

## **Keynote Speech by His Excellency SUZUKI Kazuhiro**

**On the occasion of the Golden Gala Dinner hosted by the Australia-Japan Business Council of Victoria, Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry Melbourne and Japanese Society of Melbourne, Friday 13 September 2024**

- Before I begin my remarks, I'd also like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.
- Mr. Justin Mohamed, Ambassador for First Nations People
- Ms. Nancy Gordon, Commissioner General for Australia, World Expo Osaka 2025
- Mr. KANNO Takayuki, President, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, JCCI, Melbourne
- Ms. OGAWA Natsuko, Chair of the Australia-Japan Foundation, Co-Chair, Australia-Japan Business Council of Victoria, AJBCV
- Ms. Celeste Koravos, CEO, AJBCV
- First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to the AJBCV and other co-hosts, the JCCI in Melbourne and the Japanese Society of Melbourne for their hard work in bringing everyone together this evening.
  
- This event is always one of the favourites on the calendar of the Japanese Ambassador.
  
- I'd also like to extend my deep appreciation to Mr. Junji Shimada and Ms. Kaori Shimada, for their contribution to Japan – Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia relations over the years.
  
- As you know, they are an energetic couple and are actively engaged in strengthening our bilateral relations. But above all, what stands out about them is that they are such nice people. So, I also would like to thank them on behalf of the Embassy of Japan. Thank you.
  
- I am honoured to deliver a speech in front of so many of you gathered here, which reminds me of the Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee, AJBCC and JABCC joint conference held last year in Melbourne, particularly the reception in the huge banquet hall at Government House.
  
- I'm sure many of you attended that evening last year as well.
  
- With 728 top business leaders from Japan and Australia filling the magnificent banquet hall, the sight was nothing short of spectacular. And tonight, I'd like to share with you a little anecdote about that banquet hall.
  
- During my official visit to Victoria a year ago last September, I had the great fortune of being the first guest to stay at Government House under the newly appointed Governor Gardner.

- The Governor herself kindly gave me a tour of Government House, and I was struck by the sheer size of the banquet hall.
- She told me that at the time of construction, there was an instruction from London not to build a larger hall than they had in Buckingham Palace. But you Aussies just ignored it!
- So, if not for this great spirit of defiance by the Victorians about 150 years ago, we couldn't have had that phenomenal evening last year.
- I therefore would like to extend my renewed respect for the great achievements of your predecessors.
- Speaking of Aussies' achievements, I must also congratulate Australia on your outstanding performance at this year's Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- It was the greatest gold rush Australia has ever seen! Watching all the gold medal events won by Australia and Japan was worth the sleep deprivation!
- Speaking of sports, the AFL finals season started last week. I suspect about half of you might be checking the AFL updates during my speech, but I'd appreciate it if you could bear with me for a bit.
- Ladies and gentlemen, last week the Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations were successfully held in Queenscliff.
- Amid the increasingly challenging regional and global situation, it is more important than ever that close friends, Japan and Australia continue to deepen our security cooperation together with like-minded partners in the region.
- In this context, it was great to see that the ministers engaged in candid discussions on a range of issues, including regional challenges and economic security. Moving forward, I am committed to continuing our efforts to deepen our security ties.
- At the core of Japan-Australia cooperation is the strong trust and connections between our two countries. This year's Lowy Institute survey ranked Japan as Australia's most trusted partner for the fourth year in a row!
- Let me share with you another of my favourite statistics. Australia has the world's largest number of people per capita learning Japanese. Around one hundred thousand Aussies study Japanese in Victoria.

- There are also active sister city exchanges between Japan and Australia, with Melbourne being a sister city to Osaka. Next year, Osaka will host the World Expo 2025.
- This Osaka Expo will provide a showcase for Japan-Australia cooperation. Thank you, Nancy and the DFAT team, for your outstanding efforts.
- I encourage all of you to check out flights to Osaka. It will be held from April 13th for 6 months. The real Myaku Myaku will welcome you too.
- I'm sure many of you know Myaku Myaku here better than me as Myaku Myaku is getting many more "likes" than I do in our Embassy's social media posts. To be honest, I am jealous, but we are good friends, you know.
- We are also seeing a recovery in Australian tourism to Japan after the pandemic. I suppose that many ski resorts are now considering opening a Vegemite Café for Aussie skiers! Hopefully they will start serving my favorite biscuit, double coat Tim Tams , as well.
- Ladies and gentlemen, the world currently faces a number of shared challenges in geopolitical tensions, climate change, and the spread of disinformation.
- However, I am an optimist, and I believe that these challenges also present opportunities for collaboration between Japan and Australia.
- Climate change is a pressing issue for us, and I would like to introduce one simple but important equation.  $3 + 1 = 4$ , out of a total of 100.
- Japan's carbon emissions account for 3% of the global total, while in the case of Australia it is 1%. Even if both countries were to achieve net-zero, 3+1 equals only 4.
- When you play video games with your family, do you really focus on 4% of the battle ground and let your children conquer the remaining 96%? I do not think so. To win against your very smart children, you must maximize your chances. Right?
- Japan and Australia must therefore cooperate on reducing carbon emissions in the whole region as many countries do not have natural environments that support solar or wind power like Australia.
- And Japan's advanced technology and fiscal strength can contribute to realising Australia's aspiration to become a "renewable energy superpower".

- It is estimated that Asia requires 40 trillion Australian dollars in funding to achieve decarbonisation in the region. That's a lot of zeros, and trust me, I had to double-check that number myself.
- But this figure shows how many business opportunities exist for the taking, and how both Japan and Australia can work together to seize such opportunities. Allow me to show you some examples. Hydrogen generators produced by Toyota in Altona will power various sites, including Australian mining and construction sites as well as providing back-up energy to hospitals.
- Hyhome, a hydrogen powered showcase home supported by a Japanese company, Rinnai in Wollert, will give us a glimpse of a future hydrogen society.
- The business opportunities between Japan and Australia are expanding in other areas.
- Housing is an increasingly important issue in Australia. Japan's strength in the housing industry lies in its high productivity as well as efficiency in heating and cooling, which can contribute to both alleviating housing shortages and combating climate change.
- Our Embassy will have a housing seminar in Melbourne next month to introduce the Japanese housing industry and its appealing points to Aussies.
- Last year, we held a similar seminar in Sydney. But I am confident, with your support, Melbourne will beat Sydney in terms of the number of participants.
- The importance of cooperation in the cyber domain is also increasing.
- As to our potential for cooperation, the defense industry stands out in particular. The progress in Japan-Australia defence cooperation has been remarkable, so a standardisation of equipment will naturally become necessary. Strengthening our defence industry cooperation is a completely natural development.
- I look forward to seeing vigorous discussions on various fields at this year's AJBCC and JABCC joint committee, which will be held in Nagoya next month.
- For many of you heading to Nagoya, I've got three pieces of personal advice.  
No.1: Dive into the nice local Nagoya cuisine.  
NO.2: Enjoy your great Karaoke time with your Japanese counterparts.  
And No.3: Never speak at the office about what happens during nights out in Nagoya!
- In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to touch upon the two important figures that indicate where we are today. Namely, the year 2023 witnessed a record of 53 M&A deals between Japanese and

Aussie firms and Japan's FDI in Australia reached a historic high of around 130 billion Australian dollars.

- These numbers clearly bear eloquent testimony to our two countries' natural integration, as Japan and Australia represent leading democracies for political and economic stability in the region.
- It is the result of many years of solid effort to foster strong economic relations, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people connections between our two countries, which each of you gathered here tonight has made significant contribution towards.
- So, thank you so much to all of you for your positive roles in realising the current fantastic bilateral relations between our two countries, and let us further promote Japan-Australia cooperation in the fields of economy, culture, and security, and lead this region together.
- And on my part, let me also renew my commitment that I am determined to work toward this goal alongside all of you.
- Thank you.

[End]