

Opening Remarks

**Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo, Ambassador of Japan to Australia
On the occasion of the UQ Japan Reception
Official Residence of the Consul-General of Japan in Brisbane
6.40pm, 14 June 2022**

1. Introduction

Thank you Professor Rakic for that kind introduction.

And my gratitude to Professor Terry and everyone involved from UQ for organising this wonderful evening.

It is truly a pleasure to finally be able to attend a UQ-Japan event in person.

As much as I enjoyed last year's online UQ Japan day, I'm delighted to be able to kick off my Canberra Ugg boots and enjoy the Brisbane weather once again. I'm sure that many Japanese tourists are also looking forward to escaping their coming winter for this beautiful Sunshine State.

As you know, before COVID, more than half of all Japanese visitors Down Under flocked to this State.

Many of them love it so much, they decide to stay, with around a third of all Japanese nationals calling Queensland home.

What's more, there are now hundreds of Japanese companies active in Queensland.

Though known historically for their significant investment in the local coal industry, these days they are leading hydrogen and ammonia projects all across Australia.

Including of course in Gladstone, tipped to become one of Australia's first hydrogen hubs.

From the massive investment in resources and agriculture in the sixties, to the eighties property investment boom through to the present, Queensland and Japan

have grown together.

And Japan continues to be Queensland's second largest trading partner and export market.

All of this is a fantastic backdrop for further Japan-Queensland education and cultural exchange.

2. Japan-Queensland Education Exchange

As representatives of the Queensland education, industry and government sector, all of you should be proud of the deep education and cultural exchange already built up with Japan.

Australia has the highest number of Japanese learners per capita in the world, and thirty per cent live in this very state.

Queensland has a thriving Japanese-speaking community, with members of AJS, QJCCI, JETAA and other Japan-related groups working across a broad range of sectors, utilising their Japanese skills behind the scenes to help improve the relationship.

Robust educational partnerships between Queensland and Japanese universities have allowed students from both countries to learn valuable transferable skills and expand their understanding of the world.

And through academic collaboration, Australia and Japan have combined our strengths to contribute to cutting-edge discoveries in a range of scientific fields.

A UQ team led by Professor Yamauchi Yusuke is working alongside Waseda University and the National Institute for Materials Science on ground-breaking chemical engineering and nanotechnology research with potential applications for climate change and energy stability.

Japanese industry has also partnered with UQ in fields such as mining and electronic engineering, opening up new opportunities for post-graduate research, and providing students with industry-specific training and skills.

Before 2020, in alternating years, UQ sent a mission of engineering students led by

Professor Nogita Kazuhiro to Kyushu University to observe Japanese industry and technology firsthand, while UQ welcomed Japanese teaching and research academics from Kyushu University.

I look forward to seeing exchange programs resume, and expanded academic collaboration as travel restrictions ease further.

3. Future Opportunities for Cooperation

Looking ahead, I know that, for example, many top tier Japanese universities are considering establishing joint degrees with overseas counterparts.

Just between you and me, having experienced study at an Ivy League grad school firsthand, I'm sure that many Aussies will agree that they're 'inordinately evaluated'.

I'm hopeful therefore that Japanese universities and students will look to their Indo-Pacific neighbour, Australia.

Imagine a future in which university students from Tokyo could also earn a degree in Brisbane and vice versa.

Considering the strength of our cultural ties, I'm sure they would feel very at home.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again; the nickname 'BrisTokyo' seems to fit this city better than 'BrisVegas'.

I understand the University of Queensland has a 2032 strategy to see at least half of all students participate in global study experiences, internships and other enriching programs.

I too am eager to see more research collaboration between our nations in time for the Brisbane Olympics.

They say that hindsight is 2020, and looking back, I can say the Tokyo Games were a huge success because of the cooperation from countries all around the world including, of course, Australia.

Not only did the Tokyo Olympics overcome immense logistical challenges posed by a global pandemic, they also demonstrated Japanese technical innovation with the

highest level of digital engagement of any Olympics thus far, and the lowest level of carbon emissions.

Likewise, the Brisbane Games will provide immense opportunity for Australia to promote advances in science and technology, and show the world what cooperation with Japan can achieve.

Japan is a global leader in high-speed rail, facial recognition and robotics. Likewise, Australia has provided the world with numerous technological innovations: wi-fi, the cochlear implant, and, my personal favourite, the hills hoist.

So perhaps a robotic clothesline could be in the pipeline?

On second thoughts, I'll leave the R&D ideas to scholars such as yourselves.

4. Conclusion

In closing, no pressure, but I look forward to seeing what ideas you and your students come up with.

Because with further collaboration and research, the land of the rising sun and Australia's sunshine state share a bright future together.

Thank you.

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