

Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mitsui Immersion Program
Pre-departure Function
Wednesday June 19, 2024

- Mr. Tack Nakao, General Manager, Perth Office, Mitsui & Co.,
- Representatives of DFAT,
- 2024 New Colombo Plan Mitsui Immersion Program participants,

To all 2024 participants, congratulation for being granted to this program after very competitive selection process.

Mitsui Educational Foundation (MEF) program has been running since 1971 for more than 50 years and the New Colombo Plan Mitsui Immersion Program since 2014 and this is the 10th year. Through MEF and NCP combined, Mitsui has invited 510 participants from Australia to Japan.

The New Colombo Plan Mitsui Immersion Program is a wonderful opportunity for young students to go to Japan, to learn about Japanese society and people, management systems, advanced technologies and insights that relate to the development of your own country, Australia.

It is an intensive program prepared by Mitsui & Co. to improve your leadership skills and to sharpen your global and regional perspectives as well.

These gains will definitely be useful in your respective professional careers.

Japan and Australia's bilateral relationship has developed remarkably. Since 1957, only 12 years after World War II, the two countries signed the Commerce Agreement that enabled the partnership on iron ore, and later LNG, that led to the remarkable economic development of both Japan and Australia, and contributed to the world economy on a massive scale.

Over the years, the Japan-Australia bilateral relations has been built upon mutual trust among professionals, business leaders and government officials with the broad support of people-to-people friendships through robust interactions.

According to Lowy Institute's annual poll result announced this month, Australians answered Japan is the most trusted countries (which marked 87%). We were humbled that this is not for a single year result but for four consecutive years. We are glad that Japan overtook Bali and became the most popular tourist destination for Australians, and the Perth Japan Festival in March attracted more than 20,000 people, the biggest ever in Perth.

We are fortunate to have many cultural ambassadors especially in WA. These people-to-people bonds are the most important asset of the longstanding relationship between Japan and Australia.

As you might be aware, because I repeat in many occasions that 53% of Japan's imported iron ore, 30% of LNG and 15% of wheat, just ideal for udon noodles, are from Western Australia according to the latest statistics of the WA Government. In other words, WA is everywhere in Japan. We cannot imagine a single day in Japan without Western Australia.

In August of last year, I attended the alumni gathering of this program and I was impressed to know that ex-participants in Perth are advancing their careers in professional fields including corporate advisory, legal firms and medical sector. Recently, I was pleasantly surprised to meet with one of the past participants at Parliament House, moderating an important event attended by ministers and parliamentarians.

Japan and Australia, and particularly Western Australia, should not take these remarkable relations for granted. We need to continue deepening, widening and updating the relations as the agenda and challenges of the time change. In this connection, we count on you to be bridges between our two countries.

Also, learn more about Mitsui & Co., a global investing and trading firm in Japan who played a founding role in Australia's resource industry.

At the same time, excel yourself in your respective fields.

I wish to propose a toast wishing you all to have a fruitful program in Japan.

Kanpai

End