

**Remarks**  
**Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth**  
**On the occasion of the 2023 Perth Japan Festival Opening Ceremony**  
**Saturday March 25, 2023**

Partners, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Perth Japan Festival 2023. This is 9<sup>th</sup> Japan Festival in Perth and the first time at the Supreme Court Gardens. The Perth Japan Festival started in 2014 at Forrest Place and has expanded bigger each year with great response from public.

We have wonderful progress of bilateral relations between Japan and Australia especially with Western Australia, including the visit of Prime Minister Kishida last year in October to Perth followed by Premier Mark McGowan's visit to Japan with an announcement of resumption of Perth Tokyo direct flight later this year. Minister Bill Johnston has just come back from Japan last week.

But most importantly, this state of bilateral relations is based upon shared values and respect, supported by our friendship and trust, forged over the years through people-to-people bonds.

We are blessed with so many goodwill ambassadors and talented enthusiasts, practitioners and even masters of Japanese cultural activities and martial arts here in Perth. And today's Japan Festival is the opportunity to celebrate and share the beauty of aspects of Japanese culture ranging from traditional ones to pop culture.

This year, we welcomed Ms Noriko Tadano, a famous vocalist and Tsugaru Shamisen performer, coming from Adelaide to perform for us. We are also featuring 'Bon Odori' (Bon dance) for the first time in Perth. It is a community dance at Japanese summer festivals throughout Japan during Obon season when we receive the spirits of our ancestors back home. People in Japan have special nostalgic and yet exciting feeling when we hear the sound of Bon Odori.

I will tell you the secret of enjoying Bon Odori. Join in the circle and participate dancing rather than watching it from a distance. It is easy and trust me it is fun! You will enjoy

the sense of togetherness in the circle and that is the essence of 'Matsuri', Japanese Festival.

When I insisted to perform 'Dai Tokyo Ondo', Dance Song for Great Tokyo that is where I am from, Bon Odori members insisted that we should have one for Perth. Their love for Perth was so strong that with the effort of talented members, Perth Ondo was born.

Song lyrics written Mr Otohiko Fuji in 1992 and composed this time by Ms Setsuko Hayashi. The song was sang by Sanshi and visiting artist Ms Noriko Tadano, and dance was choreographed by Chisato Mcarthure. It is basically saying "Perth is a great place you should come to."

There will also be performances by local musical groups including 'wadaiko' drumming group Taiko-On, TIDA Okinawa dance, Japanese martial arts groups, including Kendo, Judo, Aikido, Kyudo, Kyokushin Karate, Shorinji Kempo and Kobudo. From traditional culture side we have Tea Ceremony sessions, Ikebana, Bonsai, Shodo, Kimono experience, and even Shigin recitation of poems. We also have pop culture artists, including cosplay performers and character goods shops.

If you're interested in getting to know more about Japan, please visit various information and cultural booths of local groups, including travel and study in Japan run by Consulate-General's team. The CLAIR team from Sydney will tell you about JET Programme and sister city relationships.

When you get hungry, there are plenty of Japanese taste to enjoy. We'll have food stalls of dishes ranging from Sushi, Ramen and Katsu Curry, to Japanese street food such as Okonomiyaki, Takoyaki, Taiyaki, Isobeyaki, Wataame (fairy floss) and Kakigori (shaved ice).

So, we have something for every members of family to enjoy.

Lastly but not least, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all the sponsors. Without your generous support, this wonderful opportunity for interactions was not possible.

In conclusion, let us all have fun today and widen the circle of friendship.

End

After the opening remarks by the guests below, 'Kagami wari' - Sake Barrel Opening Ceremony was held on stage, wishing for happiness, harmony and continued friendship among the people of Japan and Western Australia.

Ms Freda Ogilbie, Welcome to Country

Ms Christine Tonkin MLA, on behalf of The Hon Dr Tony Buti, Minister of Education; Aboriginal Affairs; Citizenship and Multi-Cultural interests

Mrs Jessica Stojkovski MLA, Co-Chair of Western Australian Parliamentary Friendship Group of Japan

Mr UEDA Yosuke, President of Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Perth, President of Japanese Society in Western Australia

Mr Sean O'Hanlon, General Manager, Rio Tinto

Ms Andrea Galt, General Manager, Woodside

Mr NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth