

Memorial Service for the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake

Saturday 13 March 2021

at Canberra Nara Peace Park

10 years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami; a devastating event that caused unprecedented damage and claimed many precious lives.

I am very moved to see you all here today to commemorate this occasion in the Canberra-Nara Peace Park; a symbol of the ongoing friendship between Nara and Canberra, and Japan and Australia.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the JET Alumni Association of Canberra, Canberra Japan Club and Australia-Japan Society for kindly arranging this service over ten years.

To this day, the memory of watching the destruction played out on TV screens will be forever etched in my mind.

Reconstruction of the affected region is surely advancing, but at the same time many people still suffer from the aftermath.

In September last year, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum opened in Fukushima. It will convey the impact of this unprecedented disaster and the importance of disaster preparedness to visitors and subsequent generations.

And as the Japanese Ambassador to Australia, I stand ready to share with Australia and the rest of the world, Japan's expertise and knowledge of disaster preparedness and recovery from natural disasters.

Even events such as the recent earthquake off the coast of Fukushima in February are a reminder of the devastation of March 11 and the absolute necessity to be always vigilant.

The tremendous generosity and support shown by Australia immediately following the disaster is a testament to the strong, robust friendship we share.

Then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard was the first foreign leader to visit the Tohoku region and Australia provided much support through food aid packages, donations and relief teams on the ground.

I cannot highlight Australia's support without expressing gratitude to the generosity and kindness of the Canberra community.

From fundraising activities to annual memorial services and charity concerts for the Tohoku Youth Program, to name a few.

And we have not forgotten Australia's kind generosity.

During the Black Summer bushfires, Japan provided support to Australia with the bushfire response, including two aircrafts to assist with the transportation of personnel and equipment, and cash donations exceeding \$5 million dollars.

The multitude of cultural and community linkages between our two countries is one of the great pillars supporting the Japan-Australia relationship.

I am very grateful to have an opportunity to come together with the Canberra community to honour the victims of this disaster.

I join you all in offering heartfelt prayers for the eternal repose of those who lost their lives and pray for the peace and tranquillity of their bereaved family members.

Thank you.