

Speech

Presented by His Excellency Yamagami Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia
On the occasion of the Conferral Ceremony of Mr Bruce Miller AO
6 May 2021, Ambassador's Official Residence

Today it is my pleasure to welcome you to the conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, to Mr Bruce James Ross Miller, Officer of the Order of Australia.

I am honored to note that Bruce and I have some things in common.

For example, we were both born in 1961.

And so, I must say that it is an incredible achievement for someone this young to receive the Order of the Rising Sun.

In addition, both of us have experience directing the intelligence agencies in our respective countries.

As such, we both know just what intelligence officials say about diplomats when they aren't around.

I feel fortunate to have been posted to Australia at this time, allowing me this humbling opportunity to recognize Bruce.

His contributions to our bilateral relationship have been exceptional.

His deep knowledge of Japanese culture and language certainly made a difference.

As I'm sure you are all aware, his Japanese is impeccable.

Bruce's association with Japan spans from his high school years, when he first visited on a Japan Foundation summer program, to today, as he continues his life-long work of strengthening our bilateral ties.

I understand that he read a great deal of Japanese literature during his university days.

The mark of a great diplomat is someone who puts in the time to understand a nation through its culture and people.

After reading Natsume Soseki, I'm sure Bruce knows that the subtle Japanese way of saying 'I love you' is 'The moon is beautiful'.

After watching 'The Castle' I know that the subtle Australian way of saying thank you for an award is 'this is going straight to the pool room'.

Bruce's third tour of duty in Japan was as Ambassador and came shortly after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. Bruce made it his priority to visit disaster effected areas, not once, but numerous times.

He contributed to the realization of a special program which allowed students from Minami Sanriku to broaden their perspective through study in the Gold Coast.

Bruce was also there for the opening ceremony of the first permanent structure built in Minami Sanriku after the disaster.

Known as the 'Koala house' and built pro-bono by Australian companies, this community centre offers educational support for children still suffering the effects of the disaster.

Some of the most significant steps in our bilateral relationship were made during Bruce's time as Ambassador.

With regards to defense, our Information and Security Agreement was signed, as was our Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.

Furthermore, the relationship was elevated to a 'Special Strategic Partnership'.

With regards to our trading relationship, the all-important Japan-Australia Economic Partnership, which has supported a rise in our two-way trade of some 31 per cent, was signed.

Japan was also chosen as one of the few pilot locations for Australia's New Colombo Plan during its inception.

When the sad news of Bruce's return to Australia was announced, then Prime Minister Abe took it upon himself to throw a farewell lunch to express his gratitude.

I must also congratulate TAL for a job well done in headhunting such a great talent.

I'm certain it was an enormous loss for DFAT.

Bruce has hopefully laid the foundation for a great exodus from the Australian government into the Japanese business sector.

Just for your information TAL, I'm also available.

To conclude I'd like to wish Bruce, and his partner Mikio who has been by his side for so much of his journey, all the best for the future.

I'm sure you will provide many more years of service towards our bilateral ties, this time in the Japanese business sector.

And so, it is my great pleasure to announce that the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, is hereby awarded to Mr Bruce Miller.

Congratulations!