

# Speech

**Presented by HE Mr Yamagami Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia**

**On the occasion of the 5th Japan-Australia Infrastructure Network Meeting**

**19 November 2021**

## **1. Introduction**

Her Excellency, Ms Jan Adams, Ambassador of Australia to Japan,

The Honourable Stuart Ayres, Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking you for participating in the 5th Japan-Australia Infrastructure Network Meeting.

On behalf of the Embassy of Japan, I must say that we are thrilled to have such a broad range of business and government leaders in attendance, both online and here at the PwC Sydney Office.

My appreciation goes to Jason Hayes, Tsuzurahara-san and all others at the PwC for providing this magnificent venue.

Many of you will know that I simply cannot deliver a speech without attempting a joke.

This time around, I must admit, I worried I wouldn't be able to come up with an infrastructure-related joke.

But then I thought: "I'll just cross that bridge when I come to it".

It is particularly exciting to have your company at this time as Australia-Japan relations enter a whole new chapter.

As you know well, our relationship has long been defined by economic complementarity.

And while this is still the case today, what defines us has broadened.

We also share universal values, such as a commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and, significantly, shared strategic interests.

New areas of cooperation are opening up at an exponential pace, particularly in infrastructure, hydrogen and even space.

## **2. Current Japanese Engagement**

There is no better time for Japanese companies to be considering investing in Australia.

As a foreign investment destination, there are many factors that make Australia attractive.

It is one of the few advanced countries in the world where the population is growing, rather than dwindling.

It has a vast amount of land.

It is a safe and welcoming nation, inhabited by friendly, down to earth people.

And, perhaps most importantly, it upholds values such as transparency and fairness in its laws and policy.

It comes as no surprise therefore that many Japanese companies have jumped at the chance to invest here.

With regards to the development of Western Sydney, six Japanese companies have already signed MOUs with the New South Wales Government.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, Hitachi, Urban Renaissance Agency, NEC and NTT will provide a range of solutions to contribute to the growth of business and employment in the region, as well as the reduction of congestion in Greater Sydney as a whole.

Japanese companies have much to offer.

Attention to detail, commitment to quality, advanced technology and an eagerness to invest in new and exciting ventures are some of their hallmarks.

One of Japan's strong suits is the planning and construction of smart cities.

For the past decade, the Japanese government has been taking a whole-of-government approach, with all hands on deck, to promote the construction of smart cities.

Japan's aim is to have smart city projects underway in one-hundred different regions in the next four years.

Private companies have been following the governments lead and establishing their own projects.

One example is Toyota's 'Woven City', which is being constructed on 71 hectares at the base of Mount Fuji.

This pioneering project will see smart homes, robotics, AI and automated vehicles come together to create a highly integrated, energy-efficient and simply enjoyable place to live.

Sustainability is at the heart of this project in which buildings will be made with carbon neutral materials and roofs lined with solar panels.

With regards to the construction of new cities, Japan shares many of the same challenges that Australia faces.

We want to create cities that do not rely heavily on car travel.

We want cities that have low environmental impact.

And we want cities that can withstand natural disasters.

All over the world, in places like Las Vegas, Hanoi, Bangkok and Jakarta, Japanese companies are using their know-how to help to build cities that fit this vision.

### **3. Future Potential**

It's for all these reasons that I have high hopes for what Japanese companies can achieve for the development of Western Sydney moving forward.

The momentum from the Western Sydney Aerotropolis has already led to exciting developments in Japanese business engagement in this country, including the establishment of Urban Renaissance Agency's first overseas office right here in Sydney.

For decades, UR has been encouraging and facilitating the involvement of Japanese infrastructure businesses in overseas projects from its Tokyo office.

But agreements concluded with the NSW government and the Western Parkland City Authority became a catalyst for its first ever overseas presence.

UR has extensive experience in community building and urban development in Japan, including its involvement in the unprecedented challenge of rebuilding towns in the wake of the 2011 tōhoku earthquake and tsunami.

UR constructed over 5,000 public housing units for survivors and reconstructed around 15,000 hectares of effected urban areas.

I am certain that the knowledge gained from this enormous challenge can be drawn upon for their next big task in Western Sydney.

What's more, it is sure to spur on many other Japanese businesses to get involved in the development. There is certainly already a lot of enthusiasm.

I have been hearing from Japanese companies that they are keen to know more about the grand vision and the timeline from the NSW government.

Today is a wonderful opportunity for questions to be asked and connections to be made.

Japanese companies hope to see the development of a city which is convenient and attractive for Sydneysiders.

In order to ensure that the development smoothly integrates public transport and the new airport, many believe it is important for the State and Federal government to work in unison.

Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of Japan's involvement in the development of Western Sydney will be what comes next.

I am certain this will be a trigger for an era of unprecedented infrastructure related cooperation between our two nations.

Not only here in Australia, but also on projects in our region, the Indo-Pacific.

Because there is certainly more that Japanese technology and experience has to offer.

With any luck, one day we might see Japanese-quality high-speed rail in this country.

This would have a remarkable effect on productivity and significantly reduce the travel time between Australia's largest cities.

A trip between Canberra and Sydney could be done in an hour.

And the great leg from Melbourne to Sydney in just three hours.

It would also reduce congestion and house prices in Australia's capitals and spread prosperity to regional communities.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To conclude, whether it's in relation to efficient, highly-livable smart cities, high speed rail, or other endeavors, I hope that today's meeting inspires all of you to dream big about what you can achieve for Australia, and Australia-Japan relations.

Certainly, there is no better time to exchange ideas and hopes for the future than on days like today when so many stakeholders are gathered together.

On that note, it truly is the participation of each and every one of you which makes this event meaningful.

So again I would like to say thank you.

Thank you and enjoy today's discussion.