

# FOUNDATION FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDIES IN CHINA

(ABN 23 151 021 037)

MEDIA RELEASE

## FOREIGN MINISTER WELCOMES THE APPOINTMENT OF NEW BHP CHAIR AT PEKING UNIVERSITY

8 August 2018

Today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, issued a media release welcoming the appointment of Professor Pookong Kee as the new BHP Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University. Professor Kee will begin his assignment in Beijing in early 2019 after the current BHP Chair of Australian Studies, Professor Gregory McCarthy, completes his three-year tenure at Peking University. Professor Kee was appointed by the Foundation for Australian Studies in China (FASIC) because of his scholarly study of multicultural Australia, his focus on Australia's relationships in Asia and his many years of fostering cooperation between Australian and Chinese scholars.

FASIC, which is financially supported by BHP, was an initiative of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Australia China Council and the private sector to combine private funding for people-to-people projects that will enhance mutual understanding between Australia and China.

Tony Cudmore, Group Sustainability & Public Policy Officer, BHP said "We congratulate Professor Kee on his appointment as the new BHP Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University. BHP's support of FASIC reflects the value that BHP places on our longstanding relationship with China. Our support of FASIC, the Chair and the many Australian Studies Centres throughout China aims to benefit both Australia and China by fostering a deeper knowledge of Australia in China, resulting in a stronger bilateral relationship based on mutual understanding."

Professor Kee has served as the Director of the Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne for the past eight years. Among his previous academic appointments, Professor Kee held senior roles at universities in Singapore and Japan.

The Chairman of DFAT's Australia China Council and FASIC board member, the Hon Warwick Smith AM, said that "This year, we celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Australia China Council. The Council's support of the BHP Chair initiative has increased the number of Chinese university students who have had the opportunity to learn about Australia and has raised the profile of Australian Studies within the Chinese academic community. We congratulate Professor Kee and wish him well in his important work."

Professor Kee said "I am honoured to be appointed as the new BHP Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University. I look forward to encouraging the study of Australia in China, to working with the talented university students of China and to continuing my academic collaboration with fellow university scholars throughout China."

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The BHP Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University is located within the School of International Studies at Peking University. In addition to teaching courses on Australia within the School of International Studies, Professor Kee will also provide assistance to the over 39 Australia Studies Centres located at universities and institutes across China.

FASIC Chairman, Kevin Hobgood-Brown AM, congratulated Professor Kee, saying “Following a competitive selection process, Professor Kee is the ideal person to serve as Australia’s unofficial education ambassador to China. In his role as BHP Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University, Professor Kee will embody the best of contemporary Australia and will inspire a new generation of Chinese scholars to learn more about Australia. On behalf of FASIC, I would also like to thank Professor Gregory McCarthy for his three years as the BHP Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University. Professor McCarthy’s contributions to our relationship with China have been significant. We wish him well as he returns to his academic duties at the University of Western Australia.”