

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW ZEALAND CHINESE LANGUAGE WEEK – A NEW INITIATIVE

25 May 2014

For the first time in New Zealand an initiative will be launched to develop awareness of Chinese language and culture. The New Zealand Chinese Language Week will be a bipartisan event that creates awareness of Chinese language and etiquette used in business and in social contexts. It will also be an opportunity to showcase Chinese art and culture.

Raymond Huo, Labour MP and Jo Coughlan, Wellington City Councillor, will co-chair the Trust which has been set up to run the New Zealand Chinese Language Week (NZCLW).

Other trustees include, Sarah Thomson, founder and president of the Waikato Mandarin Corner group which encourages youth to study Chinese; Professor Neil Quigley, Professor of Economics and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Victoria University of Wellington; Patrick English, Executive Director for the New Zealand China Council; and Dave Bromwich, National President of the New Zealand China Friendship Society. Ms Thomson will also be the Trust's first Youth Ambassador.

NZCLW has the support of the Chinese Ambassador, Wang Lutong, and launching the initiative this year seems particularly timely with the November visit of Chinese president Xi Jinping.

Honorary advisors to the Chinese Language Week Charitable Trust will be appointed in due course following consultation with the Chinese community and other relevant stakeholders.

The idea of Chinese Language Week was raised in 2010 and support of all relevant stakeholders and the Chinese community in New Zealand was then gathered.

'As co-chair I am very honoured to see the level of support from across the board,' says Raymond Huo. 'Chinese Language Week is not just about learning the language, it's about how New Zealand can better promote our multiculturalism and prepare our future generations for the increasingly important market in Asia'.

'Maintaining a good working relationship with China is essential and this initiative is a way for New Zealanders to become more familiar with Chinese culture and language in both a business and a social context,' says Jo Coughlan. 'The idea is that the week of events will be both informative and fun showcasing Chinese art and heritage but also offering hands-on advice and training to any New Zealander who shows an interest in learning more.'

NZCLW will most likely take place from 8-14 September and Trustees recognise that the initiative will take a number of years to evolve and develop resulting in a full and stimulating calendar of events over time.

The NZCLW was launched at the New Zealand China Friendship Society 2014 Conference on Saturday 24 May 2014. Among the initiatives following the launch will be putting together simple language learning phrasebooks and organising an exhibition showcasing Kiwi Chinese artists. New Zealand schools will also be assisted in resourcing Chinese teachers.

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Note to Editors – Biographies of Trustees of the NZCLW are attached with this media release.