

## **SPEECH**

Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia  
On the occasion of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games Reception  
Ambassador's Official Residence, Canberra - 30 November 2021

### **1. Introduction**

Senator the Honourable Richard Colbeck, Minister for Sport  
Mr Matt Carroll, CEO of the Australian Olympic Committee  
Ms Lynne Anderson, CEO of Paralympics Australia  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is wonderful to see you all here in person at my residence.

The recent lockdown here in Canberra has meant many of our functions had to be cancelled or postponed.

But with the opening up, I have been able to resume diplomatic activities.

Thankfully so, because if I kept gaining those COVID kilos during lockdown, the buttons on my shirt would have had to start socially distancing from each other!

Perhaps now is the perfect time to seek training and dieting advice from the Olympic and Paralympic coaches here tonight.

This evening is my opportunity to welcome you in the Japanese style of hospitality, *Omotenashi* as we celebrate the accomplishments of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

You may be familiar with the term, *Omotenashi*, but you may not have had the chance to truly experience it in Tokyo.

I heard many stories from those on the ground at the Games.

One of which was the dining halls in the athletes village offered over 700 meal options 24 hours a day!

Athletes from around the world took to social media to rave about it.

I'm told gyoza was a popular dish with athletes even though they came frozen.

So tonight, please let me show you how gyoza should really taste.

And when I say me, I mean my wonderful chef, Chef Ogata who has handmade fresh gyoza for you all to enjoy this evening.

So coaches, just for tonight, I politely ask you to look the other way and even cover your ears when I say this.

Athletes, now is the time to indulge! Leave your strict diets at the door and enjoy the best gyoza you'll ever try!

I strongly recommend a cold stubby of Asahi beer to accompany Chef Ogata's gyoza.

## **2. Accomplishments of Tokyo 2020**

Amid the global pandemic, there were many discussions around the world on whether the Games should go ahead.

The operational challenges, the logistical difficulties, even the thousands of daily COVID-19 tests were extraordinary.

However, thanks to close cooperation between Tokyo 2020 organisers and participating countries and territories, the enormous mission of holding Tokyo 2020 was accomplished.

Mr John Coates kindly said Tokyo 2020 were the "greatest Olympic Games of all time".

And it wasn't just athletes breaking Olympic and world records.

Tokyo 2020 recorded not only the largest number of participating athletes, but also the largest number of female Olympians and Paralympians.

We saw the introduction of skateboarding, surfing and sports climbing, bringing in a completely new audience and generation.

And no Games has ever seen this level of technical innovation or digital engagement than what we saw at Tokyo 2020.

Proving that even without spectators, fans from around the world were able to engage and connect with the Games using new digital technologies.

### **3. Gratitude to Australia**

Australia has been a strong and unwavering supporter of Tokyo 2020.

One particularly encouraging moment came a month before the Opening Ceremony.

The Australian women's softball team, the Aussie Spirit were the very first team from anywhere in the world to arrive in Japan.

Overjoyed, I rallied the Embassy team together and donned our softball uniforms for a photo to send to our Aussie mates in Ota City.

Together with several packets of the iconic Aussie biscuits, Tim Tams, I sent them a care-package to offer my support and encouragement.

I call this "Biscuit Diplomacy".

Now let me say this here. My aim was to encourage and support them, not to sabotage the team with the sweet, chocolately goodness that is Australia's favourite biscuit.

Aussie Spirits' arrival made news across Japan and created momentum in the lead up to the Games.

One moment that stood out was Laing Harrow's praise for Fukushima peaches, describing them as "outstanding".

Another moment was the giant banner hanging from the building of the Aussie team in the athletes' village, thanking Japan for holding the Games.

This simple act struck a chord with so many Japanese given the long and challenging road in hosting the Games during a pandemic.

From the onset of the Games, our Embassy received hundreds of emails and letters, even flowers from Aussies around the country, thanking us for providing much-needed joy and inspiration.

So moved by these kind and gracious messages, I immediately passed them on to our colleagues on the ground at Tokyo 2020.

#### **4. Two great sporting nations**

Even on our TVs here in Australia, you could feel the camaraderie on display between our sporting nations.

You could feel it when Australia's Sally Fitzgibbon – despite missing out on a medal – reached across the water to fist bump Japan's TSUZUKI Amuro in the surfing quarter-finals.

And you could feel it when Japan's OKAMOTO Misugu fell during the women's park final of skateboarding.

Despite being her rival, Australia's Poppy Olsen joined her fellow skateboarders in cheering her up and lifting her onto their shoulders.

Japan and Australia have proven time and time again they are fierce sporting nations.

And not just in individual events.

Japan and Australia both excel in team sports.

Sports that require teamwork, communication, a sense of purpose, and most importantly shared trust.

I felt an overwhelming sense of pride when an Australian said our two nations “don't pursue ‘niche’ sports for the sake of collecting medals”.

#### **5. Brisbane 2032**

“Sport has the power to change the world and our future”.

These are the words of Japanese Summer and Winter Olympic Games legend and President of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, HASHIMOTO Seiko at the Closing Ceremony.

The Games were delayed for the first time in its history and the world was plunged into an unprecedented crisis in 2020.

However, Tokyo 2020 became a symbol of global unity in overcoming COVID-19.

We eagerly stand ready to share what we have learnt with Brisbane for a successful 2032 Games.

Because what Tokyo 2020 has shown us is, we are faster, higher and stronger when we are together.

**[END]**