

## **Remarks**

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

**On the occasion of the Signing Ceremony of Joint Project between CSIRO & Panasonic Energy**

**On Wednesday July 10, 2024**

- Dr Shoichiro Watanabe, Chief Technology Officer and Executive Vice President of Panasonic Energy Co., Ltd.,
- Dr Robert Hough, Director of Mineral Resources, CSIRO,
- Mr Michael Neimanis, Assistant Manager, Critical Mineral Office, DISR,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour and privilege as the representative of the Government of Japan to be here today and witness the signing of the Joint Development Project between the CSIRO and Panasonic Energy Co., Ltd., which seeks to establish a new Nickel extraction route in Australia.

As I understand, the project seeks to lay groundwork for future utilization of Australian nickel laterite resources and the creation of low-cost nickel processing technologies for lithium ion battery applications. The project endeavors to reduce the overall cost of nickel products as well as to establish a resilient supply chain. It enhances cost competitiveness of Australian critical mineral industry, recently affected by a turbulent nickel price, partially due to global overproduction.

It was one year and 9 months ago that I was assigned as Consul-General of Japan in Perth just two weeks before the visit of Prime Minister Kishida to Perth in October 2022.

The visit was a milestone that strengthened the “Special Strategic Partnership” between Japan and Australia. Since then, I have seen a series of positive developments between the two countries including cooperation to uphold the rules-based order in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, cooperation on energy security and energy transition as well as expansion of human exchange with Japan, which is now known as the most popular holiday destination for Australians.

But one of the key outcomes of the Prime Minister’s visit was the “Japan Australia Critical Minerals Partnership” signed by Minister Madeleine King and Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry of Japan.

We thank Panasonic Energy for participating in bilateral meetings on the critical minerals partnership and sharing their efforts on critical minerals frequently with the Hon Madeleine King.

These efforts culminated to the Joint Development Agreement with CSIRO and I am delighted to witness the signing of the agreement. It is a symbolic embodiment of the Japan Australian Critical Minerals Partnership.

Japan values measures and incentives by the Australian Government including “the Future made in Australia policy” promoting investment in critical minerals sector. Major Japanese resources sector, longstanding partners of Australian mineral and resource right from the founding stage of the iron

ore industry, are increasing investing in critical minerals in Australia.

The Government of Japan places high priority on the Japan Australia Critical Mineral Partnership and accordingly supports this joint project.

I wish to congratulate both the CSIRO and Panasonic Energy to have reached this agreement, and hope the successful development of a new cost-competitive nickel extraction technology will maximize the use of quality Australian Nickel in the strengthened supply chains.

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