

## Speech

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

**On the occasion of the**

**6th Japan-Australia Infrastructure Network Meeting, 21 November 2022**

Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Firstly, let me begin by expressing my great thanks for your support and participation in today's Japan-Australia Infrastructure Network Meeting.

Like many great infrastructure projects, the construction of today's event has involved many moving parts.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to AJBCC, PwC and KPMG for your efforts in ensuring today's success, including providing such a magnificent venue.

Indeed, it is with great reluctance that I am unable to be there with you in person, as I am in Queensland on a business trip.

I am sorry to miss witnessing – in real time – new opportunities and partnerships being forged between Japan and Australia.

But, don't worry, you can't escape me that easily.

While I cannot send myself, I'm more than happy to send you some food-for-thought.

So, I hope you're hungry!

And what a menu we have to select from today.

It is incredible to see just how far the scope of this event has expanded over the past six years.

Last year, we enjoyed dynamic discussions with a focus on development in Western Sydney and opportunities for Japan.

This year, we are privileged to welcome a smorgasbord of representatives from business and government from all around Australia – a reflection of the ever-expanding potential for Japan-Australia cooperation.

Particularly in the infrastructure space, the pace at which new frontiers and opportunities are emerging has never been faster.

Let me take that one step further – they're emerging at *high-speed!*

It is fantastic to see so many members of 'Team Japan' joining the meeting today, with many riding the momentum from the Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference held in Tokyo last month.

Just last week, I also welcomed a delegation of leaders from the Federation of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry to Canberra for their annual meeting.

As I heard many times in conversation, there truly is no better time for Japanese companies to be considering investing in Australia.

Even at the highest level of conversation, Prime Minister Albanese and Prime Minister Kishida recently reaffirmed the importance of Japan-Australia economic collaboration on many fronts; not least of which, our shared vision for a low-emissions future powered by Australian resources and Japanese investment and innovation.

We need only look at how much has already been achieved in the clean energy space to see just what is possible when Aussies and Japanese join forces.

There are already around 30 hydrogen projects in the works across Australia.

Since arriving two years ago I've had the privilege of witnessing everything from Rinnai's hydrogen-powered water heaters, AFL stadium lights and cars fuelled by Toyota's hydrogen fuel-cell technology, to the commencement of the world's first global hydrogen supply chain project, driven by a multi-industry consortium of Japanese and Australian businesses.

Many may paint hydrogen as an energy of the future, but from where I'm standing, the future is already here.

What is important is the choice of colour that we paint it with.

I have to join one of the most progressive minds of our times, Kermit the frog, in admitting, 'it's not easy being *green!*'

Especially when considering realistic assessments of production cost and transportation methods, we should also draw inspiration from the hues of Australia's vast ocean and eucalyptus forests, and actively pursue *all* possible avenues for hydrogen production – both blue and green.

Japan's major energy companies are also making long-term investments in carbon capture and storage, including offshore greenhouse gas storage sites.

The vast potential of all of these technologies could be the key to reducing emissions, benefiting our entire region, and the Japan-Australia partnership is leading the way, full-speed ahead...

...Which brings me to another emerging area of cooperation I am particularly passionate about – high-speed rail!

It is difficult for me to overstate the beauty that is the Japanese Shinkansen.

As a frequent commuter between Karuizawa, Nagano and Tokyo by rail, let me tell you, it was truly a life-changing moment when the 150km journey transformed from a 3.5 hour slog to a lightning-fast, just-over-an-hour dash.

I'm sure many of you who travelled long distances today can relate – just imagine throttling through the bush at 320km an hour on a Japanese-quality high-speed train!

A trip between Canberra and Sydney could be done in an hour.

And the great leg from Sydney to Melbourne - just three!

Some might say that I'm a little high-speed-rail-mad, but luckily I'm not alone.

According to the Australia Institute, an overwhelming 82% of Aussies agree that major capital cities should be connected via high-speed rail.

And yet Australia continues to hesitate.

With work towards high-speed rail connections in the US and India already underway, Australia is the only country in the Quad yet to address its need for speed.

With Japan's Shinkansen professionals – the International High-speed Rail Association – now here in Australia, Japan is ready to help you!

Japan is also a prime example of how high-speed rail and airlines can harmoniously co-exist.

A similar system in Australia might even take the burden off a certain airline, perhaps giving them extra time to sort out baggage claims?

The realisation of high-speed rail in Australia would also help to reduce congestion and house prices in urban areas while spreading prosperity to regional communities.

The possible benefits of 'Value Capture' are just one of many reasons why the argument of cost can be overcome.

As one of the few advanced countries in the world where the population continues to grow, you're running out of reasons not jump *on board*, Australia!

It wouldn't be food-for-thought without a motivating kick of spice!

I hope I haven't caused any indigestion.

In all seriousness, I have ever-high hopes for what Japanese companies can achieve in Australia moving forward.

And on a day like today, with so many key-players from around Australia and Japan gathered in one place, there is certainly no better time to exchange ideas and hopes for the future.

I have no doubt that this year's meeting - and those of years to come - will be fertile ground for much seed-planting and cultivation of fruitful developments and partnerships in the infrastructure space.

Not only in Australia, but throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

Once again, I am sorry to miss the chance to be with you all this year, but please know that it is the participation of business key-persons like each of you which makes this event meaningful.

Thank you very much once again, and enjoy today's discussion.

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