

Speech

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

**On the occasion of the launch of the Australia Japan Business
Council (WA) Inc**

23 March 2022

His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley AC, Governor of
Western Australia,

Mr Richard Sandover, Chair of Australia Japan Business Council
(WA) Inc,

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,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here for this momentous celebration of the Australia Japan Business Council Inc.

While tonight's event is the official launch, I know that Richard, Mayumi-san and the board have been working tirelessly on this labor of love for many, many months.

I first met Richard and Mayumi-san during my first official visit to Perth almost exactly a year ago.

He impressed upon me the importance of the establishment of a Japan-focused business council in WA, which would operate for the interests of both existing and emerging sectors, and provide a bridge between large and smaller enterprises.

Today I have the privilege of welcoming the first chapter of this vision.

It comes at a time when the inseparability of national security and the economy has become stark.

Economic coercion from China, the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine all reinforced this reality.

Just last week, Prime Minister Morrison announced a renewed push to grow Australian critical minerals processing, thereby safeguarding the future of global industries in the face of risks associated with market dominance by a trading partner who shows indifference to the rules.

Trade diversification and economic resilience are the key words of this era.

Japan, like Australia, knows well the need to ensure that all its

eggs aren't in the same basket- particularly when that basket is Japan's neighbour.

Unjustified export restrictions placed on rare earths in 2010, led Japan to actively reduce its dependence on Chinese imports and seek alternate suppliers.

Both our nations understand just how much of an asset to our relationship the mutual trust we have built over decades is.

It is because of this trust that Japanese businesses have a strong desire to trade with and invest in Australia, not for short-term profit, but for long term commitment.

I have to tell you, it is always quite a shock to watch Australian movies from a generation ago and see characters mistaking Japan for Japan's continental neighbour.

This, it seems, was a reoccurring attribute of the trope of the

uncultured Aussie businessman.

It happens in Muriel's Wedding, but also in Japanese Story- a movie I do love, filmed right here in Western Australia.

To be fair, some people in Japan still mix up Australia and Austria.

All I can say is I hope to see a new characterization of the Aussie businessmen and business women, perhaps one who loves sushi, plays Koto, sings Karaoke and knows a bit of Japanese.

Because in reality, as everyone here can attest to, there are now so many Japan-savvy businessmen and women here in Australia, particularly WA.

With the formation of the AJBC, I am certain there will be even

more to come.

Which is fantastic, because as I speak, opportunities for trade and investment are opening up between our two nations in the Indian Ocean region at an exponential pace.

In emerging energies like hydrogen of course, but also in merchandise trade, as the remaining tariff reductions from the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement come into force.

I don't mean to put too much pressure on you Richard, but I have high hopes for the future of WA-Japan relations and indeed Australia-Japan ties, under the facilitation of the AJBC.

With any luck, you'll be so successful that I can retire a little earlier.

In all seriousness though, I would like to thank everyone on the board for their initiative in taking this important step to strengthen Japan-WA ties.

You have my full support, my gratitude and an open invitation to my official residence, should you get sick of the sunshine and decide to make a trip to Canberra.

Thank you.

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