

## **Remarks**

**Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth**  
**On the occasion of the Corporate Networking Event**  
**launching the 10<sup>th</sup> Perth Japan Festival at the Supreme Court Gardens**  
**Friday March 22, 2024**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Thank you to the organizing committee for all the preparation and arrangements for the 10<sup>th</sup> Perth Japan Festival. If you are interested in Japan, this is the day for you. You can enjoy and appreciate different aspects of Japan, from traditional and pop-culture, to martial arts and a variety of Japanese food, even a sushi making experience. We are so fortunate to have many masters and practitioners of Japanese culture in Perth who are eager to share their proficient skills honed throughout the year. I wish to take the opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the sponsors who make this event possible.

I respect the hard work of the festival committee who support these cultural ambassadors to showcase their shining performances on the big stage, with a lot of coordinating efforts including with volunteers of Japanese students studying in Perth. This is a day for everybody to have fun. We have something for everyone in the family to enjoy. This is also a day for making friends and new connections.

Last year, we were all amazed by the turnout of more than 16,000 people, marking it as the biggest ever Japan Festival in Perth. Since last year's festival, many more people in WA have visited Japan as we saw the resumption of the ANA Perth to Tokyo direct flights, and thanks to the impact of the visit of the WA Premier and Deputy Premier on the inaugural flight, with Tokyo becoming the most popular holiday destination for Australians, overtaking Bali in December. A big thank you to ANA for its contributions and for becoming a sponsor of the Perth Japan Festival which is a testimony of your commitment to your continued efforts of bridging Japan and Western Australia in the years ahead.

A special theme of this year's festival is the 50 year celebration of the sister city relationship between the City of Perth and Kagoshima City, Perth City's longest standing sister city relationship. The Government of Japan and the festival committee invited three distinguished traditional music performers from Kagoshima with the support of the Mayor of Kagoshima City. They are Ms Rumiko Setoguchi (shinobue flute), Ms Riko Hirata (taiko drum), and Ms Mako Sakai (vocals and shamisen), who will be arriving in Perth this evening on the ANA direct flight. They will perform tomorrow to showcase the beauty of Kagoshima traditions. Perth and Kagoshima have common features, as both are full of sunshine and abundant nature, with historical contributions to nation building, and even sharing the same latitude of 32 degrees north and south of the equator.

We are delighted to host the Rt Honourable Lord Mayor Mr Basil Zempilas tomorrow. The mayors of Perth and Kagoshima are planning mutual visits this year to advance the cities friendship even further.

Turning to business, Japan and Western Australia enjoy a longstanding relationship of over 140 years that began with Japanese pearl divers. After World War II, forward-thinking politicians from Western Australia, such as Sir Charles Court, and business people here led new partnerships 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 contributed to the world economy on a massive scale, which economists describe as a rare model of success in the world, based on mutual trust.

Our close relationship, including many successful business relations, have always been supported by broad people-to-people friendships. We are humbled to know approximately 80 % of Australians find trust in Japan through a Lowey Institute survey last year as well as through a Japanese Ministry Of Foreign Affairs survey conducted this year. We believe events such as the Perth Japan Festival will further harness people's appreciation of various aspects of Japan while motivating a deeper understanding.

I would like to add that the Japanese community in Perth has a wonderful spirit of hospitality and passion, creating the Perth Ondo パース音頭, a Bon Odori dance dedicated to Perth for last year's festival. As I stood at the top of the Yagura stage, it was a moving sight to see the circle of dancers grow as both Australian and Japanese visitors joined the Bon Odori, with participants tripling by the end of the day. We are looking forward to seeing an even larger circle of friendship this year.

I hope today's event on the eve of the Perth Japan Festival is useful in broadening networks among you all.

Thank you for your attention.

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