

**Remarks**  
**Delivered by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth**  
**On the occasion of the Australia Japan Society of Western Australia Gala Dinner**  
**Thursday December 14, 2023**

The Hon Samantha Rowe MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Culture and the Arts; Sport and Recreation; International Education; Heritage, and co-chair, WA Parliamentary Friendship Group of Japan,

Mr Ben Wholagan, President of the Australia Japan Society of Western Australia,

Mr Patrick White, Ms Jean Stuart and all the committee members of AJSWA,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to the year-end gala dinner of AJSWA.

It has been over one year since I arrived and welcomed Prime Minister Kishida with you to this beautiful city of Perth. Since then, a series of positive developments has followed between Japan and Western Australia.

Included in this is the resumption of ANA's Perth Narita direct flights after three and a half years of suspension due to the pandemic, which has brought Japan closer to WA, as we have seen many delegations from Japan coming to Perth in the past month.

The Premier, the Hon Roger Cook MLA, and the Deputy Premier, the Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, became the first passengers of the direct flight to make an official visit to Japan, further strengthening the Japan-WA relationship.

We have also seen Japanese Festivals in WA going from strength to strength, including in Perth, the South West and Broome. We had the launch of the WA Parliamentary Friendship Group of Japan thanks to the invaluable efforts of Ben, Samantha and Jessica. We saw the resumption of student and sister city exchanges, as well as advancing our partnerships in energy and resources.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the AJSWA team for working tirelessly towards the launching of JECCWA, the Japan Education and Cultural Center of Western Australia, now planned for February. I extend our appreciation to all those who made their contribution to the center which was handed from Hyogo Government to Western Australia.

We are so fortunate to have hundreds of cultural ambassadors here in WA. We believe JECCWA will serve as a hub for cultural and educational activities to bridge Western Australia and Japan. We believe the grassroots human-to-human bond is the most important asset of Japan and Western Australia and we wish to foster this continuously.

The Japan-Australia partnership was a rare success of the world. Just 12 years after World War II, forward thinking politicians from Western Australia such as Sir Charles Court and business people joined forces with Japan, looking for ways and means to unlock the potential of our two countries, signing a commerce agreement in 1957.

It led to the remarkable economic development of both Japan and Australia, first with iron ore, and later with LNG, and has contributed to the world economy on a massive scale.

Professor Ross Garnaut, the globally eminent economic policy intellectual for over 30 years, who is originally from Perth, described the Japan-WA partnership as a rare success model in global history. Nevertheless, we should not take it for granted, but should make continual efforts to strengthen and evolve the partnership so it is fit for the time.

We are now trying to advance the partnership to tackle the common challenge of energy transition of the region, and expanding cooperation to other fields. We thank AJSWA for embracing this special relationship and showing its willingness to advancing it into the future at the 50th year milestone next year.

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