

Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the Alumni Reunion for Mitsui Educational Foundation (MEF) and
New Colombo Plan Mitsui Immersion Program (NCP)
August 3, 2023

Mr. Tack Nakao, General Manager, Perth Office, Mitsui and Co.,
Representatives of DFAT,
Representatives of partner universities,
Alumni of MEF and NCP participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mitsui and Co. has great educational programs globally. I know this from my previous posting, as Mitsui invited hundreds of African students (under the “ABE initiative”) and I had the privilege of taking part in their workshops as part of a government official panel.

Here in Australia, the Mitsui Educational Foundation (MEF) program has been running since 1971 and the New Colombo Plan Mitsui Immersion Program since 2014. For more than 50 years, a total number of alumni exceeds 500 including some 60 from Western Australia. This number amazed me and I wish to express my deep appreciation to Mitsui and the partner universities for their continued efforts.

MEF and NCP are wonderful opportunities for young students in WA to go to Japan, not only to learn about Japanese society and people, but also to learn new systems of management, technologies and many insights that relate to development of your own country, Australia.

The visiting period may have been limited but I am sure you have made your own discoveries, through the program, and had some inspirations regarding Japan, Australia and the region. These gains will definitely be useful in your respective professional careers.

Japan and Australia’s bilateral relationship has developed remarkably. Since 1957, only 12 years after the World War II, the two countries signed the Agreement on Commerce that enabled the partnership on iron ore, and later LNG, that led to the enormous economic development of both Japan and Australia.

This Japan-Australia economic relationship has been based upon mutual trust among professionals, business leaders and government officials with the broad support of people-to-people friendships through robust interactions. These people-to-people bonds are the most important asset of the longstanding relationship between Japan and Australia.

As you might be aware, 53% of Japan’s imported iron ore, 35% of LNG and 15% of wheat (just ideal for udon noodles) are from Western Australia according to 2023 statistics of the WA Government. In other words, WA is everywhere in Japan. We cannot imagine a single day in Japan without Western Australia.

When it comes to our common challenges of new energy and de-carbonization, we see new announcements by Japanese companies in this area almost every week.

Furthermore, Japanese Mega Banks are the top three foreign banks in Australia in terms of corporate loan balance, supporting quality growth and the well-being of people in Australia. In all these spheres of interaction, Mitsui has been one of the core players.

Japan and Australia, and particularly Western Australia, should not take these remarkable relations for granted. We need to continue deepening, widening and updating the relations as the agenda and challenges of the time change. In this connection, we count on you to be bridges between our two countries.

At the same time, excel yourself in your respective fields. If your interactions with Japan are useful somehow, I am very happy and I think Mitsui & Co is also happy.

Some of you, who, now back from Japan, might find yourself looking to expand your connections with Japan and this gathering is an excellent opportunity to do so. The Japanese Consulate-General in Perth will also provide you opportunities to connect with Japan by organizing Japan related events with our partners.

I wish to propose a toast; to celebrating this reunion, thanking Mitsui and their partners for their contributions, wishing for the success of all alumna in your careers, and to the enduring friendship between Japan and Western Australia, and Australia.

Kanpai

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