

**Speech**  
**Presented by Mr NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth,**  
**On the occasion of the Celebration of the Birthday of**  
**His Majesty the Emperor of Japan,**  
**Consul-General's Official Residence**  
**On Friday February 14, 2025**

### **1 Acknowledgements**

I wish to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and pay my respect to their elders, past, present and emerging,

- The Hon John Quigley MLA, Attorney General and Minister for Electoral Affairs representing the Premier of Western Australia, the Hon Roger Cook,
- The Hon Madeleine King MP, Commonwealth Minister for Resources & Northern Australia,
- The Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, the Speaker of Legislative Assembly,
- Mr WAKAMIYA Kenji, Senior Adviser to the Minister of Defense, and former Minister for World Expo 2025 and former State Minister of Defense visiting Perth all the way from Japan,
- The Hon Martin Aldridge MLC, representing Leader of the Opposition in Western Australia, the Hon Shane Love,
- The Hon Colin Barnett, former Premier of Western Australia,
- Ms Libby Mettam MLA, Leader of Liberal Party WA,
- Members of Legislative Council,
- Members of Legislative Assembly,
- Senators and Members of Commonwealth Parliament,
- The Right Hon Basil Zempilas, the Lord Mayor of City of Perth,
- Mayors of sister cities of municipalities in Japan,
- Ms Meg O'Neill, CEO and Managing Director of Woodside Energy,
- Fellow Consul-Generals & members of Consular Corps,
- Distinguished Japanese and Australian business leaders,
- Cr Phillip Matsumoto representing Japanese community in Broome,
- Representatives of Japanese community and culture organizations,

### **2 Celebrating the Emperor's Birthday**

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the celebration of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan who turns 65 years of age on February 23. His Majesty has long-standing ties with Australia from the time he spent in Australia during the 1970s. His parents, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress Emeritus, visited Perth in 1973 as Crown Prince and Crown Princess and were received warmly by the people of Western Australia. This visit made our two nations closer and a number of major developments

were seen the following year, including the first ever visit to Perth by a Japanese Prime Minister, Mr TANAKA Kakuei.

### 3 Celebrating 50 year milestones

In that same year, the City of Perth and Kagoshima City signed a sister city agreement, which has become the longest standing sister city relationship of Perth City. We celebrated the 50th year anniversary of the agreement last year, underscored by mutual visits by the cities mayors. We thank the Right Hon Basil Zempilas, the Lord Mayor of City of Perth and the delegation for visiting Kagoshima City and for renewing this important partnership.

Investment in Yanchep by Tokyu Corporation also began in 1974, which led to the development of the Yanchep Two Rocks project. This project with the vision of a “Clean Green Sustainable City” has received strong support of Minister Quigley and the WA Government, with the completion of the Metronet Yanchep Rail Extension opening another chapter of its development.

The Australia-Japan Society of Western Australia was also established in 1974 and last year, the year of the group’s 50th anniversary, they opened the Japan Education and Cultural Centre of WA (formerly the Hyogo Center), with substantial financial support from INPEX.

Thus, with this remarkable number of 50 year celebrations, 2024 was the year the efforts of our predecessors came to fruition and was the year for us to renew our commitment to the future of our bilateral partnerships.

### 4 Australia Japan Joint Business Conference

In October last year, 558 top business leaders and government officials from Japan and Australia gathered in Nagoya, for the Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee Joint Conference and we thank Minister Madeleine King for representing the Government of Australia at the conference.

I had the honor of accompanying HE the Governor of Western Australia, the Hon Chris Dawson, to the joint conference where he announced the next Joint Business Conference would be held in Perth, the first time in 17 years. This is big news and we anticipate some 600 top business leaders from Japan and Australia will gather here in Perth on the 5th to 7th of October.

Hence, 2025 will be a year when the Japan-WA relationship receives special attention, both in Japan and Australia, spearheading important bilateral developments. In fact, a number of significant developments of Japan-Australian relations are happening in WA. We would like to capitalize on this opportunity to advance investment, trade and the

broader bilateral relationship for the benefit of our countries.

#### 5 Expanding of human interactions

We had a new record of more than 920,000 Australians visiting Japan in 2024, an impressive 50% increase compared to 2023, and higher than pre-COVID. A huge factor for Western Australia was the resumption of the ANA Perth to Tokyo direct flights, which now operates all year round.

The Osaka Kansai Expo will take place from April 13 through to October with the theme of “Designing Future Society for Our Lives” and is an opportunity to inspire the future of humanity.

We welcome Australians, including Ministers and officials from Western Australia, to visit the Osaka Expo to create new opportunities, including making investment to Japan.

We also have a great line-up of events in Perth. As the Deputy Premier, the Hon Rita Saffioti announced in December, Perth will host the FIFA World Cup Qualifier, where the Socceroos will face Samurai Blue on June 5, attracting a massive crowd of Australian and Japanese soccer fans to OPTUS Stadium.

We will also have the Perth Japan Festival on March 15 at the Supreme Court Gardens, with special guest performances by the Kanto Daiichi High School Barbie’s Cheerleaders, who have won world championships, alongside a huge line-up of local groups showcasing Japanese culture. We are full of excitement for the inspiring opportunities 2025 will bring.

#### 6 Defense cooperation

When I received the then-Prime Minister Kishida in Perth in October 2022, the Defense Cooperation Declaration was signed alongside Prime Minister Albanese that led to an unprecedented pace of development in defense collaborations between Australia and Japan. There were four defense ministers’ meetings and 39 joint exercises last year, along with one Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Defence Ministers’ Meeting.

Today, I had the honor of welcoming our Senior Advisor to the Minister of Defense, Mr WAKAMIYA Kenji, and I thank him for travelling to Perth in recognition of the importance of Western Australia. Your presence here today underscores the current state of our partnership.

I am glad to know that Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has already opened an office in Canberra last month and will soon open one in Perth. Please stop by the MHI booth today to learn more about what they offer.

This week, JMSDF announced their intention to send the Mogami type Frigate, JS Noshiro, to Australia and Phillipines from February 17 to April 3.

Just last week, Prime Minister Ishiba held the first face-to-face meeting with President Trump at the White House and agreed on a number of issues to strengthen the partnership for Peace and Prosperity. I am glad the chemistry of the two leaders was good, with both leaders showing deep respect to the late-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The Joint Leader's Statement following the meeting included intention to work closely with Australia and other likeminded countries in achieving a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

## 7 Energy relationship

Japan's historic partnerships with Western Australia in resource and energy industries has been a rare success model, and has led to the remarkable development of our two economies and contributed to the world economy on a massive scale.

Investment and M&As with Australia remain high and 12 % of FDI to Australia comes from Japan, and recently, JERA and LNG Japan invested and joined the Scarborough Joint Venture with Woodside. We commend the leadership of the WA Premier, the Hon Roger Cook, for supporting mega projects, such as Scarborough and Browse, which are advancing firmly. Japan welcomes the decision by the WA Government to grant environmental approval for the North West Shelf Project Extension. We are looking forward to steadfastly advancing energy cooperation for the benefit of our two countries, for the region, for energy security as well as for global decarbonization.

Ms Meg O'Neill made an inspiring speech in Melbourne last week saying switching 20 per cent of Asia's coal-fired power stations to gas would reduce carbon emissions by 680 million tonnes a year, more than one and a half times Australia's total annual net greenhouse gas emissions. Gas is an affordable transitional fuel that can reduce CO2 effectively.

Japanese companies are seeking multi pathways. For instance, INPEX has just announced the acquisition of nine renewable energy assets in Western Australia and seeks to produce 2-4 GW by 2030. Japanese companies are also involved in advanced projects of hydrogen and ammonia in Australia. Despite some setbacks, work will continue with Australian partners to commercialize, and we definitely need the strong support of federal and state governments in these endeavors.

Toyota is prominent for its multi pathways. Take a moment to visit the exhibition of their Hydrogen car Mirai, Battery EV as well as Hydrogen Generator, which has provided electricity to Marvel Stadium in Melbourne. This generator is waiting for licensing by WA authorities and will soon be available to purchase in Perth. If you are interested, please speak to Toyota officials here this evening.

We are glad to note Japanese companies are working on the critical minerals sector with JOGMEC and Australian partners.

#### 8 Kizuna, Human Bond

Tonight, I am delighted to present the Order of Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, upon Mr Arun Radha Krishnan, in recognition of his outstanding contribution in promoting academic exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and Australia. Krishnan Sensei has been a pioneer of Japanese studies in Western Australia, who made invaluable contributions in establishing a double major Japanese Studies course, with Japanese Economy as well as Japanese Language, at UWA in the early 1970s, an Australian first. This was in response to an unprecedented surge in demand for business interactions with Japan in mineral resources.

For fifty years, Krishnan Sensei taught Japanese politics, economics and society at UWA and Murdoch University, which led to the establishment and promotion of exchange with Japanese universities. Since then, a number of prominent leaders in the Japan-WA community have emerged, having studied under Krishnan Sensei. This includes Prof Sandra Wilson of Murdoch University, Ged Boylan of AJSWA, Stockley Davies of the UWA Judo Club as well as so many others, each one with their own unique and remarkable journeys of human bonds and connection to Japan.

I will later present the Order of Rising Sun to Krishnan Sensei on behalf of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

#### 9 Conclusion

I feel great honor to be able to host the Emperor's Birthday Celebration before my departure. I am leaving Perth at the end of February and will be the event I host. My new posting as Minister-Counselor at the Embassy of Japan in South Africa is my fourth assignment in South Africa, which will host G20 summit this year.

Since arriving in Perth in October 2022, two weeks before the visit of Prime Minister Kishida, my work as Consul-General of Japan in Perth has allowed me to make countless fond memories and has been one of the greatest experiences of my life.

We are so humbled with the special bonds of friendship with Japan seen at all levels in Western Australia, built over many years that support the strong bilateral relationship between Japan and Australia. I wish to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the support you have extended to my wife Harumi and to myself.

My successor will arrive in April and I hope he too will enjoy the wonderful friendship and support you have shown to me. My Deputy, Mr HASEGAWA will serve as Acting Consul-General of Japan in the meantime.

I wish to mention that my colleague Noel HARA serving as MC tonight and his wife Mai are also leaving Perth soon. I wish to thank Hara san and his family for the remarkable contribution they made to our cultural activities. Please give him an applause.

I wish to conclude by wishing for the enduring friendship between Japan and Western Australia.

I would now like to ask you to join with me and raise your glass in a toast to the good health and long life of His Majesty King Charles III.

To the King.

Thank you for your attention.

End