

**Vote of thanks**  
**Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth**  
**On the occasion of the Australia Japan Business Council (WA) Networking Event**  
**Thursday October 17th, 2024**

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Minister Michael for sharing with us your rich insights on the issues under your portfolio. Minister David Michael's portfolio is deeply linked to activities of Japanese investment and trade in Western Australia. That is why we have so many Japanese business leaders with us tonight. Today we have representatives from Mitsui & Co., Mitsubishi, Marubeni, Itochu, Sumitomo, INPEX, MIMI, JERA, MEPAU, LNG Japan, Iwatani, MUFG, Ocean Network Express, Toll and All Nippon Airways among others.

And I welcome you all to this heritage building of "MINAWARA" which has just had maintenance works completed. It is nice and fresh with no cracks.

It was built by Sir Walter James, the fifth Premier 124 years ago and this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year since the Japanese Government obtained an indefinite lease in 1974, the year the Japanese Prime Minister visited WA for the first time and a year after the Crown Prince and Princess Michiko (currently father and mother of His Majesty the Emperor) visited WA in 1973.

I am also delighted to have Minister Michael, who is also the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport, with us as we resumed the ANA Perth to Narita direct flight on Monday after a 5 month hiatus.

The impact of the ANA direct flight for the first 7 months was so huge thanks to Premier Roger Cook and Deputy Premier Rita Saffioti, who paid an official visit to Japan last October with the inaugural flight.

Simone Spencer from JTSI joked with me that it seems like two-thirds of Australians have visited Japan. But she was not totally joking, a total of 830,000 Australians have visited Japan in the year up to August 2024. In WA, the ANA direct flight was the single biggest contributor.

Thus, we are excited with the resumption of ANA direct flight this week, and especially so because ANA aims for year-long operation this time and not seasonal. It once again connects Japan with transit-free travel and it is expected to boost tourism and trade. The cargo of the first flight from Perth on Monday was full of Western Australian melons exported to Japan and already notable is a new flow of Japanese business missions visiting Perth.

As Minister Michael indicated, the Japan-Western Australia partnership is a rare success model in the world that unlocked the potential of two economies first with iron ore and later with LNG and contributed to the world economy.

We would like to apply this firm partnership of mutual trust to tackling major challenges of our time, the energy transition, our energy security partnership and our security collaboration in achieving a Free and Open Indo Pacific.

At the margin of the ASEAN Summit, the new Prime Minister of Japan, ISHIBA Shigeru, met with with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last Friday and discussed these issues. The two leaders also collaborated on the 2nd Asia Zero Emission Community, AZEC Summit hosted by Prime Minister ISHIBA.

In this connection, Japan highly values the visionary policy pronouncement on Energy Transition by Premier Cook's government in clear recognition and support to the role of Mining and Gas in contributing to the decarbonization not only of Australia but also of Asian countries including Japan.

We have also seen moves on EPA reform in WA to fast track the approval process. Recently I spoke with Minister Madeleine King on EPA reform and she said WA is ahead of the other states who should learn and follow.

Minister Michael also shared his insights on Westport, the WA Government's long-term initiative to plan for a new container terminal in the Kwinana Outer Harbour that can uplift the comprehensive infrastructure of the broader region which we realized today that would have positive implications to Japan's possible involvement with the shipbuilding industry in the Henderson area.

Minister Michael is a vibrant minister and I see him often including at soccer games. (By the way, Japan against Australia in Saitama Stadium was a good game resulting a friendly draw one all, but both by own goals.)

We thank Minister once again for his talk and we are looking forward to having further close interaction with you including consultations on possible Japanese investment.

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