

**Speech by His Excellency Ambassador SUZUKI Kazuhiro**  
**The 2025 Japan Symposium**  
**24 March 2025**

**Introduction**

Before starting my remarks, I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

The Premier of Western Australia, the Honourable Roger Cook,

The Honourable Richard Court,

Professor Gordon Flake,

Mr Richard Andrews, CEO of the AJBCC,

Mr Sam Walsh,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for inviting me once again to address you for this year's Japan Symposium. It is always a real pleasure to be in Western Australia and to visit the Perth USAsia Centre.

I did want to take this opportunity to express my thanks to His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson, Governor of Western Australia, the Premier and members of the Western Australian government for making time to accommodate me for my official state visit to Western Australia, despite it coming so soon after the state election.

This symposium is marked on my calendar as an annual event. Last year I stayed just one night in Perth, but I was determined to stay longer, and this year I am staying in Western Australia for an entire week!

My wife reluctantly accepted this trip after hearing from me that I won't be spending any time on the beach with a Swan lager in hand.

If I was luckier, then of course I would put SPF +100 sunscreen on my face, with a Swan lager in my

hand, and then ensure it all remained a state secret. Peace at home is my top priority, you know.

Just this past weekend, I was able to visit Broome for the first time since taking up my post in Australia and is something that I have wanted to do for a while.

To be able to visit the place where over 130 years ago the strong foundation of the present relationship between Japan and Australia was formed was particularly special.

### **Japan-Australia Relationship**

So today, I would like to share my views on the current status and possible new frontiers of our economic ties.

The resource and energy sectors bask under the bright light of the Western Australian sun. This is fitting, given they were the first industry sectors in our economic relationship to be given the spotlight and continue to be a crucial part of our bilateral relations.

We have the very recent example of the major investment made by Mitsui in the iron ore mines of the Pilbara, but the truth is that the Australian resource and energy sectors have long been the recipients of major investment from Japan.

This in turn has contributed to the stability of resource and energy supplies chains spanning throughout the globe and constitutes the backbone of the Japan-Australia economic relationship.

Their success in the energy and resource sectors owes much to the many complex negotiations conducted between Japanese and Australian businesspeople over several gigantic projects for many years.

This might not be a familiar topic to many of you for whom good bilateral relations are a matter of course, but for those who saw it go through its development stage, such as former Ambassador Court, we well remember those tough negotiations.

And now, hydrogen, renewable energy, and critical minerals are also stepping into the spotlight.

So why has Australia been so well regarded by investors? It's because it is valued for both its respect for democracy and for its political stability.

As many of you here are no doubt very well aware, investors don't like surprises. And in Japan in

particular, as Gordon Flake says, the phrase “good surprise” does not exist in Japanese business dictionary. Two of the key factors in ensuring the continuation of investment are political stability and a high degree of predictability.

To that end, accelerated approvals are also very important. And I would like to express my gratitude to the Western Australian government for both their understanding and cooperation for developing Japanese company-related projects including the Browse Gas Field, which is crucial to the energy security of both Japan and Australia.

Those businesses developed over last decades are the strong foundation of Japan-Australia economic relationship, but also Australia’s strong sunlight now illuminates new frontiers to be explored by both countries.

I’d like to introduce 3 of those areas which I believe should be explored in depth in the interests of furthering our bilateral cooperation.

The first relates to today’s theme: advanced technologies and manufacturing.

Australia has great educational institutions, including the University of WA here, and great research capabilities to further develop its advanced manufacturing, and Japan is willing and able to contribute to their development.

In terms of specific areas, I can point to the space and defence industries. From the viewpoint of national security, it is also important that these are developed as sovereign industries.

Looking at the security relationship between Japan, Australia, and the US, it resembles an isosceles triangle. In order to cope with external pressure, the triangle must be an equilateral one. That’s basic physics, and the key to making it more of an equilateral triangle is a heightened level of defence industry cooperation between Japan and Australia.

This is why the ‘Mogami’ class frigate, now short-listed as a contender for the Royal Australian Navy’s new general-purpose frigate, offers such a brilliant opportunity to advance our Special Strategic Partnership. The expansion of Japanese defence industries into Australia will promote growth in local jobs and the overall development of advanced manufacturing base.

Moreover, when it comes to space, both South Australia and Queensland have expressed their interest in this sector.

Given the enormous size of Western Australia and your vast reserves of territory, might there be

potential to explore this field in greater depth with Japan here as well? I will certainly be keeping an eye on any developments in this area, I can assure you.

The second frontier for further exploration concerns the expanded business chances that accompany the increase in Australia's population.

Australia's population is growing at an annual rate of around 1.5% and is expected to surpass 40 million by 2063.

Japanese companies have great potential to make life better for all Australians.

When it comes to retail, Seven & i Holdings have acquired Australia's 7-Eleven and have started opening Japanese-style convenience stores, or '*konbini*'.

Turning to housing, 4 of the top 10 housing companies in Australia are Japanese associated. They have a strong expertise and strength in urban development in Australia, and the Yanchep development that I visited on the weekend speaks to this, having been started over 50 years ago by the Tokyu Corporation.

Then there are industries related to the response to aging societies. The average lifespan of both Japanese and Australian citizens is extraordinarily long. Did you know that Australian males live longer than Japanese males nowadays?

Maybe we enjoy sake a bit too much.

However, Japan has long faced the issue of an aging society, and has built strength in relevant related industries such as aged care, including the application of AI and robotics, as well as diagnoses and pharmaceuticals.

These experiences will be able to provide the Australian people with many good options.

This leads me to my final point, people-to-people exchanges.

Earlier in my speech, I mentioned my recent trip to Broome. I was very happy to see for myself the roots of Japanese pearl divers, together with those of the First Nations, that are thriving in Broome.

It is one chapter of an economic relationship that stretches back for more than a century. Japanese trading houses were involved in trade with the newly federated nation of Australia, helping to build

the nation's wealth.

With such a long history between us, I wanted to share with you some data about the modern Japan-Australia relationship.

Since 2008, and for around 15 years afterward, Australia had the 3rd largest Japanese expat community in the world in the order of US, China, and Australia. Last year, Australia overtook China to have the 2nd largest Japanese expat community.

This is living proof of the wide range of fields that Japanese people are involved in here in Australia.

Moreover, in 2024 a new all-time record was set for Australian visitors to Japan, with 920,000 Aussies making their way to Japan's shores.

What I'd really like to encourage you all to do is visit Japan, particularly given that the Expo, Osaka Kansai is scheduled to kick off on 13th April.

I'm pretty confident that with your help, we'll be able to break through the million Aussie visitors' mark this year!

Perth is also slated to host the Japan-Australia Joint Business Conference for the first time in 17 years, which will present a unique opportunity for high level business representatives from Japan and Australia to gather here in the west and help maintain the momentum in our ever-growing economic relationship.

I believe that there is still great potential to expand educational exchanges between Australia and Japan.

Established in 1954, the [MEXT scholarship program](#) has become one of the most prestigious scholarships.

Australia has been a participating country since 1958, with around 40 scholars in Japan in any given year. And this year 90 Australians are set to journey to remote parts of Japan to teach English on the annual [JET](#) Program.

It would be wonderful to see a similar flow from Japan to Australia, more Japanese students, researchers and young professionals coming to study and live in Australia on similar programs.

## **Conclusion**

And it comes not a moment too soon, given that the international situation continues to grow ever more opaque. It is critical that both Japan and Australia maintain close ties with one another.

It is vitally important both Japan and Australia, with our shared values of democracy and free markets, continue to work together for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Through implementing our primary roles, we will strengthen our ties with other QUAD partners, namely, the US and India. And other democracies in the region such as the Philippines, and South Korea. We will also endeavour to promote even closer ties with ASEAN.

It is often said that Perth is the gateway to the Indo-Pacific and has a vital geostrategic role to play.

Today's symposium is an important reminder of that fact.

As I gaze out across the audience here and see participants from Japan and those who have recently visited Japan, I have every confidence that from this focal point in the west we will see the opening of a new chapter in the Japan-Australia relationship.

Thank you.

**[Ends]**