has 14 designated research centres, which provide valuable research training to postgraduate research students and have an excellent record for attracting scholarships and research funding.

In July this year, four 2012 ARC Future Fellowships were awarded to Swinburne researchers totalling more than \$2.6 million.

The successful applications were in the fields of astronomical and space sciences, optical physics, distributed computing and quantum physics.

Earlier this year, astrophysicist Professor Karl Glazebrook was named one of the 12 most influential Australian researchers at the 2012 Thomson Reuters Australia Citation and Innovation Awards.

Swinburne has an opportunity to become Australia's leading university in research innovation by creating a distinctive research and development environment that focuses on the application of research.

Those of you who attended the symposium earlier today would have heard our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development), Professor George Collins speak.

Professor Collins, who joined Swinburne earlier this year, has more than 30 years experience in research and research management, and has been involved in developing and managing many successful research collaborations with other organisations

As a researcher, Professor Collins has been internationally recognised in the field of plasma surface engineering. He played a lead role in the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation's development of Plasma Immersion Ion Implantation.

Professor Collins is focused on building on our existing partnerships with other research organisations, government and industry, as well as developing new relationships to leverage maximum value and benefit for Swinburne's research and innovation endeavours.

Professor Collins, along with Professor Kapoor, and the Executive Director of the Swinburne Leadership Institute, Professor Ken Chern, will be involved in this afternoon's program.

Professor Chern also has a well established relationship with China and South-east Asia, having worked as an academic at the University of Hong Kong and in the United States Foreign Service.

He has been posted to Beijing, Taipei, Hong Kong, Manila, and Cebu. He worked at the State Department's China Desk, and served in the White House as Director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council.

He has an extensive background in political affairs, and is experienced in trade, science and technology issues.

China is Victoria's largest trading partner, and is one of our most significant education partners. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students have studied in Australia and many of them in Victoria.

There are approximately one thousand (1000) Chinese students currently studying at Swinburne, in Melbourne, and we hope to build on through relationships that we develop as part of the Victorian Government's Super Trade Mission that brings us here this week.

We also hope to see more of Swinburne's students and staff coming to China to expand their knowledge through our exchange programs with Chinese universities and institutions, such as the Beijing Institute of Technology.

This year marks 40 years of formal diplomatic relations between Australia and China, and this milestone anniversary is a good reason to celebrate our long science and research partnership.

Our universities have been friends for a long time, so this conference is a great opportunity for Swinburne and Beijing Institute of Technology to commit to greater collaboration in the future.

We also have a lot in common. We share a similar focus on areas such as research, science, engineering and social sciences. Like Swinburne, you are also focused on developing a first-class and world-renowned research oriented university.

Beijing Institute of Technology has also created a favourable environment for teaching and research, something that we at Swinburne pride ourselves on doing.

It is equally important, as with the diplomatic relationship between our two countries, that we too as universities ensure that our partnership is a two-way partnership. We invite and welcome your researchers to Melbourne to work closely with our academics to achieve even greater things.

Today we signed a memorandum of Understanding with your university that will see research collaborations in the areas of Engineering and Industrial Sciences, and Information and Communication Technologies.

Partnerships between universities represent the best in academic leadership, with practical application, spirited collaboration and profound results.

It is a privilege for Swinburne to be able to support and sustain this important research linkage, and I have no doubt that it will generate many new discoveries in years to come.

My colleagues and I look forward to discussing how we can further grow our research cooperation with China.

A combination of researchers working across the Chinese and Australian systems provides both countries with the opportunity to lift our knowledge creation output. And, importantly we can have a positive impact on the world around us.

Australia and China, working together, can aim to become a new research and innovation force in the global knowledge economy.

Swinburne actively encourages and values its international and industry connections and recognises that it is these relationships that enrich and enhance the research efforts and careers of our academic staff.

A strong foundation of knowledge and expertise is paramount to our continued growth and development.

China's education system is internationally renowned and I believe there are many opportunities to expand and develop our suite of programs and partnerships to meet the needs and priorities of our two nations.

I hope that we can continue to develop a platform for dialogue and find ways to facilitate ideas exchange.

By striving for success together and achieving excellence we can pursue new ideas and new discoveries.

We look confidently to the future.

Thank You.