

**Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador Suzuki Kazuhiro at the 81st
Anniversary of the Cowra Breakout Commemoration Ceremony
5 August 2025**

Mayor Paul Smith

Deputy Mayor Nikki Kiss

Mr Nathan Flanagan

Mr Bill West

Mr Gordon Rolls

Mr Lawrance Ryan

Mr Shane Budge

Mr Terry Harris

Mr Bob Griffiths

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is an honour to join you all once more here on a crisp Cowra day as we commemorate the 81st anniversary of the Cowra Breakout.

Around three months ago, I was here to give a keynote address ahead of the start of the Kōyō Matsuri. During that address, I revealed details about my father's past, the legacy of conflict and reconciliation, and what Cowra means as a symbol of the Japan-Australia relationship.

In the limited time since then, the global situation has grown even more severe, with conflicts intensifying in the Middle East and Europe. Across the world, the norms and institutions that underpinned peace and prosperity in the aftermath of WWII have been shaken, with new challenges emerging that demand our attention.

80 years ago, the most destructive conflict to ever afflict human society ended only after great suffering and hardship.

In a world that had been torn apart by war, humanity realised that for peace to endure, a collective effort had to be made by mankind to uphold laws for the benefit of all.

In time this would lead to the creation of institutions like the United Nations. It

would encourage growth in cross-border trade and investment, including between countries that had once been enemies.

It created the means for people to rise out of poverty, to achieve prosperity and stability to prevent the world from returning to the pre-war world.

For peace to endure, it needed champions to advocate for it and do everything possible to achieve it. For many decades now, Japan has been proud of its contribution to upholding world peace.

In the 80 years since 1945, much has happened. Ideologies have come and gone, technology has progressed at breakneck speed, so that we are more connected now than at any time in human history.

Japan and Australia have been direct beneficiaries of this progress. The trade relationship that first defined our postwar partnership has broadened and diversified into a myriad of different fields and forms.

We recognize that in each other we have a true friend, a real mate. No better proof of this can be seen than in this year's Lowy Institute poll of Australian attitudes to international relations.

For the 5th year in a row, Australians have placed Japan at the top of those nations most trusted to act responsibly in the world. Japan is only second to New Zealand in terms of the warmth Australians feel towards another country.

As Ambassador of Japan, I can't tell you how happy I am to learn of this. It is a great honour. At the same time, it also proves that the Embassy is earning its keep!

Such news is all the more heartening knowing that next year marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia, also known as the NARA Treaty.

Fifty years ago, Japan and Australia embarked on a new phase in our bilateral relationship when we pledged to move beyond commercial ties to embrace broader links across just about every field imaginable.

Today Australia is second only to the United States in terms of its resident Japanese population. There are more Japanese people living here now than in China, which is quite extraordinary when you think about it.

It is safe to say that this would not have happened without the grassroots efforts of people from both countries to form ties to each other, and to learn and grow with one another.

And all of this would not have happened without the pioneering role played by the town of Cowra.

81 years ago Cowra was the scene of tragedy. That tragedy was followed by an act of kindness, which in time led to further acts of kindness and generosity, leading to eventual reconciliation.

Coming to Cowra, meeting with locals and enjoying country hospitality in the tranquil setting of this refined tea room within the elegant Japanese Garden, reminds me that there are still places of grace and goodness left in this world, and I am fortunate enough to find myself in one of them.

At a time when peace has been too often overlooked and sorrow deepens amid the growing reliance on force around the world, the story of Cowra stands as a silver lining.

Together with the people of Japan, I am forever grateful for this legacy and feel committed to ensuring that its message is passed on to future generations.

Thank you.

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