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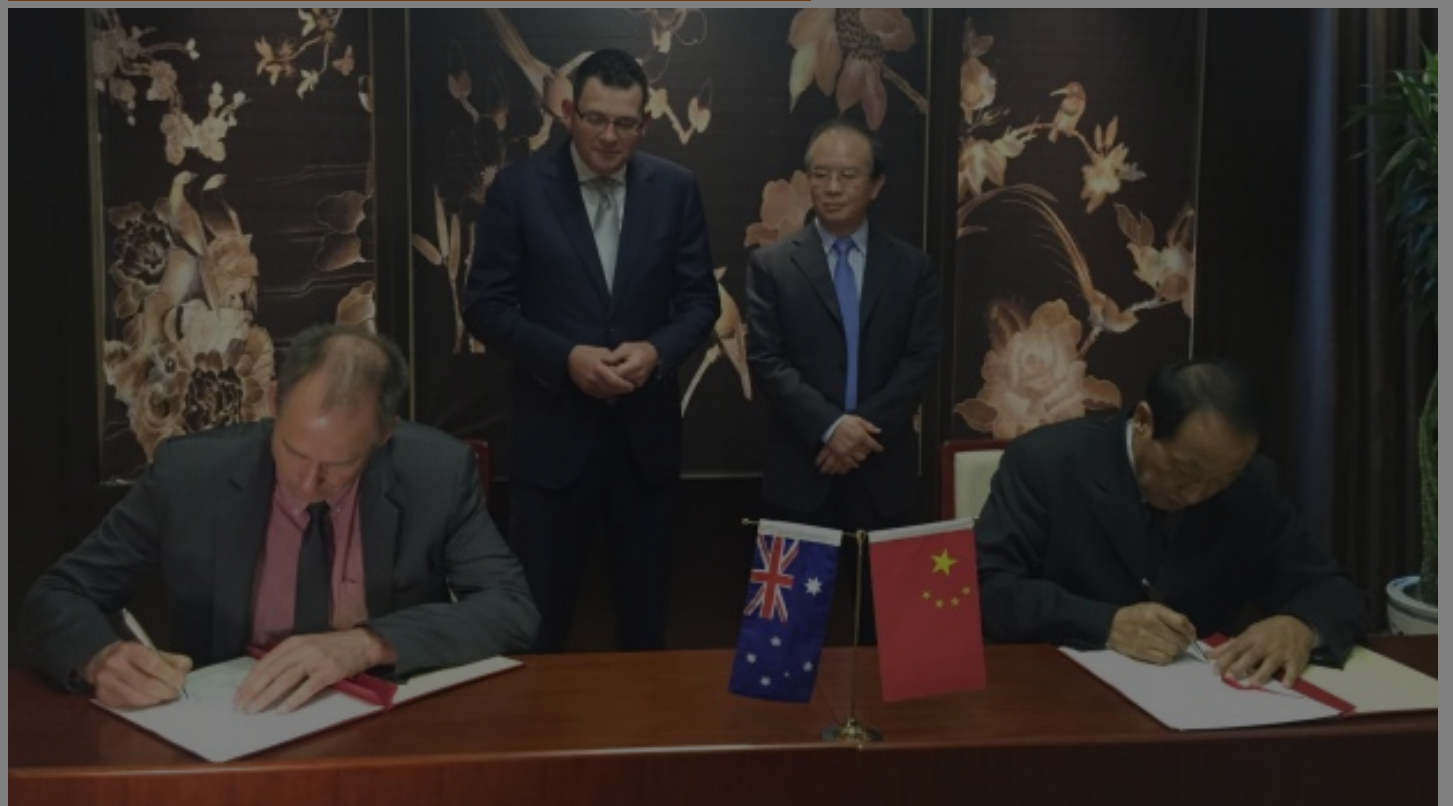
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agreement with China



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Victoria has become the only Australian state to sign a cultural agreement with China's national government, in an historic deal that will result in the exchange of more festivals and arts over the next five years.

As reported in *The Age, Victoria*, Premier Daniel Andrews and China's vice cultural minister Ding Wei announced the decision in Beijing last month, paving the way for an unprecedented boost to Victoria's multibillion-dollar creative arts industry.

The deal will enable more festivals, tours, exhibitions and artist-in-residence opportunities to be shared between Victoria and its biggest trading partner.

During the first year of the partnership, cultural activities that have been proposed include the introduction of a new Chinese film festival in Melbourne, and tours of China by the Australian Ballet and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Victoria's cultural co-operation agreement is regarded as a major coup for Premier Daniel Andrews, as it is the only time an Australian state has signed an agreement with the national government of the People's Republic of China.

Most agreements – such as Victoria's sister-state arrangement with the Jiangsu province – are usually between states and provinces.

Mr Andrews said the new deal cemented Melbourne's reputation as Australia's arts and culture capital. At a signing ceremony at the Ministry of Culture headquarters in Beijing, the premier and Mr Wei were treated to a performance of Beethoven from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

"This will be a great exchange in terms of fine art, music, dance, theatre, but it's also a great opportunity

This will be a great exchange in terms of fine art, music, dance theatre, but it's also a great opportunity for staff, and those who are employed within the dynamic and growing industries to be able to travel to and from China," he said.

Victoria's creative and cultural industries employ more than 220,000 Victorians and represents almost 10 per cent of the state economy.

The government's latest figures suggest the industry generated \$1.4 billion in exports – mostly in services – and attracted cultural tourism worth \$1 billion.

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