Fuchsia Hepworth reports on being RMIT’s Delegate to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao Invited Group of Australian Youths to Visit China:

I represented RMIT on a tour of China from 25\textsuperscript{th} September to 1\textsuperscript{st} October 2006. Forty-four student delegates participated in the First Premiers Invited Youth Delegation to China, from some of Australia’s key universities.

This event was supported by the Chinese Government and Qantas. I was extremely fortunate to participate in this event, and made a number of contacts amongst other young Australian Sinologists. It also allowed delegates the chance to meet various Chinese politicians, university students, members of the All China Youth Federation, reporters and Australian politicians and diplomats. The group was lead by MP Greg Hunt, the Federal Member for Flinders and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

Arriving in Beijing the delegation visited the Tsinghua University, one of the foremost universities in China. The discussion at Tsinghua centred on the importance of volunteering to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. A luncheon was held at the Australian Embassy in Beijing, where a very interesting speech was given on the state of play in China by Graham Fletcher, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission. This was followed by a tour of the Forbidden City.

\textit{Photograph1: Fuchsia Hepworth and Graham Fletcher, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission, Australian Consulate in Beijing.}

A memorable dinner was held at the Great Hall of the People and was hosted by Ms Zhang Xiaolan, Vice-President of the All-China Youth Federation. Cultural performances were given by members of the delegation and the All-China Youth Federation.

A personal highlight was a visit to the Great Wall of China, where all the delegates were impressed by its sheer scale.

\textit{Photograph 2: Fuchsia Hepworth at the Great Wall of China}
A further luncheon banquet followed hosted by Ms Zhang Xiaolan and Mr Zhou Qiang, acting Governor of Hunan Province.

**Photograph 3: Mr Zhou Qiang**

The delegation then moved to Guangzhou, where we visited Sun Yat-Sen University and were warmly welcomed by the universities students. A lively discussion about youth culture in China and Australia was followed by a soccer match and lunch banquet. That evening comprised of a cultural evening, where a variety of cultural performances were presented by both Australian delegates and Chinese students.

**Photograph 3: Group photo of Sun Yat-Sen University students**

The next day began with an extremely popular visit to the Pearl River Beer Factory. That evening a dinner was hosted by the Guangdong Deputy Provincial Leader, Liu Hongxiu. There was a televised discussion between Ms Liu and Mr Hunt.

**Photograph 4: Gift exchange between Ms Liu and Mr Hunt**
The Pearl River Night Cruise followed, which illustrated the spectacular lights in the Guangzhou city centre.

*Photograph 5: Fuchsia Hepworth and Mr Zhang, Education Consul, Chinese Embassy, Canberra*

The delegation then moved to Shenzhen where we had the opportunity to visit the Guangdong LNG Terminal and Trunkline Project in Dapeng Bay. This Chinese and Australian cooperative project uses Western Australian liquid natural gas to distribute to the gas pipeline networks throughout the LNG terminal. It is Australia’s biggest exporting project. We also visited the environmentally friendly Eastern Power Plant of the Shenzhen Energy Group.

The timing of this trip represents the warming of a great friendship between Australia and China, at a time when both Prime Minister Howard and Premier Wen are aiming to promote closer bilateral ties between the two nations. Officially the trip aimed to promote cultural exchange and greater understanding between the youth of Australia and China, and in this it was certainly a success. It was also very interesting to be exposed to some of the etiquette and public relations which occurs at such a high level event.

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Fuchsia Hepworth is a graduate from RMIT who completed BA (International Studies) and Certificate IV in Applied Language (Chinese) in 2006.