

Re: “Japan-Australia Infrastructure Networking Meeting”

Australia’s economic growth continues and the country’s population continues to expand despite the downturn in commodity prices and the decline in manufacturing. Against this backdrop, major investments in transport-related infrastructure—including both road and rail projects—are being made in areas around Australia. Indeed, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has predicted that Australia’s population will double by 2075, with Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in particular expected to experience rapid population growth in the years ahead.

In these cities, the traditional reliance on road infrastructure, coupled with growing traffic congestion and a lack of parking spaces, has led to the announcement of numerous rail and light rail projects. In relation to rail, major projects include the Sydney Metro Northwest project, Melbourne's High Capacity Metro Trains project, Queensland New Generation Rollingstock project and the Gold Coast Light Rail project. Significantly, Japanese businesses are in some form involved in all of these projects.

In other areas, infrastructure-related opportunities are also arising in connection with port privatisation; housing and urban development; utilities infrastructure, including electricity, gas and water; renewable energy; and the construction /operation of educational facilities, hospitals and prisons. Australia is also a leading country in relation to the utilisation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for delivering infrastructure projects, and Japanese firms are forming consortia with companies from Australia, Europe, North America etc. to participate in such projects.

At a government-to-government level, based on the joint statement made by Prime Ministers Turnbull and Abe during Prime Minister Turnbull’s visit to Japan in December of last year, Australia and Japan will this year hold the first Vice-Ministerial Infrastructure Meeting. This meeting will provide an opportunity for Japan and Australia to share views and experiences in relation to transport infrastructure and to exchange opinions on promotion of public transportation, while also assisting in the process of matching Japanese companies’ strengths with Australia’s infrastructure needs.

The meeting will provide an important forum for policy-related discussion pertaining to infrastructure and regional development, and will chiefly involve representatives from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (Australia) and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (Japan). Nevertheless, given that Australia has developed highly-sophisticated PPP system over time, it is essential

that Japanese businesses also create a close network with Australian companies to be able to establish consortia at a very early stage in the tender process.

Many Australian and Japanese firms already maintain close contact with one another. On the other hand, some Japanese businesses state that they aim to boost their presence in Australia and some Australian businesses say they are keen to engage in networking with Japanese companies that are seeking to enter or have recently established themselves in the Australian market. Some Australian businesses also say that they are interested in meeting with Japanese businesses that possess new technologies.

Therefore, in order to promote such exchange and networking—and also to provide an opportunity for Japanese companies to convey their strengths and interests to their Australian counterparts—the Embassy of Japan in Australia is planning to hold a “Japan-Australia Infrastructure Networking Meeting” (tentative title) at Embassy of Japan, Canberra, in July 28th (Thursday) of this year.

In this instance, the meeting will focus on transport infrastructure (including rail, airports and ports) to maximise synergy effect with the aforementioned Vice-Ministerial Infrastructure Meeting. However, we will also consider holding meetings focusing more heavily on other infrastructure-related areas of interest to Japanese and Australian businesses in future.

The Embassy continues to support the efforts of Japanese companies that have entered or are seeking to enter the Australian market. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Economic Section at the Embassy of Japan at economics@cb.mofa.go.jp or on (02) 6273 3244.