

## Opening Remarks

Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth

On the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop of the Australia-Japan Collaborative Research Network

On Tuesday July 18, 2023

### *Acknowledgments*

Prof Mark Ogden, Pro Vice Chancellor, Curtin University,  
Associate Prof Hussein Znad, Conference Chair, School Director of Graduate Research, Curtin University,  
Prof Kenji Mishima, Conference Co-Chair, Fukuoka University,  
Prof Mikio Ouchi, Conference Co-Chair, Fukuoka University,  
Prof Ikuo Yamamoto, Vice-President, Nagasaki University,  
Mr David Trotter, Research Portfolio Manager, Mineral Research Institute of Western Australia,

Distinguished professors, experts, and businessmen,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

### *Congratulations*

It is my honour to be invited and offered an opportunity to make remarks at the opening of this workshop. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Curtin University, Fukuoka University, the Government of Australia, and partners including Hyogo University and Waseda University, for hosting of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop of the Australia-Japan Collaborative Research Network.

### *The Purpose of the Workshop*

The purpose of this workshop, which I fully support, is to bring together Australia and Japan's leading experts and industries to share and discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the energy transitions and critical resources required, and explore future areas of research and industry collaborations. The Workshop will also increase awareness and encourage Australian and Japanese researchers and companies to participate in jointly funded projects and exchange programs, and establish lasting professional relationships with globally recognized institutions.

### *Energy and Mineral Resources partnership between Japan and Australia*

According to the 2023 statistics of the Government of Western Australia, more than 50 % of Japan's imported iron ore, 35% of Japan's imported LNG are from Western Australia. Thus, you may say Japan's sustainable economic development has been possible with mineral resources and gas from Western Australia. But the benefit was mutual. Australia has built the world's top industries with the investment and global network of Japanese companies. The partnership of this mutual trust was built over the years.

### *Japan and Australia Partnership on Critical Minerals*

Given the global energy shortage after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, importance of this partnership was highlighted with renewed sense of urgency on energy security. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio visited Perth last year October and agreed to strengthen the “Special Strategic Partnership” with Australia in his meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The strengthened partnership includes energy, mineral resources, security cooperation precisely upholding of rules based order in the Indo-Pacific as well as on new energy areas such as hydrogen and ammonia. Energy and resources were discussed in the meeting between the two Prime Ministers at the recent G7 Hiroshima Summit as well as at the Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Jakarta just last week.

It was also during the visit of Prime Minister Kishida to Perth that an additional MOU on Partnership on Critical Minerals was signed between the Hon Madeleine King, Federal Minister of Resources with Mr Hirai Hirohide, Vice Minister for International Affairs at Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry. The partnership aims to build secure critical minerals supply chain between the two countries, and promote information sharing and collaboration including research, investment and commercial arrangements between Japan and Australian projects. As Minister King explained, “The partnership will help Australia further develop its abundant critical minerals reserves which will ultimately help both countries achieve emissions reductions” and ensure Japan of supply on critical minerals required.

### *Progress on the Critical Minerals Partnership*

On March 7 of this year, Japan Australia Rare Earth (JARE), co-founded by Sojitsu Corporation and JOGMEC, announced a AUD 200 million investment to Lynas Corporation. This is in addition to AUD 250 million finance made by JARE to Lynas in 2011. The investment is to be used for Lynas’s midterm plan that includes light rare earth production expansion as well as heavy rare earth separation commencement. Lynas became the first company to produce heavy rare earth from mines to finished product with a Japanese company involvement. This is an example of the progress of the Critical Minerals Partnership with Australia.

### *Timely hosting of the workshop*

Innovation in this field can expand scope of technical possibilities and industrial affordability. It can become a game changer in a short space of time. That is precisely why this workshop, co-hosted with the Curtin University, world’s leading university on mining engineering and research, is so timely, having had the first workshop in Fukuoka University in February this year partially online and now fully in person here at Curtin in Perth.

### *Incentives and expectations*

It is in this context that the Government of Japan under METI initiative has announced a set of new support programs through JOGMEC on critical minerals at a total of 2 billion dollars globally including

its support on exploration, feasibility studies, development of mines, processing and technical support to raise productivity and reduce costs. I appreciate the support given by the Government of Australia in this area, and hope it will expand further.

We are glad that leaders of major Japanese companies in Western Australia are present here at this workshop. We have Mr Mitutaka Nakao, General Manager of Perth Office of Mitsui and Company & Co, as well as Mr Koji Iwama, Senior Operating Officer for Oceania and Deputy Managing Director of Marubeni Australia, among others are with us.

Recently, we find new announcements of involvement by Japanese companies in Australia in the field of clean energy almost every week, including INPEX's 50% share purchase agreement with Enel Green Power to enhance its renewable energy initiative announced just last week.

I am also glad to have Dr Hideto Kurokawa, Chief Technical Officer and Senior General Manager of Tokyo Gas is here today. Dr Kurokawa is exploring the innovation of Microbubble Technology co-developed with Curtin University. Microbubble Technology will expand the capacity of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), which is necessary to reduce CO2 emission while providing stable and affordable energy to the world.

#### *Conclusions*

I hope the workshop will produce fruitful deliberation and share research insights among academics and business partners of both Australia and Japan.

Thank you for your attention.

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