

## **Speech**

### **'Japan and Western Australia: Our Shared Future'**

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

**On the occasion of a dinner with Deputy Premier the Hon Roger**

**Cook**

**22 March 2022**

Thank you for that kind introduction. I've been in the foreign service for almost 40 years. Oh how time flies!

The toughest assignment is speaking while drinking, especially when you are enjoying these many great dishes and fine wines.

It's a tough assignment, and you can say it's like no other!

The Honourable Roger Cook MLA, Deputy Premier of the  
Western Australian Government,

The Honourable Richard Court AC, Former Premier of Western  
Australia and Former Australian Ambassador to Japan,

The Honourable David Johnston, Former Federal Minister for  
Defence,

The Honourable Julie Bishop, Former Federal Minister of Foreign  
Affairs, and good friend of the current Japanese Prime Minister,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate the Japan-  
Western Australia relationship with the distinguished people who  
helped to foster it.

I must say, I've been eager for such an opportunity for so long!

Earlier this month I tried to come to Broome, but I couldn't get

in. So thank you for finally letting me in!

Whoever said you can achieve anything you set your mind to, obviously hadn't encountered Fortress WA.

Over the past year, Australia has been facing a multitude of economic pressures, including of course Chinese economic coercion, pandemic-related disruption and the global repercussions of Russia's war in Ukraine.

I'm certain that the business people among us are feeling these pressures more keenly than most.

Such pressures reinforce the message that economic and national security issues have become irrevocably intertwined.

And dissipate any fantasies some may have held about reliable trade with business partners who defy the rules.

Now, more than ever, preservation of the international rules-based order is critical, as has been pointed out by the Deputy Premier.

As are likeminded partners who understand the importance of protecting such an order.

Japan and Australia are each other's best friends in the region.

Our Special Strategic Partnership is based on shared values such as a commitment to democracy, human rights, free trade and the rule of law.

In a world in which national security concerns readily flow outside the domain of politics into the business sector, it is

natural that our two nations look to one another for trade and investment opportunities.

Luckily, Western Australia has had a decades-long head start when it comes to trade ties with Japan.

Major investments by Japanese companies began as early as the 1960s, opening up regional areas such as the Pilbara and invigorating this State's resources industry.

I was humbled by the words of WA acquaintances who praised Japan's involvement at every stage of the supply chain in this State's resources industry: helping to find, dig and ship.

Japan has also been a major buyer of WA's high quality grains, which it uses to make Japanese staples like Udon noodles and

even Shochu.

In fact, at 44 percent, almost half of all Australia's merchandise exports to Japan originate from this State.

With such a rich history of Japanese investment and trade, I don't doubt therefore that WA business leaders are some of the most Japan-savvy.

That's why I'm always just a little bit more choosy when picking a Japanese restaurant to take a Western Australian friend to.

In all seriousness though, while the Japan-WA story seems like a happy ending, it shouldn't end here.

Our shared future is bright.

New opportunities are set to open up for Western Australian companies looking to export to Japan or attract investment to

grow their business.

World-leading Japanese hydrogen technology and investment is an obvious example.

Japan is aiming to increase its hydrogen usage tenfold by 2050.

Which is great news for Western Australia, as it is aiming to have hydrogen exports of a similar scale to current LNG exports by 2030.

And, with the remaining tariff reductions under the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement to come into place over the next decade, things can only get better for our trade ties.

There's no better time for WA winemakers to start rolling up their sleeves and promoting the elegance of a nice Margaret River Cab Sav to Japanese wine lovers.

Likewise, now, more than ever, Japanese investment is facilitating growth opportunities for Australian businesses.

In 2020, despite the advent of a global pandemic, Japan was the top source of new direct investment in Australia, with a total of \$27.4 billion dollars.

Now, I've already spoken too long and I've heard that tonight we are going to be spoilt with a bespoke menu featuring premium local produce.

So I'll wrap up here.

But before I finish, please allow me to finish with one final word on the bright future of the Japan-WA relationship.

And that word is 'trust'.



It's our greatest asset.

And it will ensure that together we can protect our mutual prosperity and national interests long into the future.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

[Ends]