

## **Emperor's Birthday Reception (Wednesday, 25 November)**

Dr Southcott, Your Excellencies, honourable members of parliament, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed an honour for my wife Ikuko and I to be able to host you at my Residence on the occasion of the Birthday of His Majesty, the Emperor, to celebrate the National Day of Japan.

On December 23rd, His Majesty Emperor Akihito will celebrate his 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday. Over the decades, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress have dedicated themselves to fulfilling their domestic duties in addition to promoting international friendship as a symbol of Japan and the unity of the Japanese people. As we partake in this celebration, I would like to wish His Majesty the Emperor and Her Majesty the Empress the very best of health and continued success in their promotion of international goodwill.

To focus on the Japan-Australia relationship for a moment, as you are all aware, 2015 has been a momentous year for the relationship between our two countries. A major example of this is the historic Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement which officially came into effect in January this year. With the support of the Agreement, we have already witnessed a significant boost in trade, such as that of Australian wine and Aussie beef being exported to Japan, as well as a considerable increase in Japanese investment in Australian companies.

This relationship is highly complementary, and Australian companies are welcoming these new opportunities thanks to Japanese businesses' strong financial and technological capabilities, as well as their ability to generate local employment opportunities.

To explore some of the other products, goods and services on which the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership agreement will have a positive impact, I would like to draw your attention to some of the displays of Japanese companies and organisations operating in Australia including automotive, technology, transportation, defence and food and beverage industries.

In the front and rear gardens there are some of the latest Japanese vehicles on display, as well as a number of Japanese food stalls and specialized Japanese beverages booths where you can enjoy Japanese beer, tea, Yakult and whisky. Inside the Residence we have displays ranging from those of Japanese technology and machinery companies, to food and beverage companies, and even small scale models of a Japanese bullet

train, a Mitsubishi Regional Jet, and if you search very carefully, you may even see the model Japanese submarine which has very stealthily made its way into this year's display.

The concept for this evening's reception is '*Discover the Spirit of Japan*', and we hope that you will all be able to experience, and enjoy many features that Japan has to offer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those companies including Toyota Australia, Honda Australia, Kirin, Asahi Holdings Australia, Ito En Australia, Yakult Australia, NEC Australia, Central Japan Railway Company, Mitsui & Co. Australia, Mitsubishi Australia, Hitachi Australia, Fujitsu Australia, Kikkoman Australia and Tsubaki Australia for making all of these displays possible.

I firmly believe that the strong Australia-Japan relationship is key for stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. I also believe that it is the respect we have for each another, and the visionary approach towards our future that I believe have sustained the relationship between Japan and Australia. I intend as Ambassador to expend every effort in further strengthening and promoting the ties between us not only in the fields of the economy, defence and security, but also on a cultural level, by nurturing people to people exchange at a grassroots level.

All of you here today are key to the continued strengthening of the valued relationship between Japan and Australia, and I look forward to working with you in the New Year. Thank you once again for your great friendship and for joining us here this evening.