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SE Feature

HD Stokes shares his recipe for success

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It spoke volumes of the importance that Ryan Stokes places on Australia's relationship with China that the billionaire scion spent the entire day at Crown in Melbourne yesterday for the second Australia in China's Century Conference.

And when his turn came to speak, while he may not have grabbed the headlines his father did two years earlier by saying he was "repulsed" by seeing foreign troops being trained on Australian soil because of how it would be viewed in **China**, Stokes Jr still had a powerful message.

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Beyond resources and energy, he said four key areas of trade deserved Australia's focus in the China relationship: food, education, tourism and technology.

He said Australia must actively pursue export opportunities and welcome **Chinese** investment in Australia's food sector, as well as improving the visa system to make it easier and cheaper for **Chinese** students to study in Australia.

The Stokes family's Seven Group Holdings and its private company Australian Capital Equity are together one of the largest Australian investors in China. The other is James Packer's Crown Resorts.

Seven Group's WesTrac operation sells Caterpillarmining equipment and vehicles in northeast China and has a stake in the Agricultural Bank of China.

ACE for more than a decade has partnered with the Shanghai Media Group to provide a mobile TV service on buses. Today, there are more than 10,000 buses broadcasting the service to 10 million people in Shanghai each day.

Stokes was clear yesterday that foundational friendships were crucial to the group's success in **China**, as was Packer.

"We never set out to teach, but rather, to share, learn and contribute," he said.

Now Stokes is flagging aspirations for Seven Media Group to pursue new media opportunities in **China** and hinted that **China**'s **energy** demands could also present expansion options in gas.

Many Australian businesses are still struggling to find their feet in **China** after years of trying. They would do well to heed the comments of Stokes and Packer yesterday about the recipe for success.

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