

# Speech

**Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia  
For the Conferral of the Foreign Minister's Commendation  
On Mr. Peter Jennings AM**

**25 November 2021**

It is an honour to invite you all to my Residence this evening to convey the Foreign Minister's Commendation Award on renowned strategist, astute analyst, and great friend of Japan, Mr. Peter Jennings.

Over his distinguished career in government and think-tanks, Peter has been a consistent, vocal supporter of the Japan-Australia relationship, and the Special Strategic Partnership that both nations share today owes a great debt of gratitude to Peter.

Peter's record when it comes to forging closer ties between the Japanese and Australian defence and strategic communities speaks for itself.

During his time as Executive Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Peter has overseen many 1.5 Track Dialogues between Japan and Australia's security and defence communities, leading to greater cooperation in many fields and building personal ties between senior officials involved in foreign affairs and defence in both countries.

Peter has long advocated for Australia and Japan to develop a closer strategic relationship, as evidenced by his activity while in government.

Peter worked with Japan to reach an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement, and helped to lay the foundation for the Information Sharing Agreement that was

signed in 2012.

Upon becoming Executive Director of ASPI, one of Peter's first reports advocated expanding Japan-Australia defence cooperation – indeed this was in the very title of the report!

Whether it be at symposiums, dialogues, during television or net-streamed interviews, or in newspaper and journal articles, Peter has consistently and resolutely backed the Japan-Australia relationship and highlighted its strengths and the need for greater levels of cooperation between both countries.

This support was made most evident in the 2016 Defence White Paper. Peter's role as chairman of the panel of consultants for the drafting of the paper resulted in a more prominent position for Japan in Australia's security thinking. This was both noticed and appreciated by Tokyo, as was the support shown by Australia for Japan's more pro-active involvement in security-related activities.

I also wish to offer my sincere gratitude to Peter for the support that ASPI has given to joint projects and analysis both with the Japanese government and the Japan Institute of International Affairs.

Under Peter's leadership, ASPI has become the foremost think-tank in Australia, and indeed within Oceania as a whole, for all matters concerning defence and security.

Moreover, ASPI has now branched out overseas, with the announcement by Defence Minister Dutton of the opening of an ASPI office in Washington D.C. That is a remarkable achievement and testament to Peter's influence and advocacy.

As Executive Director, Peter has lent his considerable expertise to analysing what

opportunities and threats lie in the present and future for Australia and what should be done to resolve them.

It is not very often that an individual and their arguments can change the course of government policy, but in Peter's case I think we can safely say that Australia's security has been vastly strengthened due to Peter's advocacy for foreign interference and critical infrastructure legislation.

Peter went through a great ordeal during his crusade on the Port of Darwin. Some might call it quixotic, but he held his ground firmly.

Throughout this episode and for much of his professional life, I am sure Charmian's support meant a lot to Peter. Partners bring out the best in us, and we all owe a debt of gratitude to Charmian for the encouragement and assurance that she has provided to Peter over his distinguished career so far.

Peter has fearlessly stood up for Australia, its institutions and its democracy against all comers, becoming a bane to those who seek to down-play or belittle Australia and its relations with other nations.

Such an outstanding personality as Peter's will always be in great demand but also such short supply. He will always be warmly welcomed in Tokyo.

So here's to you, Peter, and congratulations on your award.