

Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the TAP Welcoming Ceremony for TCU students
at the Edith Cowan University
Thursday February 13, 2025

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.

Mr Jake Garman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor International,
Prof Matthew Allen, Executive Dean, School of Arts & Humanities,
Mr Simon Davies-Burrows, Manager of Internationalization at ECU,
Ms Stephanie Coates, representing Tokyo City University,
Tokyo City University students,
Professors, staff and buddies ambassadors at ECU,

(Words of Welcome)

I wish to welcome the 95 students from Tokyo City University on the TAP Program to Perth. This is a great opportunity for students from Japan to learn, experience and make friends with people from different cultures.

I have been welcoming students for the past 2 years and 5 months and I will say this to you confidently that after the 16 weeks, how you see Australia, Japan and the world will be very different. It is a real life-changing experience.

It is going to be fun, but try to the maximum this experience as it will be an important turning point for your futures.

(Bilateral Relations)

Japan and Western Australia share very strong ties that have been built over many years. Economically, 53% of Japan's imported iron ore, 30% of LNG and 15% of wheat, ideal for udon noodles, are from Western Australia. Japan's imported sugar, beef and canola oil are also from Australia. Western Australia is everywhere in your everyday life in Japan.

(Expanding people-to-people exchange)

Last year, 2024, was extraordinary year. A record of more than 920,000 Australians visited Japan last year, an impressive 50% increase from 2023. In Western Australia, the resumption of the ANA Perth to Narita direct flight was the biggest breakthrough, now operating year round and adding 35,000 seats annually. With the Osaka Kansai Expo from 13 April to October, well over 1 million Australians are expected to visit Japan this year. So tell your Australian friends about Japan including tips for enjoying travel and life in Japan.

(Goodwill ambassadors between Japan and Australia)

We have 8,500 Japanese citizens living in Western Australia, and Japanese language is one of the most popular foreign languages taught in government schools. You will find friendliness and a remarkable understanding of Japan among people all around you. This shows the level of mutual trust built over the years through people-to-people interactions between Japan and Australia, and is something we should cherish deeply. We have many goodwill ambassadors who bridge Japan and Australia, and for the next 16 weeks you will find yourself to be goodwill ambassadors of Japan.

TCU students from previous cycles speak of their sense of achievement at their farewell ceremonies before their departure.

(Perth Japan Festival and other excitement)

A major event on our calendar each year is the Perth Japan Festival, a day where the Japanese and WA community come together to celebrate Japanese culture, music and food, and we would like to encourage you all to join, as either volunteers or participants.

The 11th Perth Japan Festival will be held on Saturday the 15th of March at the Supreme Court Gardens, and we welcome you to take the opportunity to enjoy the festivities with your friends and buddies. It is the perfect opportunity to experience a Japanese festival atmosphere with Japanese drumming, Bon Odori, tea ceremony, martial arts, ikebana flower arranging and pop culture all showcased in one place. Last year, 20,000 people attended the Perth Japan Festival and attendance is growing each year.

And enjoy hosting your own Japan Festival at ECU in April.

Through these interactions, you will be surprised to see we have so many friends of Japan in Perth, and I am sure it will be an unforgettable experience during your stay in Western Australia.

(Words of Appreciation)

I am sad to say this is my last chance to welcome TCU students at ECU as I am leaving Perth at the end of February to my new posting. So I wish to take this occasion to once again express my sincere appreciation to the professors and staff of Edith Cowan University for supporting this excellent program and for guiding and caring for students. Your efforts have contributed to the mutual understanding between Japan and Australia immensely and we will continue to see its impact in the years to come.

I congratulate you on the massive achievement of more than 1400 students from TCU having completed the TAP Program at ECU and more than 750 ECU students have acted as buddy ambassadors to support TCU students since it started in 2016.

I had the honour of receiving a message last night from the former Ambassador of Japan

to Australia and advisor to the President of TCU, Kusaka Sumio, and I am happy to know that President Yashiro is planning another visit to Perth in July this year. This is a special year where Japan-Western Australia relations have special attention in both Japan and in Australia.

Let me now say a few words to the TCU students in Japanese.

東京都市大学の皆さん、パースへようこそ。在パース日本国総領事の内藤です。貴重な 16 週間の留学の機会を是非有効に活用して頂ければと思います。海外から日本を見つめ、世界を見る、そして自分自身を向上させるチャンスですので、楽しんで下さい。様々な発見を日本に持ち帰り、職業選択の時にも役立つと思います。

今後、海外留学を続ける方や、オーストラリアを含め、世界を相手に活躍する方もおられると思います。皆さんの留学期間には、3月15日(土)にパース日本祭があります。去年は2万人が参加しました。ボランティアも募集していますが、参加できる方は是非楽しんで下さい。昨年夏の甲子園で準優勝した菅東一校のチアリーダー達が世界大会で優勝したパフォーマンスを見せ、日本の高校の部活のパワーを見せてくれます。6月5日のFIFAサッカーワールドカップ予選の日豪対決にも注目して下さい。

私は2月末でパースを離任することになりましたので、ジョインできなくて残念ですが、盛り沢山の今年のパースを是非楽しんで下さい。きっと生涯を通じて忘れられない良い経験になると思います。

パースは安全で暮らしやすい街ですが、やはり外国ですので十分注意して下さい。くれぐれも健康には留意され、旅券等紛失しないよう、また犯罪に合うリスクが高まるような行動をしないよう心掛けてください。具体的には総領事館の担当者より注意がありますので、参考にしてください。その上で困った事態となれば総領事館までご相談頂ければと思います。それでは、今日から始まる留学経験が、皆さんの将来にとり実りのあるものになることを願っております。ありがとうございました。

Thank you for your attention. All the best to the future leaders and best wishes for the further success of ECU and the TAP Program.

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