

## Support Grows for Prime Minister's Strategic China Visit

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Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's recent five-day diplomatic mission to China has sparked debate, but key voices have defended the trip as a necessary step in restoring critical trade relations and advancing national economic interests.

The Prime Minister spent the past week engaging with top Chinese officials and business leaders across Shanghai, Beijing, and Chengdu, promoting Australian exports and research

collaboration. Despite criticism from political opponents who claim the visit lacked concrete outcomes, multiple agreements were signed, signalling progress toward rebuilding a strained partnership with Australia's largest trading partner.

Attorney-General Michelle Rowland, speaking to Sky News, rejected the criticism, calling it "extraordinary" in light of the government's success in removing an estimated \$20 billion in trade barriers with China. These restrictions, imposed during the previous administration amid heightened tensions, had impacted sectors including wine and seafood. "Our resources sector depends on this relationship," Rowland stated, emphasising the economic necessity of maintaining stable ties with Beijing.

The Prime Minister's visit came at the formal invitation of Chinese authorities and was supported by a high-level delegation from Australia's private sector. The Business Council of Australia (BCA), which played a central role in many engagements, welcomed the outreach as an opportunity to strengthen commercial ties and secure new job opportunities for Australians.

While in China, the Prime Minister met with President Xi Jinping, an interaction that contrasted with the ongoing diplomatic challenges in arranging a face-to-face meeting with United States President Donald Trump. Rowland commented that Australia would continue to engage in its national interest with all global partners, including China and the United States, but with different priorities in mind.

On the security front, Rowland addressed concerns raised by a recent review of the trilateral defence agreement known as AUKUS, short for Australia-United Kingdom-United States security pact. The \$360 billion submarine program is seen as foundational to Australia's defence strategy. Questions were raised after former U.S. official Elbridge Colby, now involved in defence review discussions, reportedly asked Australia and Japan about their commitment to defending Taiwan in the event of a regional conflict.

Rowland declined to engage in speculation but reiterated that Australia opposes any unilateral changes regarding Taiwan. She highlighted ongoing defence investments, noting that approximately \$10 billion is allocated over the forward estimates and nearly \$60 billion over the next decade to enhance national defence capabilities.

Reassuring public confidence in the AUKUS arrangement, Rowland emphasised, "There is nothing unusual about a new administration conducting a review of defence partnerships."

She reaffirmed that the pact remains a core pillar of Australia's defence alignment with the United States and United Kingdom and underscored the country's intention to act in the national interest at every step.