

Ambassador's Message No.49 (The Spring 2017 Conferment of Decorations on Foreign Nationals Ceremony for Former Australian Ambassador to Japan Mr Peter Grey)

4 September

Dear friends,

I wish to inform you all of a celebratory event in the relationship between Japan and Australia that recently took place at my residence.

In recognition of the significant contribution made by Mr Peter Grey, former Australian ambassador to Japan, to the promotion of friendship, goodwill, economic relations, and mutual understanding between Japan and Australia, in the Spring 2017 Conferment of Decorations on Foreign Nationals announcement, His Majesty the Emperor bestowed upon Mr Grey the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star.



I would like to provide an overview of the conferral ceremony that took place at my residence on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, an event that was attended by many representatives of the Japanese and Australian business and other communities and members of Mr Grey's wife, and was extensively covered by media outlets.

Former ambassador Grey, in addition to his service as Australia's ambassador to Japan from the period of 1998 to 2001, and following his retirement from government service, continued to make a profound and lasting contribution to the development of the economic and trade relationship between Japan and Australia by applying his insight to the heretofore relationship in his capacity as a member of the board of the Australia-Japan Business Co-operation Committee.

The paragraphs that follow have been taken from the speech that I presented at the conferral ceremony at my residence, and I have taken the liberty to introduce (or more accurately

summarise) some of the achievements that former ambassador Grey made during his time in office.

During his tenure as Ambassador, Mr Grey made a significant contribution to the transformation of the bilateral relationship into one of a “creative partnership”. His tireless efforts in the service of Australia’s interests led, in 1997, to the establishment of nascent negotiations between Australia and Japan for the eventual creation of the Australia-Japan Conference.

The subsequent convening of the conference in March 2001 in Sydney, the preparations for which owed a great deal of their success to Mr Grey’s diligence, resulted in a Joint Chairman’s Statement, otherwise known as the “Sydney Declaration for a Creative Partnership between Australia and Japan”. Proposals made in that statement were later expanded upon in the “Australia-Japan Creative Partnership” announced by Prime Minister Koizumi during his visit to Australia in May 2002, which led to further bilateral initiatives in security, economics, and higher education.

The efforts made by Mr Grey during his ambassadorial tenure and afterwards as the chief negotiator of the Australian Trade Commission laid the foundations for the establishment of the “Special Strategic Partnership”, as the relationship between Japan and Australia is now known, and have been widely and highly acclaimed.

Mr Grey’s contributions to the bilateral relationship have continued through the years both in a public capacity and as a member of the executive of private companies such as MLC Life Insurance. Mr Grey has thus proven time and again to be a staunch, steadfast friend and promoter of the ties between Japan and Australia.



After conferring the decoration and its related certificate upon Mr Grey at the ceremony, Mr Grey went on to state his sincere gratitude for the role he was able to play at the centre of economic and trade relations in further deepening the relationship between Japan and Australia. He said that his experience of negotiating with Japan left him with an impression that Japan is a tough negotiator, but was precisely because of this that a relationship of trust was built between both sides and he felt it played a very important role in the formation of personal networks. Mr Grey then said that he would continue to expend every effort on behalf of the Japan-Australia relationship for which he feels a very personal connection, adding that for him “it is a never ending fascination with Japan, its culture and society. For anyone who has spent in Tokyo, you can’t help but be fascinated by it.”



While celebrating the conferral of the award on Mr Grey at the ceremony with the attendees, I wanted to use this occasion to convey to my counterparts in the Australian government and to all those involved in Japan-Australia relations including those reading this letter, that in continuing the legacy of all those who have striven on behalf of our bilateral ties, and with your co-operation, I solemnly vow to take the relationship to even greater heights across the broad range of fields.

Yours sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia