

**Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador
YAMAGAMI Shingo on the occasion of the conferral of the Foreign Minister's
Commendation on Professor Rory Medcalf AM
Friday 25 November 2022**

It is an honour and a pleasure to invite you to my Residence this evening for this conferral ceremony for the Foreign Minister's Commendation on my good friend, Professor Rory Medcalf.

This is a particularly fitting award for a distinguished individual who has done so much to promote closer regional ties between partners.

Rory's contribution to the public debate on Australian foreign policy has informed us as never before about our strategic choices and what we must do to capitalize on them.

This is not at all surprising, given Rory's innate ability to narrow down to the nub of an issue – a skill no doubt honed through his previous career as a journalist.

Rory and I actually share something in common. We've both had eclectic careers.

We've worn so many different hats and walked in so many different shoes that I expect David Jones to ring any minute to offer a modelling contract.

From mass media, through to the public service and then academia, Rory has maintained a keen eye for detail combined with an ability to draw together seemingly abstract concepts and show how they can fit together.

Perhaps nothing demonstrates this better than Rory's advocacy for the idea of the Indo-Pacific.

For a concept that had been lying dormant for decades, Rory gave it new life back in 2012 when he argued that Australia, as an island continent, should have a two-ocean geographic security focus with Australia at its centre.

So persuasive were Rory's essays that they convinced the then Labor government to adopt

the Indo-Pacific concept for its defence white paper in 2013.

The same idea was later championed by Julie Bishop during her time as foreign minister.

It is no small thing when your writing can influence both sides of the political divide and revive an entire concept for a new era in geopolitics.

But Rory managed to do it, and it is fitting that we recognize it here.

Rory has also made a considerable contribution to forging closer ties between the academia and bureaucracies of Japan and Australia.

Rory is perhaps unique among prominent Australian foreign policy strategists in that he has worked at the heart of Japanese bureaucracy in Kasumigaseki.

He helped to enrich Japan's debate on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament which led to his landmark report on the 1999 Tokyo Forum.

Since his move from intelligence to the hallowed halls of scholarship, Rory has maintained an active interest in Japan's regional activities and brought them to the attention of the wider public.

His involvement in the expert panel informing the creation of the 2016 defence white paper saw Japan gain greater prominence in Australia's strategic thinking, thereby leading to a greater level of cooperation between our defence forces.

Rory has also been a tour de force in driving the creation of a 1.5 Track Dialogue between the Japan Institute of International Affairs and the ANU National Security College.

This event was one of the highlights between our respective security and foreign policy experts, forging close links between them and promoting greater levels of awareness of the respective policies of our nations.

Throughout it all, Rory has been extraordinarily generous with his time and wisdom, sharing it equally with expert and novice alike.

He was also kind enough to invite me to speak at the NSC this year on a number of occasions.

His advocacy for the relationship with Japan, for broadening its scope and the degree of cooperation within it, has produced concrete results, results that will elevate our bilateral relations into the future.

With forthright opinions brought forth from an impressively hirsute visage resembling that of my mentor former Ambassador NOGAMI, Rory has become a mainstay of the conversation on how best to develop this special strategic partnership.

So on behalf of the Foreign Minister HAYASHI of Japan, I do convey this award to Rory, and look forward to many more years of dialogue to come.

Congratulations, Rory!

[Ends]