

Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the Australia Japan Business Council (WA) Networking Event
Thursday November 9, 2023

Esteemed Prof and former Ambassador H.E. Ross Garnaut,
Mr Richard Sandover, Chairman of AJBC WA
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honour to have the opportunity to meet with Prof Garnaut at this Networking event of AJBC WA. It is such an honor to be here tonight to hear the insights and opinions of Professor Garnaut, thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us tonight. And thank you to Mr Sandover, for the opportunity for me to say a few words to update you all on the Japan-WA relationship.

I wish to share with the members of AJBC WA that ANA have finally resumed direct flights to Tokyo. It was precisely this issue that AJBC WA focused on and had an interactive session on 1st of December last year with the Hon Roger Cook himself, which I was honoured to share the platform. And it was this room. His firm conviction on the importance of the direct flight and his commitment to visiting Japan on the inaugural resumption flight materialized 10 days ago when both the WA Premier and Deputy Premier made their first official visit to Japan on the ANA direct route to Narita.

It was during this visit that the Premier invited Japan to become a founding partner for the Energy Transition, as it did with the LNG industry in WA. He made strategic communications with major Japanese resource and energy companies, saying that WA seeks energy security and decarbonization of Australia and will contribute that of Asia, and call for Japan for more investment including to critical minerals, to new gas fields and CCUS projects.

The Deputy Premier as the treasurer also emphasized to Japanese finance institutions, who have been providing 10-20% of the finance needed for WA (5-10 billion dollars), that WA is the only state in Australia with a triple A rating by both Moody's and S&P for four consecutive years. Both messages were well received and discussions on further investment into WA and the Japan-WA relationship were firmly advanced.

Already, different missions from Japan have poured into Perth via the direct flight within past 10 days. And yesterday there was an announcement by Curtin University of the establishment of the Japan Center of Engagement, of which academic and industry collaborations in minerals and energy transition will be one of its pillars.

Japan and Western Australia have enjoyed a longstanding, mutually beneficial relationship for over 140 years, starting with the Japanese Pearl divers. In the late 1940's, Japan was at a crossroads, trying desperately to rebuild economically, politically and spiritually. In the early 1950's, a new constitution based on international peace was adopted and remarkable economic development started to unfold.

In Australia, forward thinking politicians from Western Australia such as Sir Charles Court and businesspeople joined forces with Japan, looking for ways and means to unlock the potential of our two countries, signing a commerce agreement in 1957. Both countries mutually understood their respective needs at the time, and Japan became a founding partner of the iron ore industry and later the LNG industry, all centered in Western Australia.

For a long time, Japan has continued to be within the top three in terms of investment and trade within Australia, and today, 53 % of Japan's imported iron ore, 35% of its LNG, 15% of its wheat, and 22% of its canola seed are from Western Australia.

Japan and Australia share principles of peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and most notably chaired the G7 and Quad meetings respectively earlier this year.

The Japan-Western Australia relationship is strongly supported by robust people-to-people bonds that were built over many years, in areas including student and sister city exchange. I wish to repeat here again that human bonds are the most important asset between Japan and WA.

Last month, there was the milestone 60th Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee Joint Conference held in Melbourne, which attracted the biggest ever attendance of 620 business delegates and political leaders. The Ambassador of Japan to Australia, Mr. Suzuki Kazuhiro, who used to be Director-General of North American Department at MOFA during the Trump administration, said it was the largest and highest profile of any business meeting Japan has been involved in including with USA.

In fact, the Japanese counterpart to AJBCC, the Japan Australia Business Cooperation Committee, was formed in 1963, sixty years ago and it was requested by them that the Japanese Government establish a consulate office in Perth, the base of iron ore investment, resulting in the establishment of our office, the Consulate-General of Japan in Perth in 1967. Most Japanese companies operating in Australia are affiliate of JABCC, whose current chair is Mr Hirose of Tokyo Gas.

It was agreed at the Joint Conference to strive for another 60 years of co-operation as we endure common challenges in geopolitics, energy transition, as well as technological challenges including generation AI, Space and Cyber security.

Next year in 2024, the Government of Japan, JAXA and the Western Australian Government will co-host APRSAF, the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum in Perth, where more than 500 delegates from 40 countries are expected to participate and is just one other example of future collaborative opportunities with Japan.

With these developments, I believe it is a great opportunity to have this lecture by Professor Garnaut as we reach this important juncture of global affairs.

Thank you for your attention.

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