

Speech

**Presented by Mr NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth,
On the occasion of the Celebration of the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan,
Consul-General's Official Residence
Friday 23rd February, 2024**

1 Acknowledgments

- H.E. the Hon Chris Dawson AC APM, the Governor of Western Australia, and Mrs Dawson,
- The Hon Don Punch MLA, representing Premier of Western Australia,
- H.E. Richard Court, AC, Former Ambassador of Australia to Japan & Former Premier of Western Australia,
- The Hon Julie Bishop, Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia,
- Mr. Shane Love MLA, the Leader of the Opposition,
- The Hon Samantha Rowe MLC, Co-convenor of the WA Parliamentary Friendship Group of Japan, and members of Legislative Council,
- The Hon Bill Johnston MLA and members of Legislative Assembly,
- The Rt. Hon the Lord Mayor, Bazil Zempilas, Mayor of City of Perth,
- Senator Dean Smith, and members of Federal Parliament,
- Colonel Rhogan Aitken, Deputy Commander, 13th Brigade, Australian Army,
- Mr Allan Adams APM, Deputy Commissioner of WA Police Force,
- Consul-Generals and colleagues from the Consular Corps of Western Australia,
- Mr Tad Watroba, Executive Director of Hancock Prospecting,
- Mr Sam Walsh AO, External Director Mitsui & Co, Former CEO Rio Tinto,
- His Worship Phill Cronin, the Mayor of Busselton and all the mayors who traveled here tonight,
- Cr Phillip Matsumoto, representing Japanese community in Broome,
- Prof Andrew Deeks, Vice Chancellor of Murdoch University,
- Prof Gordon Flake, Perth US Asia Center,
- Leaders of Japanese and Australian business,
- Representatives of Japanese community in Western Australia,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening. I wish to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land we are meeting, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and pay my respect to elders, past, present and emerging.

2 Celebrating the Emperor's Birthday

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this historic building "Minawarra" built by Sir Walter James, the 5th Premier of Western Australia, designed by Sir Joseph Talbot Hobbs. The building was

commissioned 124 years ago in 1900 and it is exactly half a century this year that this building has served as the house of Japanese hospitality. It is a great privilege for me to be part of the heritage of Western Australia and be the custodian of this legacy.

Today, the 23rd of February, is the National Day of Japan. We gather here to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor, who turned 64 years of age today. His majesty has a long and strong attachment with Australia, stemming from the time he spent in this country during his first overseas trip, including a home stay, in 1974 exactly 50 years ago, from which he has a fond memories of the warmth of the people of Australia.

3 Japan-Western Australia Relations

The last year we saw a blooming of human exchanges between Japan and Western Australia. This included the resumption of ANA's Perth-Narita direct flights after a three and a half years suspension due to the pandemic. Subsequently, more and more people from WA have been visiting Japan. In December, we were amazed with the news that Tokyo overtook Bali and became Australia's favorite holiday destination. Perhaps the sudden rise was due to skiing and snowboarding and value for money fare due to the exchange rate. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization, Australians tend to enjoy Japan to the full by staying an average of two weeks. I sincerely thank Premier Cook and Deputy Premier Saffioti for their strategic visit, jumpstarting the direct flights.

High-level visits are also continuing. This month we received Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Komura Masahiro, who attended the Indian Ocean Conference. Also, Minister Madeleine King visited Japan, while the visits of global CEOs of Japanese energy companies have become so frequent and some are happening as I speak. And it was also this month that we had the launch of JECCWA, Japan Education & Cultural Center of Western Australia, at the former Hyogo Center run by AJSWA.

Tonight, I am happy to have Ms Nicole Fasana with us, former Investment and Trade Commissioner of Western Australia in Tokyo. Thank you to Nicole for achieving so much during your tenure, bringing Japan and WA closer and billions of more investment to WA. Welcome home. 引き続き宜しく願
いします。

I look forward to more Australian investment in Japan with its large market as well as highly skilled human resources, with world highest Global Talent Competitiveness Index. In that connection, we welcomed the AmCham Quad business mission to Japan last December. We are looking forward to the Asia Pacific Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) later this year in Perth, hosted by the Japanese Government, JAXA and the Western Australian Government.

4 Energy and Resource Partnership

Japan and Western Australia enjoy longstanding relations over more than 140 years that began with Japanese pearl divers. We have Cr Phillip Matsumoto, all the way from Broome, who shared with me the stories of the difficult days as well as their commitment to this beautiful country and became a bridge between our two nations. Their story has been a great inspiration to many Japanese residents that have come since.

Just 12 years after World War II, forward-thinking politicians from Western Australia such as Sir Charles Court, father of Ambassador Richard Court, and business people here forged new relations with Japan.

It has unlocked the potential of our two economies and led to the remarkable success of both Japan and Australia, first with iron ore, and later with LNG, and thereby contributed to the world economy, which economists describe as a rare model of success in the world, based on mutual trust.

Nevertheless, we should not take the relationship for granted but should always make continuous efforts to evolve the partnership. We are now taking the partnership further to tackle the common challenge of the energy transition. Japan is as committed to net zero just as Australia, and is developing paths to reduce and manage CO2 emissions affordably. We are doing this in collaboration with various Australian partners.

Tonight we have a delegation of JBIC, a policy based finance institution 100 % owned by Japanese Government, who played a critical role in providing finance to major WA projects. They are here to brief Ministers and partners on the financial assistance tools of the Japanese Government for energy transition, including a planned price gap support similar to hydrogen head start amounting 30 billion AUS dollars, bigger than that of many countries. Japanese companies and their Australian JVs are eligible to apply.

Incidentally, we had breaking news this morning of the sales/purchase agreement of an additional 15.1% of Scarborough JV equity from Woodside to JERA Japan's biggest utility. They also made an agreement on new energy collaboration including ammonia, hydrogen, carbon management technology and carbon capture and storage.

Tonight, Toyota has kindly offered to allow guests to experience a ride in a new Mirai, hydrogen fuel cell car. We had encouraging news last year of the plan to set up a hydrogen filling station only 300 meters away from the Japanese Consulate in the city west that will add to the existing ATCO hydrogen station in Jandakot. With the new Mirai we need only 5 minutes to fill up for a 600 km range, leaving only water, certainly a great option. I am a fan of Mirai, because the very first car I drove myself in Perth was a Mirai.

5 Security Cooperation

Japan and Australia share the principles of peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Last year Japan chaired the G7 and Australia chaired the Quad Summit, both held in Hiroshima.

For Japan, Australia is at the center of like-minded countries and the scope of security cooperation is expanding as seen in the Security Cooperation Declaration signed by the two Prime Ministers in Perth in 2022. As a result, last year we saw several joint exercises of our two forces including Southern Jackaroo, Bushido Guardian, Talisman Sabre and Yama Sakura.

6 Kizuna, Human Bonds

I hope you agree with me that the Japan-Western Australia relationship is supported by strong personal ties built over many years.

Tonight, I am delighted to present the Order of Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, to Ms Pauline Vukelic, for her outstanding contribution to strengthening friendly relations between Japan and Australia through the promotion of sister city relations between several cities in Japan and South West. Her contribution over the last 30 years connecting the people of Western Australia and Japan with her warm and welcoming hospitality is highly valued by the Government of Japan.

The depth of her commitment in connecting Japan and Australia is truly admirable and it even mirrors the journey our nations have taken together overcoming the difficult times of the past. I will later present the Order of Rising Sun to Pauline on behalf of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

7 Foreseeing the Highlights of 2024

2024 is a milestone year. Firstly, the City of Perth celebrates its oldest sister city relationship with Kagoshima City with the 50th year anniversary. There will be a Kagoshima-themed Perth Japan Festival on the 23rd of March at the Supreme Court Gardens where more than 16,000 people are expected. Secondly, as the construction of the Yanchep Station is nearing completion, Tokyu Group is celebrating their 50th year of investment in developing Yanchep as a clean, sustainable city only 50 minutes by train from Perth.

In fact, 1974 was an extraordinary year as it saw the first ever visit of a Japanese Prime Minister, Tanaka Kakuei, to Perth. Investment to Yanchep, a sister city with Kagoshima, His Majesty's trip to Australia, the indefinite lease of Minnowarra and the launch of AJSWA all happened in 1974 and half a century later, we are witnessing the fruits of those commitments so vividly.

8 To the King

Last but not least, please enjoy a taste of Japan. In the corner, Mr Andre Bishop, a sake specialist “Sake Samurai” agreed to share with us again this year. In the indoor reception hall you’ll have an opportunity to enjoy traditional Japanese food, a UNESCO intangible world cultural heritage. There you’ll find not only a sushi bar, but also tempura and yakitori prepared by our head Chef Jinichi Osawa as well as his udon noodles made with WA wheat.

Please visit the desks of Fukushima Prefecture and Hyogo Prefecture where they will share their products including fish cakes, made out of fish caught in the Fukushima bay. Try our Shochu, lichiko, Japanese spirit made out of WA barley. Visit the “Green Tea House” tea counter to try different kinds of Japanese tea with explanation by Mr Iwasaki local specialist.

I would like to conclude by wishing for the enduring friendship between Japan and Western Australia and to ask you to join me in raising our glasses and ask you to keep His Majesty the King in your thoughts, especially in light of the recent news on his health.

To the health of His Majesty the King, Charles the Third.

The King.

Thank you for your attention.

End