

## **Remarks**

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

**On the occasion of the Alumni Reunion Function for the**

**Mitsui Educational Foundation (MEF) and New Colombo Plan Mitsui Immersion Program (NCP)**

**Thursday August 1, 2024**

- Mr Tack Nakao, General Manager, Perth Office, Mitsui & Co., President of the Japanese Association of WA as well as Chairman of Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Perth (JCCIP),
- Representatives of DFAT,
- Representatives of partner universities,
- Alumni of MEF and NCP participants,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Mitsui Educational Foundation (MEF) was launched in 1971 and the program has been running for 53 years. Additionally, Mitsui & Co. is collaborating with the Government of Australia on the New Colombo Plan by accepting students to Japan with NCP Mitsui Immersion Program since 2014.

We understand that during the 53 years, a total number of alumni of MEF and NCP exceeds 500.

Taking this opportunity, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Mitsui & Co. and the partner universities for their continued efforts in training and internship of young Australians in various fields in Japan for many years.

To those of you who participated in the NCP program this year, welcome back from the heat of an unusually hot summer in Tokyo. I had the opportunity to meet with you at the pre-departure reception in June and I am delighted to hear the vivid excitement of your visit to Japan.

MEF and NCP are wonderful opportunities for students to go to Japan, to learn about Japanese society and people, management, technologies and insights that relate to building of your economy.

I am sure you have made your own discoveries through the program, and had some inspirations regarding Japan, Australia and the region. These gains will be useful in your respective professional careers.

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

Japan's bilateral relation with Australia is at an all-time high. As Melissa Goh from DFAT has said, we just had the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tokyo with the participation of Minister Penny Wong from Australia. The meeting affirmed the importance of strengthening our collaboration to uphold peace and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. The meeting was followed by a visit of a high level Japanese delegation to the Indian Ocean Defence and Security Conference in Perth two weeks ago.

This is on top of our strong relations around resources and energy built upon mutual trust among professionals, business leaders and government officials with the broad support of people-to-people friendships through robust interactions.

Mitsui & Co. is a founding partner of Australia that built the resource industry in WA which led to the remarkable economic success of both Japan and Australia and contributed to the world economy.

Japan and Australia, and particularly Western Australia, should not take these remarkable relations for granted but need to continue deepening, and updating the relations.

Some of you might wish to expand your connections with Japan and this gathering is an excellent opportunity to do so. The Japanese Consulate-General in Perth will also provide you opportunities to connect with Japan by organizing Japan-related events with our partners.

Tonight I am here with Mr Noel Hara, the head of the Culture & Information Section at the Consulate-General. He has been a key figure in organizing the Perth Japan Festival that attracted 20,000 people this year, the celebration of the 50 year anniversary of Perth-Kagoshima sister city relationship, the annual visits of the Icebreaker JS Shirase to Fremantle and many other seminars and cultural events. Please also speak to him for contacts and issues around Japan.

Now I wish to propose a toast; to celebrate this reunion, thanking Mitsui & Co. and their partners for their contributions, wishing for the success of all alumni in your careers, and to the enduring friendship between Japan, Western Australia, and Australia.

Kanpai

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