

Remarks
Presented by Naito Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth at
Perth Okinawa Chimu Don Don Festival
Sunday September 24th

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Okinawa is a prefecture comprised of islands in southernmost and westernmost of Japan. It has special cultural tradition and language deeply rooted in the long history of Ryukyu Kingdom in the 14th century and before. It has a special welcoming environment and is a popular destination for tourism. People in Okinawa, in my personal experience, are passionate and friendly, resilient and proud, and charming.

We congratulate the Okinawan Prefectural Government on the promotion of “World Uchinanchu Day” on 30th October. It is a day to acknowledge and unite the people of Okinawa all over the world, including 420,000 expats, and to preserve and promote their art, culture and traditions.

This event today, the Perth Okinawa Chimu Don Don Festival, is held in the context of Uchinanchu Day. We welcome the delegation headed by Mr Daiichi Hirata, who is a stage director and coordinator instructing Okinawan cultural performances. He is a creator and an icon of Okinawa culture, with his title 南島詩人 South Island Poet, connecting people of the world with inspiration.

To add to our celebration, the 30th of October, World Uchinanchu Day, is also the day our first resumed direct flight from Perth will land Japan, connecting the people of Japan and Western Australia.

I am also happy that this festival is taking place in Fremantle, a city of great open and creative atmosphere with respect to heritage. When I discussed with Her Worship the Mayor Hannah Fitzhardinge about type of industry we would like to have in Fremantle, creative industry is at the top of the list. It is great to have such talented Japanese creators and performers from Okinawa, WA and other parts of Australia all gathered here today for this Okinawa themed event.

I have special inspiration when I think there were Pearl divers from Okinawa to Broome

and Thursday Island. Over 100 years, migrants from Okinawa have strived to succeed, overcoming difficulties and creating new lives in their migrated countries. Some came to Australia over different periods of time, including as pearl divers in Broome. Pearl divers from Wakayama are predominant but certainly there were those from Okinawa.

There is even a song "Sayonara Nakamura" for a boy from Okinawa who lost his life before 21 years of age because of diver's decompression sickness. People from Okinawa also came to Western Australia and perhaps went through difficult challenges of the times but also must have loved the land and people of Australia, and became part of the evolution and multicultural heritage.

Okinawa and WA are connected beyond oceans.

I thank Ms Akiko Hawkins, President of Okinawa Prefectural Association in Perth, for coordinating the event with her passion.

Let us all enjoy the fascinating entertainment and aspects of Okinawan culture.

Thank you for your attention.

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