

MEDIA RELEASE



MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

9 November 2016

AMBASSADOR TO KOREA

Today I announce the appointment of Mr James Choi as Australia's next Ambassador to the Republic of Korea with non-resident accreditation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Australia and the Republic of Korea enjoy a warm relationship founded on common values and interests. The Republic of Korea is Australia's fourth largest trading partner with two-way trade worth over \$36 billion in 2015. Our trade relationship was bolstered by the signing of the Korea Australia Free Trade Agreement (KAFTA) in 2014, which is delivering strong results for business in both countries.

Australia and the Republic of Korea have strong education and tourism links. We also cooperate in multilateral fora as active members of the G20, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the MIKTA grouping.

Australia maintains diplomatic relations with the DPRK, though the relationship is constrained by the DPRK's nuclear weapons and missile programs. We remain deeply concerned by human rights violations in the DPRK and the welfare of the general population. Australia provides limited humanitarian assistance through United Nations agencies to support vulnerable mothers and children.

Mr Choi is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). He has served overseas as Ambassador to Denmark, with earlier postings at the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York and at the Australian Embassy, Seoul.

In Canberra, Mr Choi has held a variety of positions in DFAT, including Assistant Secretary of the Consular Operations Branch. He was seconded to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as Senior Adviser, Asia (2005-2008) and has also been Senior Adviser in the Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr Choi holds a Bachelor of Economics and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Sydney. He is expected to take up his appointment in December 2016.

I thank former Ambassador Bill Paterson PSM for his significant contribution to advancing Australia's interests with Korea since 2013.

Foreign Minister's Office:

Rachel Obradovic 0478 488 874

Phoebe Nolan 0408 275 340