Hold on tight to ride the dragon

China is a vast market promising untold riches to those businesses that can secure a foothold in what can be a difficult country to operate in. And for the Territory the ties that have already been forged may be just the first steps on the road to a mutually beneficial relationship. **ASHLEY MANICAROS** reports

It will be a market built on long-term relationships through trust that will need to span decades.

The reality discovered by Northern Territory industry over the past week – during a delegation led by Chief Minister Adam Giles that included Treasurer Dave Tollner, Local Government Minister Bess Price and key industry leaders – was the ability to deliver large-scale supply will also be a major obstacle.

An example of the demand scale is e-commerce business Sino-Beef, who sell Australian beef, lamb and wine online from their partnership farms in New South Wales and Victoria. They sold 13 million sealed steaks in one day during “Singles Day” on November 11.

They are visiting the Territory in January looking for more product to sell. The NT Cattlemen’s boss Tracey Hayes and NT Farmers Association chief executive She-nal Ranatunga understand the quantity challenges facing their members.

But they like the e-commerce “niche-market” model.

The seven-day visit was a whistlestop tour that took in Rizhao in the Shandong Province – the home of Landbridge Group, who have leased Darwin’s Port for 99 years – the capital Beijing and the ancient capital of Xi’an in the Shaanxi Province.

We drove across the world’s longest bridge, the 32km Jiaozhou Bay Bridge, to get to the Landbridge port, the home of the world’s largest iron ore loading facility that includes a 4km conveyor belt.

For the record, we didn’t see any links to the People’s Liberation Army during our visit to the Landbridge port in Rizhao nor did we expect to. What we did see was a massive port that dwarfs our own and port workers that were not dissimilar in size and shape to our own port workers.

On December 20 the China-Australia free trade agreement will come into effect.

The Northern Territory has managed to secure re...