

**Remarks Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the 2024 ITOCHU Corporate Year-End Function
Thursday December 12, 2024**

Mr Tony Hasegawa, CEO, ITOCHU Australia,
Mr Norman Matsuzawa, GM Perth, ITOCHU Minerals & Energy of Australia,
Mr Stewart Fethers, representing BHP,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting us to the year-end function of ITOCHU Australia.

First of all, congratulations to ITOCHU, which is again top of the ranking of where Japanese university students wish to work, five years in a row. That speaks volumes.

(Looking back on the 2024- AJBCC Perth meeting in 2025)

On bilateral relations, we had an exciting announcement at the Australia-Japan Business Co-operation Committee Joint Conference in Nagoya in October that next the AJBCC/JABCC Joint Conference is going to be in Perth between October 5-7, 2025 for the first time in 17 years. Some 600 top business leaders of Japan and Australia will gather here to discuss common challenges in our future.

I remember I shared with you at last year's Christmas Party how the Melbourne meeting in 2023 addressed by Mr Mike Henry of BHP was an impressive reminder of the Japan-Australia partnership that led to remarkable development in both countries and contributed to the world economy.

This year I had the honour of accompanying the HE the Governor of Western Australia, the Hon Chris Dawson to the AJBCC conference in Nagoya, where the Governor announced that WA will host the 2025 AJBCC Conference.

Thus, 2025 will be a year Japan-WA business relations receive special attention, both in Japan and in Australia. We would like to capitalize and make maximum use of the opportunity to advance business interests as well as to advance bilateral relations for the benefit of both countries.

(ANA Direct Flight)

On October 14, the ANA Perth to Narita direct flight resumed after a five month pause. This time it operates all year round and in fact, tickets for next April onwards are already on sale!

That is why, with Japan hosting the Osaka Kansai Expo from April to October next year, we are expecting one million Australian visit Japan in 2025.
With the direct flight, there has already been an increase in business missions and we

can expect more interactions and positive impacts for investment, trade relations and over-all bilateral relationship between Japan and Western Australia.

So how about having a two weeks excursion to Japan by the direct flight to first go skiing in Hokkaido then move to Tokyo for cherry blossoms and then to Osaka to enjoy the World Expo in conjunction with your business meetings during the best season in Japan?

Perhaps that will be a good break after your election in March.

(ITOCHU UON Partnership)

I also remember that it was at this Christmas Party last year on December 12 that the ITOCHU and UON's strategic partnership was announced.

It was great to see a number of developments that followed including the dispatch of Mr Harunobu Omae, seconded to UON from ITOCHU as Manager for Energy Transition Development. I also noticed that this partnership was mentioned as one of the most important Japanese investments on decarbonization field in the Japan-Australia Investment Report.

I had the privilege of visiting UON's manufacturing HQ in Malaga and I was deeply impressed by the ongoing development of energy and water solutions that can be applied in the harsh environment of a mining sites. This is already operating in BHP mining sites and its scalability shows big potential.

(Human bonds-excitement on next year)

Human bonds are the most important asset. An example of this is the Perth Japan Festival which attracted its biggest ever crowd of 20,000 visitors in March.

And next year, Kanto First High School 関東一校, who won second place in the national high school tournament of Japan 夏の甲子園準優勝 will send a delegation of cheer leaders who won both 1st and 2nd place in the world cheer leading championship in the past two years.

It is a great opportunity to show the Perth community a passionate high school activity quite typical to Japan. With all these events, 2025 will be another exciting year for Japan and Western Australia, and we are looking forward to more close collaboration with ITOCHU and partners.

I wish you Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2025.

Thank you for your attention.

End