

Speech by Ambassador Suzuki on the occasion of Nikkei Forum, Melbourne

Monday 18 August 2025

Good morning.

Before I begin, I wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

I also acknowledge the distinguished Ministers, senior officials, and business leaders here today, and thank, in particular, Mr. Arakawa, Ms. Takahashi and Team Nikkei for hosting this timely forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just last week, on 15 August, I attended the memorial service on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, Zenadh Kes, once home to many Japanese pearl divers.

The ties between Japan and Australia began in the late 19th century with the pearl and wool industry, and since then massively expanded into resources sector.

Huge and complex projects like the North West Shelf gas field could never have happened without Japanese and Australian business leaders working side by side.

So, this morning, I want to pay tribute to those pioneers who built the trust we enjoy today.

That trust is reflected in the Lowy Institute poll, which for five consecutive years has ranked Japan as Australia's most trusted partner.

Last year alone, Japanese and Australian forces held 39 joint defense exercises—about one every nine days somewhere in the world. In all but treaty language, we are allies.

Our economic relationship now extends far beyond resources. Japan is Australia's second-largest investor after the US, and the only country whose FDI here has grown every year for the past 11 years.

Against this backdrop, one of the most consequential recent decisions came on 5 August: Australia will procure 11 General Purpose Frigates from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, MHI, with the first three built in Japan and the rest in Western Australia.

This will open major opportunities for collaboration in the manufacturing sector, as the Mogami Class Frigate is the best of the best, built not just by MHI but also with advanced technologies from 11 other Japanese companies.

The synergies and spillover effects in defence and beyond will be significant, given the scale and depth of our economic partnership.

Critical minerals are another shared priority. JOGMEC, Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, and Sojitz recently decided to advance their plans to produce gallium - a material widely used for solar power panels, LEDs and semiconductors - in Western Australia.

This project, which extracts gallium from a byproduct of the bauxite refining process, expands Australia's capability in the global supply chain. It aligns with the concept of "Future Made in Australia", which is essential in our transition towards a net zero society.

I believe our two Government's support can enhance the business viability of critical minerals projects -support both financially and through an expedited approval process. By doing so, we can send a strong message to the world, to secure our economic security.

Australia is one of the few developed nations whose population is set to grow by about 50% over the next 40 years. Japanese companies are responding—investing in food, distribution, real estate, and housing.

Just recently, I attended the opening of Suntory's Swanbank facility in Queensland—producing 90,000 beverage cans every hour—25 cans every second, powered by 14 km of solar panels and a biomass boiler, towards net zero emissions.

In housing, four of Australia's top ten companies have Japanese links. Our technology in prefabrication and high-density housing as well as sustainable and resilient method can

greatly help Australian cities, so our Embassy is hosting seminars across major cities to connect both countries' public and private sectors.

This October, the Australia–Japan Economic Conference in Perth will be a perfect opportunity to build on progress in these areas and beyond.

And next year, we mark 50 years since the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation—opening a new chapter in our partnership.

Nikkei, with its exceptional ability to read the times, has chosen the perfect moment in our diplomatic calendar for this forum. I hope today's discussions will be as forward-looking and ambitious as our evolving economic relationship.

Thank you.