

Keynote Speech by His Excellency SUZUKI Kazuhiro
On the occasion of Spring in Sydney, hosted by AJBCC and AJSNSW
Thursday 28 August 2025

Thank you for that kind introduction.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet this evening, and pay my respects to their Elders – past, present, and emerging.

The Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong MP, NSW Minister for Industry and Trade
Councillor Mr Robert Kok, City of Sydney
And distinguished guests.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a true honor to be invited by AJBCC and AJSNSW to speak here again in Sydney in the season of spring this year. Time really flies.

Coming from Canberra, I must say I feel a little jealous of the warm weather here. Sydney already feels like spring. But please don't feel too sorry for me.

Just two weeks ago, I joined the traditional Obon memorial service on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait and also the Bon Dance festival in Cairns.

So, while Canberra kept me in winter, Thursday Island and Cairns gave me summer, and now Sydney welcomes me with spring.

Only in Australia can a diplomat experience three different seasons without leaving the country!

Now, allow me to give a short promotion. Next week, on September 3rd, it will be Australia's National Day at the World Expo 2025 in Osaka.

The Expo has already welcomed more than 18 million visitors. More than 2 million have already visited the Australian Pavilion.

One reason is Café Koko, serving world-class Flat Whites and Vegemite-and-ham toasties. The Expo continues until October 13th. So, if you have not been yet, please book tonight—otherwise you may have to explain to your family why you didn't take them to Osaka!

Next year, 2026, will be very special. It will mark 50 years since Japan and Australia signed the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, known as the NARA Treaty.

What do you remember from 50 years ago? Some may say Play School, others may say AC/DC.

As for me, I was just 15 years old, and completely in love with Olivia Newton-John—her music, of course, but also her charm and accent.

For a while, she was my image of Australia. Ten years later, when I entered the Foreign Service in 1986, I saw Crocodile Dundee in the cinema and wondered: which one is the real Australia?

Back in the 1970s, there were some trade tensions between Japan and Australia. In 1976, we had only 3 sister cities. Despite this, the momentum behind our economic ties could not be stopped. In fact, at that time, a Japanese Prime Minister first said that our economies were “mutually dependent.” Today, this phrase feels like common sense.

Fifty years on, look how far we’ve come. Our partnership has grown—in security, in trade, and in people-to-people exchanges.

Trust is reflected in the Lowy Institute poll, which has ranked Japan as Australia’s most trusted partner for five years in a row.

Today we have 107 sister cities. Australia has the world’s highest per-capita number of Japanese language learners.

And last year, our defence forces held 39 joint exercises—almost one every nine days! That’s more often than I manage to play tennis in Canberra. In all but treaty language, we are allies.

And this year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the war. The great progress in our friendship is possible only because of the selfless reconciliation efforts by communities across Australia—from Father Tony Glynn and Father Paul Glynn, whom many of you here know well, to each and every Australia Japan Society and to Debra Hazelton and Wendy Holdenson, who received the Foreign Minister’s Commendation last year at this banquet, and to the city of Cowra, which received it this year. But most of all, I want to express my deep gratitude to all of you here, for your enduring support for our beautiful relationship today. ありがとうございます。

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A historic shift in the power balance and geopolitical competition are intensifying particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, with some countries in the international community attempting to change the existing international order.

Furthermore, since the start of 2025, we have faced fresh shockwaves that continue to affect our region.

To navigate our ways through this, Japan and Australia—as two democracies with shared values in the region—must deepen our integration in both economy and security, and build more resilient structures for the next 50 years.

On August 5th, the Australian Government announced one of the most consequential decisions in our partnership: to procure 11 general-purpose frigates from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. The first 3 will be built in Japan, and the rest in Western Australia.

And Japan worked very hard—government and industry all together, with the maximum effort from our Embassy and myself to win this project, as it will present the first and foremost important test to move this bilateral integration forward.

So, we are extremely delighted by this outcome.

But I must also say: everything starts from here. Building frigates in Western Australia, with its relatively small manufacturing workforce, will be a big challenge. Japan and Australia also have different business cultures.

But I am optimistic, because our two countries have already succeeded in huge and complex projects before—starting with the North West Shelf. With the advice and support of AJBCC and all of you here, I am 100 % confident that this project will succeed. よろしくお願ひします。

Critical minerals are another shared priority. In early August, there was another important announcement. JOGMEC and Sojitz will start feasibility study on gallium production in Western Australia.

Gallium is essential for solar panels, LEDs, and semiconductors. This project will strengthen supply chains and support your government's "Future Made in Australia" plan, as well as our transition to net-zero.

In the QUAD framework, critical minerals are also a top priority. Japan will keep working with

Australia in this area.

I believe, to enhance the business viability of such projects, support both financially and through an expediated approval process are essential. At the Economic Reform Roundtable earlier this month, better regulation and faster approvals are recognised as key directions of reform.

I hope that the Australian Government will take the critical mineral sector as a first priority in this regard, and advance these initiatives with ambition.

Australia is also one of the few developed countries where the population is projected to grow by about 50 percent in the next 40 years.

Japanese companies are already responding—investing in food, housing, distribution, and real estate.

Just over a month ago, I attended the opening of Suntory's Swanbank facility in Queensland. It produces 90,000 beverage cans every hour—25 cans every second! Before we can even say "Kanpai," another can is ready.

Even better, the facility runs only on renewable energy: 14 kilometers of solar panels, a biomass boiler, and renewable electricity, towards truly net-zero. Very sustainable for the planet—but maybe not for my waistline.

In housing, four of the top ten companies in Australia are Japan affiliated.

Japan's experience in prefabrication, high-density housing, and sustainable building can help Australian cities manage their future growth.

That is why our Embassy is holding Future Cities Dialogue in major cities to connect Japanese and Australian experts both in private and public sectors.

At a time when the world faces so much uncertainty, the Japan–Australia relationship has never been more important.

Looking ahead to the next 50 years, we are committed to making our cooperation even stronger.

One important milestone will be in October, when the Japan–Australia Joint Business Conference takes place in Perth.

I trust AJBCC and JABCC will create great momentum as we face the next chapter of our partnership.

I look forward to seeing many of you there—with the hope that we can celebrate the Wallabies defeating the All Blacks the day before.

Thank you.

[END]