

Remarks

**Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth,
On the occasion of the On Board Reception of the Icebreaker JS Shirase
Tuesday March 19, 2024**

- Mr Kazuki Saito, Commanding Officer of Icebreaker JS Shirase,
- Mr Gen Hashida, Leader of 65th Antarctic Research expedition team,
- Mr Yaz Mubarakai MLA, representing Minister Dr Tony Buti,
- HE Richard Court AC, former Ambassador of Australia to Japan and former Premier of Western Australia,
- The Hon Mark McGowan, former Premier of Western Australia,
- Commodore Ivan Ingham, AM CSC, RAN, Senior Australian Defense Force Officer WA,
- Captain Ken Burleigh, ADC RAN, Commanding Officer HMAS Stirling,
- Friends of Japan and Shirase Supporters,

Good Evening. I wish to start by acknowledging that we are meeting on the waters of the Derbarl Yerrigan in the land of the Whadjuk people of the Noongah Nation, the traditional custodian of the land, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

To the members of Shirase, welcome back to Fremantle after completing your expedition to Antarctica, withstanding the harshest climates on earth. We are so grateful for the resumption of on board activities that have been on hold for four years due to the pandemic. We have been eagerly waiting for this moment.

With the resumption of direct flights last year, we have seen a huge expansion of human interactions between Japan and Western Australia, and we are glad to have finally reached the stage of resuming public interactions with JS Shirase.

For the past 59 years, current Shirase and its predecessor vessels, former Shirase and JS Fuji, have been visiting Fremantle en route to the Showa Station of the South Pole. Over decades of interactions, the orange coloured hull of the JS Shirase has become a symbol of friendship.

Yesterday, Captain Amanuma, 1st Secretary and Defense Attaché of the Embassy of Japan in Canberra, and I joined Shirase supporters, such as Mr Komatsuzaki, in welcoming the arrival of the Shirase to Fremantle Ports.

It was a moving moment to witness the Shirase crew wave to supporters from the deck, who in turn waved Japanese and Australian flags to the beat of taiko drums. One supporter even cheered out loud お帰りなさい “welcome back” as the vessel moved in to dock in Fremantle on its return journey from the Antarctic expedition.

Supporters from the Japanese community have long gathered at Fremantle for Shirase. This spirit was inherited by Mr Kyoshin Kayo, legendary Karate Master of Shobukan and a prominent member of the Japanese community in WA, who even back in the times of JS Fuji, would come to Fremantle Ports for the arrival and departure of the vessel, waving the Japanese and Australian flags with pride and passion.

We also wish to thank Shirase for allowing the visits of students from Fremantle College and the Japanese School in Perth. These tours are precious opportunities to learn, harness their interest in science and nurture their dreams for their future careers.

Thank you to the Fremantle Port Authority for all of their coordination and for receiving Shirase so warmly to Fremantle Ports. We cherish the longstanding friendship of JS Shirase with Western Australia and hope our partnership in science through the oceans will be further strengthened.

We all look forward to listening to your interesting stories of your lives and duties in Antarctica during our conversations tonight including from the members of expedition team who will disembark and fly back to Tokyo tomorrow with the ANA direct flight.

Thank you for your attention.

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