

## **Remarks**

**Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth**

**On the occasion of the Official Opening of the Japan Education and Cultural Center of Western  
Australia - JECCWA**

**On Saturday February 3, 2024**

### **(Acknowledgements)**

Mr Ben Wholagan, President of the Australia-Japan Society of Western Australia,  
Ms Jessica Shaw MLA, representing the Premier of Western Australia,  
The Hon David Michael MLA, Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Ports; Road Safety; Minister Assisting  
Minister of Transport,  
HE Richard Court AC, Former Ambassador of Australia to Japan & Former Premier of Western  
Australia,  
Mrs Jessica Stojkovski MLA, Cabinet Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, Co-convenor  
of Parliamentary Friendship Group of Japan,  
The Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General  
The Hon Tjorn Sibma MLC,  
Mr James Jegasothy, Executive Director, Office of Multicultural Interests,  
Councillor Teresa Olow representing Mayor of City of Stirling,  
Mr Yukihiro Ohira, Director of Japan Foundation, Sydney,  
Mr Tac Nakao, Vice Chairman Japanese Association of Western Australia,  
Mr Terry Komatsuzaki, President of Japan Club of WA,  
Leaders organization, including Niji No Kai, Japanese Language Teachers Association, JETAAWA,  
Kangaeru Paw, Bonsai Society WA, Sogetsu Ikebana Perth, Perth Sanshin Club, Perth Japanese  
Children's Library, Busselton Sugito Sister City Association, WA secondary school association, UWA  
and Curtin University,  
Ms Melissa Luyke, the Director and Eriko-san from JECCWA,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

### **(Appreciation to everyone for support)**

Many of the guests gathered here today are masters of cultural practices and goodwill ambassadors bridging Japan and WA. This represents a level of shared passion to have the hub for exchange with Japan here in Perth, even after the closure of Hyogo Center last year and handed over to Western Australia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who made the launch of JECCWA possible, including the Government of Western Australia and corporate sector, groups and many individuals for making their financial and other support to JECCWA as a home of educational and cultural interactions between Western Australia and Japan. I am glad that Mr Ohira, Director of the Japan Foundation is also joining us all the way from Sydney. I wish to commend Ben, Patrick and all the member of AJSWA for their amazing effort with countless of meetings until today.

### **(Timely opening of JECCWA)**

The opening of JECCWA comes at no better timing. As the last year we had a boost of human

exchanges, including the resumption of ANA's Perth Narita direct flights after three and a half years of suspension. The Premier and Deputy Premier became the first passengers on the direct flight for their first official visit to Japan, further strengthening the Japan-WA relationship. And it is just this week that Minister Madeleine King visited Japan to discuss energy and resources cooperation. Certainly, more people from WA are visiting Japan, even overtaking Bali as Australian's favorite holiday destination, and delegations are pouring into WA, including Nagoya Ports who celebrated the 40 anniversary of sister port relations with Fremantle Ports, again this week.

Japan-Western Australia relationship is supported by robust personal ties built over many years. This is precisely why the launch of JECCWA today is timely and important.

#### (A base of friendship bonds in WA Japan relations)

Japan and Western Australia enjoy a longstanding relationship over more than 140 years starting with Japanese Pearl divers, who loved the beauty of people and the land of Western Australia to become the bridges, and the story gave inspiration to many.

I wish to remind you, in the presence of Ambassador Richard Court, that right after World War II, at the difficult time, forward thinking politicians such as Sir Charles Court, and businesspeople in WA joined forces with Japan, signing a commerce agreement in 1957. It led to the remarkable economic success 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 economist originally from Perth, described the Japan-WA partnership as a rare success model of the world, based on personal bonds and mutual trust.

I wish to express my deep respect to Ambassador Richard Court to be part of building this historical legacy. I also wish to thank Ambassador Richard Court who is the very person making invaluable behind the scenes support to JECCWA. I agree with Ambassador that human to human bonds has been at the core of the enduring friendship between Japan and Western Australia relations.

#### (An inclusive hub to lead the partnership forward)

As I understand, JECCWA is an inclusive center supported by many stakeholders. With the official opening, everyone of your institutions can make use of this beautiful facility for your activities. But it will be open soon to the public, starting with 3 days a week. Challenges still remain but with innovative ideas, I am sure we will be able to overcome it and will offer more opportunity.

JECCWA is going to be a home of friendship between Western Australia and Japan. I think we should not take this relationship for granted, but should always try to make efforts to advance it forward. For myself, I wish to work closely with you to support JECCWA and thank AJSWA for showing strong commitment to advance the WA Japan partnership forward at the year celebrating its 50th year milestone.

Thank you for your attention.

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