

Speech
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the Celebration Dinner hosted by Shire of Harvey
in honour of the delegation from the City of Moka
Tuesday October 31

Good evening. Thank you for your kind introduction,

Mr Ishizaka Shinichi, Mayor of City of Moka, Tochigi Prefecture
Ms Michelle Campbell, Shire of Harvey President,
The Hon Robyn Clarke MLA, representing Premier of Western Australia
The Hon Dr Steve Thomas MLC,

The delegation members of City of Moka including
Mr Kushige Takayuki, Council Chairman,
Mr Yamanaka Takao, Superintendent,
Ms Mizunuma Akemi, Section Chief,

Mr Hiraki and Mr Matsumoto of CLAIR Sydney,

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would also like to thank Shire of Harvey President Michelle Campbell and Shire of Harvey Chief Executive Officer Annie Riordan for inviting me to the Harvey Region. This is a beautiful part of Western Australia and I am delighted to be here tonight.

I became Consul-General of Japan in Perth in October of last year to receive Prime Minister Kishida who visited Perth exactly one year ago and many positive developments followed since then. The year 2022 also marked the signing of Friendship City Agreement between the Shire of Harvey and City of Moka, on which we gather here to celebrate the one-year anniversary.

This agreement is one of 11 Sister City and Friendship City Agreements between Japan and Western Australia and the youngest of all 109 agreements of sister/friendship cities between Japan and Australia.

It is my pleasure to share with you that the friendly relationship between Japan and Western Australia is at an all-time high, as ANA Perth Tokyo direct flight resumed on Sunday October 29 after more than

a 3 year suspension caused by the pandemic. The Premier, the Hon. Roger Cook, as well as Deputy Premier, the Hon. Rita Saffioti, were among the first passengers of the direct flight and they are making their first official visit to Japan right now. Ambassador of Japan to Australia, H.E. Suzuki Kazuhiro and I joined the sake barrel breaking ceremony with Premier and Deputy Premier and saw them off to Tokyo at the Perth International Airport on Sunday night.

More than 50% of Japan's imported Iron Ore, 35% of LNG and 15% of wheat (ideal for udon noodles) are from Western Australia. We cannot think of a day without Western Australia in Japanese daily life. Our two countries have made remarkable economic success out of the complimentary economic relationships based on mutual trust developed over the years. Our relationship is supported by robust human-to-human bonds among the people, which is the most important asset between Japan and Western Australia.

Thus, the visit of Mayor of the City of Moka to Harvey is so timely as human-to-human interactions and exchange are expected to expand to another level by the resumption of the direct flight. Indeed, sister city and friendship city relations are an important pillar of our strong bilateral relations. These agreements connect our communities to new ideas, perspectives, wisdom and opportunities.

They are also especially important for young people. Japanese language is one of the most studied foreign languages in Western Australian schools. While students can get a lot of help from a book or the internet, nothing is quite as helpful as meeting someone from Japan.

I know students from the City of Moka are also learning so much from their time in the Harvey Region so far. They are improving their English, discovering how we learn in the classroom and exploring Australian traditions. It is so important that we promote international cooperation amongst our young people, that we give them exciting new learning opportunities and help them uncover more about the world we live in. And I'm thrilled to see the Shire of Harvey and City of Moka friendship achieving just that.

I want to thank the Shire of Harvey again for organizing this wonderful Celebration Dinner this evening. I express my deep appreciation to President Campbell and Mayor Ishizaka and all those contributing to the friendship city relationship and look forward to seeing the relation continue to flourish in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.

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