

# Speech

Presented by His Excellency Mr Yamagami Shingo,

Ambassador of Japan to Australia

On the Occasion of the Tasmanian Government Breakfast Networking Event:

‘Let’s Talk About Exporting to Japan’

Tuesday 8 June 2021

## **1. Japan and Tasmania: strong people-to-people ties**

Minister for Trade, the Honourable Mr Guy Barnett

Honorary Consul General for Japan in Tasmania, Ms Kim Clifford

Author, Cook and Goodwill Ambassador for Japanese cuisine, Mr Adam Liaw

Accomplished Winemaker, Ms Jennifer Doyle

Director and Founder of 123V Pty Ltd, Ms Joan McGovern

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is lovely to be here in Tassie for the first time.

Please don’t think of me as a ‘Mainlander’.

I am in fact from an Island much like Tasmania.

Just like Tassie, the island nation of Japan prides itself on some of the finest, freshest seafood you will ever taste.

Just like Tassie, we have not allowed our small size to restrict our large potential.

And, just like Tassie, we truly value deep and personal people-to-people ties.

Which is why, I believe, there are so many heartwarming stories of long-lasting friendships between Tasmanians and Japanese people.

Take for example, the friendship between Ms Jillian Hall of Bagdad and Ms MARUYAMA Kumiko of Aichi Prefecture.

After exchanging letters for over five decades, the two friends first met face to face when both were over sixty years of age.

Or how about Ms Wendy Batten of Launceston and Mr YOSHIZUMI Junichi of Ikeda City?

The long-distance friendship of these two pen pals inspired their two home cities to form one of the oldest Sister City relationships in Japan-Australia history.

Everywhere you look, there is evidence of a great deal of goodwill between Tasmania and Japan.

Even within our Embassy in Canberra, we have a Tasmanian staff member working towards the strengthening of our cultural ties.

When I told him I was visiting his home-state, he told me to make sure I took my Tasmanian tuxedo.

A tuxedo seemed a little formal, a little too 'James Bond', even for an official visit.

How surprised I was to learn he was talking about a puffer jacket.

## **2. The potential of Japan-Tasmania trade & investment**

But I'm not here to talk to you about pen pals and tuxedos.

I'm here to tell you that I believe our strong person-to-person links can be utilized to expand our trade and investment.

Japan is already the second largest investor in Australia.

In total stock value, Japan has invested a remarkable one-hundred-and thirty-one billion dollars' in this country.

So the desire to invest is already there.

In Tasmania, evidence of Japanese investment can be seen just outside Longford, where Japanese supermarket chain AEON has invested in Tasmania's only commercial-scale feedlot.

Here, every year, tens of thousands of Tasmanian born cattle are fed with Tasmanian grown feed.

The beef is sent to AEON stores where it is purchased by Japanese consumers who value the assurance of high quality and safe production that comes with knowing it is from Tasmania.

Indeed, this trust in Tasmanian production is part of the reason why beef remains Tasmania's largest export to Japan.

As some of you may know, Aussie beef has the greatest market share at forty-three per cent.

Japanese investment can also be seen in Launceston, where Japanese beverage giant Kirin has invested in the James Boag brewery.

And it doesn't end there.

Right here in Hobart, James Boag rival Cascade is now owned by Kirin's largest rival Asahi.

So you could say that the Hobart-Launceston rivalry has expanded beyond Tasmania's shores.

Outside of Tasmanian beef, exports of Tasmanian aluminum, cheese and fish are all making strong headways in the Japanese market.

Whilst I would like to celebrate this, I believe the full potential of our trade relationship has yet to be realized.

I'm sure Ms Doyle will agree when I say Tasmania's vineyards have a lot more to offer Japanese wine lovers.

In Canberra I have been serving Tasmanian wine at my official residence to guests from all over Australia and Japan.

Fruit and vegetable exports from Tasmania also have room to grow in Japan, which is one of the world's largest importers of agricultural products.

And it is not just about volume.

As a food-loving nation, Japan can provide niche opportunities for unique products like Tasmanian Pepper Berry.

This antioxidant rich berry, with its long history of usage in Indigenous communities, has already been used in Japan as a flavoring and fragrance for products like chewing gum, toothpaste and even wasabi powder.

I was encouraged to hear that in 2019, for the very first time, the Government of Tasmania organized a pavilion in Japan's largest international food and beverage trade show, FOODEX.

I hope this is one of many more opportunities for Tasmanian exporters to introduce their high quality products to Japan.

### **3. The potential of Japan-Tasmania tourism**

Likewise, there is potential for our two-way tourism to grow further.

Whilst both of our nations continue to be vigilant against the risks of COVID-19, we look forward to the day when safe travel can open up between us.

Japan has already been identified as a potential partner for a future travel bubble with Australia.

It is my sincere hope that many Japanese people will get the opportunity to visit Tasmania; to see its scenic national parks and experience its delectable cuisine.

Because with more Tourism will come more people-to-people links.

And with more people-to-people links, there will be further trade and investment.

I look forward to building a closer, more rounded Japan-Tasmania relationship together with you all.

Thank you.