

# Neale's Chinese Master Class for business

By VINNIE RODI

LOCAL residents were given a valuable insight into Chinese business this week, when La Trobe University hosted a special Master Class session this Wednesday.

Hosted by former Sunraysia resident, currently living in Hong Kong, Professor Neale O'Connor, the session provided local businesses, individuals and students with an inside look into how Chinese manufacturers manage their customers.

Considered one of the largest trading countries in the world - especially when it comes to exporting - Neale, who has lived in Hong Kong for more than a decade, has gained vast knowledge of Chinese industry, undertaking numerous case studies with Chinese suppliers in his role with Hong Kong University.

Entitled 'Executing strategy in China: How Chinese Suppliers Manage Their Largest Customers,' Neale said he hoped the Master Class provided the audience with a practical insight into the Chinese market.

"When people think about China, they think of 'Cheap as Chips,'" he said. "Namely people think about

all the cheap goods that tend to arrive in Australia with a 'Made in China' logo on it.

"In reality dealing with Chinese suppliers is an extremely tricky business, and requires a fair grasp of their culture, and the way they do business."

The Master Class while including a number of topics, mainly focused on how Chinese suppliers win contracts with large international customers, and how they manage their customers - including the types of performance measures and monitoring routines used.

## Well researched

Material presented was based on more than 250 interviews with Chinese suppliers - all undertaken by Neale during the past 12 months - with Neale also providing his own thoughts on the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of dealing with Chinese industries, while also discussing how best to negotiate with Chinese suppliers.

Neale's presentation also included photographs taken inside a Chinese factory, demonstrating the quality control procedures factories and industries use.

"It's a sight that I'm sure not a lot of people would have seen before, and it's

certainly one that is a real eye-opener for most people," Neale said.

"My main aim with the presentation was to provide people with a greater appreciation of the Chinese market, namely the scope, size, and great attention to detail involved, while also providing some practical knowledge that could help local businesses interested in importing goods from China."

Neale has been based in Hong Kong for the past 15 years, making the move to Asia in 1996 to take up a teaching position with the City University of Hong Kong.

His research - which includes examining supply chain management in China - soon caught the attention of several people in the industry - with Neale making the move to the Hong Kong University in 2006.

That same research has gone on to attract interest from around the world, and has even been published in a number of highly regarded international research and professional journals.

Neale said teaching in China had proved a worthwhile enterprise, with numerous rewards.

"It's very different to

teaching in Australia," he said. "The competition for university places is intense, with close to 10 million students vying for 5 million places each year.

"It's one of the reasons why we see a lot of international students from China here in Australia, because the lack of opportunity at home forces them to seek courses overseas.

"Teaching in China is something that I'm thoroughly enjoying, and getting to work with some of the top students in China has so far proven extremely rewarding."

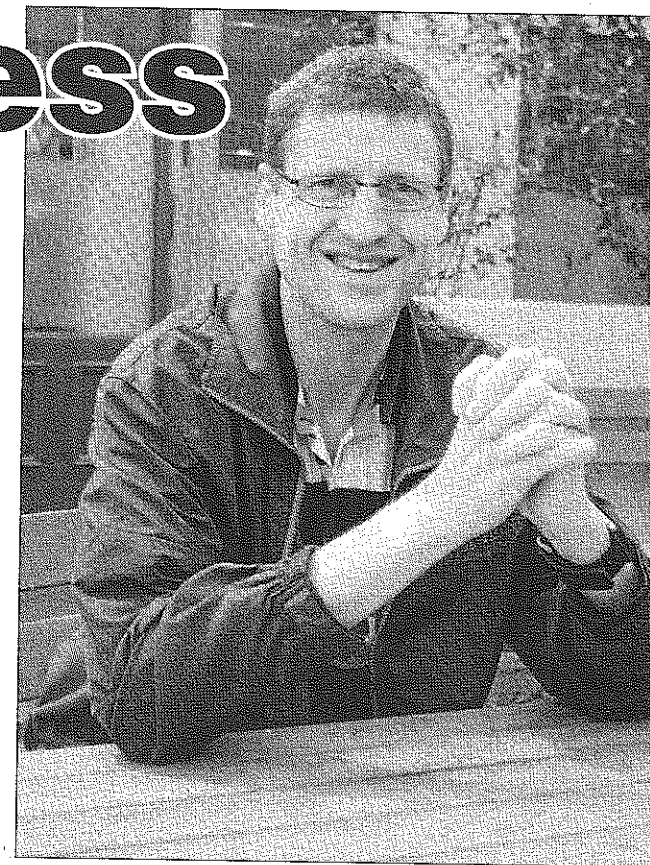
Born and raised in Dareton, Neale was a Coomealla High School student until the age of 15, when he decided to "drop out" to enter the workforce.

## Interesting job mix

He soon began working at the local Mobil Service Station, before becoming an insurance salesman.

Realising he had a love for numbers, Neale soon set his sights on an accounting diploma, before applying to undertake an accounting degree at the University of Ballarat.

After two years of studying he made the move to Melbourne - taking up a position with Mann Judd Chartered



Accountants, before becoming a tutor at the University of Melbourne - which is where he discovered his love for teaching.

Neale completed his PhD in 1996, with an offer to teach in Hong Kong too good to refuse.

Through his role with the university there, Neale has published numerous works, with his book 'Management Control of Multinational

Enterprises in China' considered one of the few published works detailing the complex issues that arise when Western multinational corporations enter into joint arrangements with Chinese-based entities.

More information on La Trobe's upcoming Master Class sessions is available by visiting [www.latrobe.edu.au/mildura/](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/mildura/) events, with more information about Neale available by visiting [nealeoconnor.com](http://nealeoconnor.com).

Sacking that shocked a nation