

Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the South West Japan Festival Matsuri Day
Sunday September 8, 2024

(Acknowledgements)

- The Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development,
- His Worship Jaysen de San Miguel, Mayor of the City of Bunbury,
- Ms Renee Lee, the Event Director of the South West Japan Festival,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Congratulating the South West Japan Festival 2023)

It is my great pleasure to join you again at the South West Japan Festival 2024 Matsuri Day. This year, I am with my wife Harumi.

This is one of the most popular festivals in Western Australia featuring Japan, which runs for a period of two weeks this year, and today's Matsuri Day is one of the highlights of the festival.

The program is yet again a great showcase of both traditional culture as well as the newest pop subcultures of Japan, you find something on Japan every day. I wish to congratulate the organizing committee for coordinating the activities with such a passion for Japan!

(Honouring a citizen of the South West)

On the sister city relationship, I wish to report to you that Ms Pauline Vukelic was conferred the Order of Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan at the Emperor's Birthday Celebration in February, witnessed by the WA Governor the Hon Chris Dawson and the Minister the Hon Don Punch.

It was presented for her outstanding contributions to strengthening friendly relations between Japan and Australia through the promotion of sister city relations between cities in Japan and the South West.

(Advancing of Sister City Relations)

I am delighted to see the progress of sister city relations between cities in Japan and cities of the South West region since last year's festival.

There was a visit by a City of Setagaya mission to Bunbury headed by Director-General Kenichi Watanabe in July to discuss further planning of exchanges. Pauline visited Sugito Town, Busselton's sister city for the lantern festival a month ago and saw an iconic Busselton Jetty lantern went down on a stream of the Furutone gawa.

Pauline also paid a courtesy call on Mayor Hosaka of Setagaya-ku in Tokyo. Back in November, there was a Moka City mission headed by Mayor Ishizuka to the Shire of Harvey in November to celebrate the one year anniversary of the friendship city, the youngest of 109 sister city relations between Japan and Australia.

I am also glad that student exchanges are active again in the region and many people, including Councillor Dr Ramesh, visited Japan and were received by my predecessor, the former Consul-General Hirayama and his wife who also found a chance to visit South West earlier this year.

I wish to thank the Mayor, Jaysen de San Miguel, for his great support for the sister city exchange activities, who himself home-stayed in Japan as a teenage student under the Bunbury-Setagaya framework.

(Resumption of the Direct Flight)

The number of Japanese nationals living in Australia, close to 100,000, is the third largest in the world, after the US and China. With the number in China decreasing, Australia will soon become second largest home to many Japanese.

We resumed the All Nippon Airways Perth to Tokyo direct flight last October which made a huge impact, with Japan known as a top holiday destination for Australians, well over 600,000 annually. The ANA direct flight is at a pause at the moment but the operation is resuming again on the 14th of October and already, high level business missions from Japan are planned in pipeline.

It is encouraging to see the return of Japanese students is in full swing, and I believe some are participating in the South West Festival today, including Tokyo City University TAP program students, dispatching 450 students annually to Perth.

Thus, more people from Japan are expected to visit Western Australia, including to the South West region. But the direct flight brings Japan closer to you, making it easier for you to visit different Matsuri special to each local town, and also visit Osaka Expo from April to October next year.

(Enjoy the Matsuri Day)

Today, you have the best of Japan all at once at the Matsuri Day. Let us all enjoy Matsuri Day.

End