

Ambassador Kusaka's Message No.72

*Farewell and thank you Australia*

12 December 2018

Dear Friends,

It is with sincere appreciation and respect to inform you that this message will be my last as the Japanese Ambassador to Australia. Upon the conclusion of my appointment in January 2019, I will return to Tokyo. I would like to use this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for your support and kindness during my ambassadorship to Australia.

It is truly amazing to think that almost four years have passed since I arrived in Canberra to assume the role of Ambassador to Australia. It is even more amazing to think that nearly forty years have passed since I first arrived in Canberra to assume my very first overseas posting as a diplomat.

Over the course of my posting as Ambassador, truly remarkable progress has been achieved across our two nations' relationship. To a large extent, this progress can be attributed to the immense value attached to the Japan-Australia relationship by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Australian counterparts - namely Prime Ministers Scott Morrison, Malcolm Turnbull and Tony Abbott - and to the strong leadership that each have displayed on bilateral as well as regional issues. By way of example, the agreement between Prime Ministers Abe and Abbott to establish the annual leaders' dialogue in 2014 thereafter significantly quickened the pace of development in our relationship.



For my own part, events such as Prime Minister Turnbull's visits to Tokyo in December 2015 and January 2018, Prime Minister Abe's visit to Sydney in January 2017, and most recently his historic visit to Darwin to meet with Prime Minister Morrison are among some of the most memorable experiences in my 40-year diplomatic career. To have witnessed, experienced, and to be included in these pivotal events as Ambassador and the progress they have engendered has been a great honour and privilege, and immensely satisfying.

Looking ahead, I have every confidence that the accomplishments of recent years - including the entry into force of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, the conclusion of the TPP11, as well as the coordinated promotion of a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, and above all the very successful bilateral visits of our respective Prime Ministers - will all contribute to further expanding and strengthening the relationship of Japan and Australia for many years to come.

People-to-people exchanges are also invaluable and encouragingly robust between the people of our two nations. It is exchange at a grassroots level that supports our friendship. The mutual interest and close ties shared between Japanese and Australians are not only incredibly strong, but also continuing to deepen and expand at a rapid pace.



On a more personal note, my wife, Ikuko and I have had the opportunity to visit various locations throughout the country during our time here in Australia and in doing so we have been made acutely aware of the histories of both countries. We have always been deeply touched by the unwavering generosity and kindness extended to us by the many Australians we have met. In this way, we have been able to experience firsthand the bonds of friendship and trust that are shared on all levels between the people of Japan and Australia.

Both Ikuko and I are very sad to be leaving Australia, but we also feel extremely fortunate to have experienced your wonderful warmth and hospitality, and to have made so many dear friends here. It has been a great privilege and a pleasure to work with you all. We are very grateful to you all.

My successor will arrive in Canberra in January and I ask that you afford him the same kindness and support that you have shown my wife and I during our time in Australia.

Thank you once again. I hope our paths will cross again someday, and until then, I wish you and your family all the best in health and happiness.

Yours sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia