

**Speech**  
**Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth**  
**The 50th Anniversary Celebration of Australia Japan Society of Western Australia (AJSWA)**  
**On Sunday August 17, 2024**

**(Acknowledgement)**

- Mr Ben Wholagan, President of Australia Japan Society of Western Australia,
- Ms Tania Lawrence MP, representing Minister Madeleine King,
- Mr Mark Folkard MLA, representing the Premier of Western Australia, the Hon Roger Cook,
- Ms Dianne Fitzpatrick, the Vice President of National Federation of Australia Japan Society,
- Mr Patrick Whight, Ms Jean Stuart and all the executive members of AJSWA,
- Representatives of Japanese and Australian business and community groups,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

**(Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of AJSWA)**

Half a century has passed since the launch of the Australia Japan Society of Western Australia.

I am delighted to celebrate this special milestone with all of you tonight in reflecting the achievements of AJSWA promoting friendship between Japan and Western Australia.

During the 50 years, the bilateral relationship between Japan and Australia, precisely with Western Australia, has grown remarkably from energy and resources to defense and security, and many other fields. The relationship is based on strong mutual trust between business leaders and government officials. But I cannot over emphasize the importance of the role played by broad human bonds that supported the bilateral relationship. Human bonds are the most important asset between Japan and Western Australia.

For the past 50 years, AJSWA has been at the core of these activities in WA, being an umbrella or home of groups of cultural, educational and language exchanges with Japan.

AJSWA was established as a volunteer organization by the late Sir Gordon Freeth KBE, former Australian Ambassador to Japan ,and Mr John O'Brien. In fact, 1974 was an epoch-making year for the Japan-WA relationship, as the first visit of Japanese Prime Minister, TANAKA Kakuei, materialized as well as the investment to Yanchep by Tokyu Corporation, the City of Perth signed its oldest sister city agreement with Kagoshima City, the indefinite lease of Minawara, a heritage building for the

Official Residence in Peppermint Grove by the Government of Japan, all happened in 1974.

#### (Bilateral Relations)

Japan and Western Australia have enjoyed longstanding relations for more than 140 years that began with pearl divers in Broome. Just 12 years after World War II, it was Western Australians such as Sir Charles Court, father of Ambassador Richard Court, and business people here who went extra miles to forge a new relation with Japan. The partnership 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 thereby contributed to the world economy in a big scale, which economists describe as a rare model of success in the world, based on mutual trust.

We are glad that Japanese investment and a number of M&A marked the highest record in 2023 and are still growing. Recent moves include Japanese investment to Scarborough and joint works to develop Browse field as well as expansion of production of Ichthys projects. As we recently witnessed the 70th year celebration of Woodside Energy as a great Australian story to have become a global energy giant, we take pride that Japan is part of that story with 35 years of LNG production through North West Shelf.

Despite these developments, we should always be humble not to take the great relationship for granted but make continuous efforts to update the partnership. We are tackling the common challenge of the global energy transition. Japan participates in 31 of the 101 energy transition projects in Australia, including acquisition of ENEL by INPEX, as well as Yuri Project Green Hydrogen Production in the Pilbara by Mitsui & CO. and Yokogawa that provides Energy Management System. Thank you to Yokogawa Australia for being the main sponsor of the celebration tonight.

#### (Achievements and new challenges of AJSWA)

Through these 50 years, AJSWA has organized many events and driven initiatives. At the time Japan was faced with devastation after Earthquake and Tsunami, AJSWA raised funds and helped Japan. A statue of a Black Swan was donated and erected as the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake Recovery Memorial in Kobe's Awaji Island Park, coinciding with the opening of Akashi Kaikyo Bridge in 1998.

In 2011 at the time of Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, AJSWA collaborated with other groups and raised relief funds, which later became the origin of the annual Perth Japan Festival that now attracts more than 20,000 people.

Japan, especially those in Western Australia, will never forget the support from WA to Japan when our elders and our children back home were devastated and at the edge of losing hope because of the disasters.

This year, AJSWA has made another historical achievement by opening JECCWA, the Japan Education and Cultural Centre of Western Australia in February. AJS members made strenuous efforts for meetings and coordination after the announcement of the closure of the Hyogo Center which was handed over from Hyogo Government to Western Australia.

I wish to extend my appreciation to all those who made their contribution to JECCWA, especially to Ben Wholagan for his leadership of initiating the project and Melissa Luyke, Director of JECCWA, for opening the beautiful facility to accommodate activities of cultural ambassadors and students since the opening in February.

In this regard, I had the special honour tonight of thanking INPEX for making a substantial financial contribution to JECCWA for next three years. Your invaluable contribution is extremely important to making JECCWA sustainable and accessible to many and hence contributing to the enduring friendship between Japan and Western Australia.

(Where “Kakehashi”(bridge builders) gather)

In concluding, the 50 year journey of AJSWA has been a path in bridging Japan and Western Australia by providing platform where goodwill ambassadors can assemble for mutual sharing and inspiring. Coinciding with the 50th year anniversary, AJSWA made the historical launch of JECCWA, a home of friendship with Japan in Western Australia.

To all AJSWA members and partners, once again congratulations on the 50 year anniversary and for the great achievements you made. We wish you continuous success in your endeavors and look forward to expanding the collaboration with you further for next 50 years and beyond.

Thank you for your attention.

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