

Speech by H.E. Ambassador SUZUKI Kazuhiro
on the occasion of the 2025 Canberra Nara Candle Festival – Saturday 25 October

Good evening

It's so nice to see so many people gathered here to celebrate this year's Candle festival.

And thank you to everyone who have volunteered to make tonight's wonderful festival possible.

My special thanks in particular to Mr Andrew Barr, ACT Chief Minister; Mr Brendan Smyth, Commissioner for Office of International Engagement, ACT; Mr Bill Andrews, Chair of Canberra Nara Sister City Committee; Aunty Violet Sheridan, Ngunnawal Elder.

I am also delighted to share with you that there are quite a few Japanese students who have come all the way from Nara just to join this festival.

Thank you, boys and girls from Nara University High School for participating in this festival again.

You know, as Ambassador of Japan, this candle festival is always such a delight for me.

A delight to see that there are so many Japan lovers in Canberra, and people like you are the ones who actually make our Australia-Japan relations work for the better.

So thank you!

This festival is really important to me, because how it started really tells you the true friendship between Canberra and Nara.

Some of you still remember, I'm sure, 2003.

Canberra suffered terrible bushfires, and the people of Nara not only sent a donation to help, they later brought 1,000 Tokae style candles to Canberra to wish for Canberra's recovery.

These are distinctive candles, meant to bring you peace and happiness.

Since then, to commemorate this friendship, you've held this festival for so many years now.

It's such a moving story and I'd like to thank all of you for coming to this festival every year and showing your love for Japan.

This the first thing I wanted to tell you.

The second is, I am very honoured to share some significant news with you all.

Ladies and Gentleman,

This year, Chief Minister Andrew Barr has been awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon by the Government of Japan.

Chief Minister Andrew Barr, please come to the centre of the stage please.

Thank you.

This prestigious decoration is presented to individuals who have made distinguished contributions to the promotion of friendship with Japan.

Under Chief Minister Barr's leadership, Japan-Australia relations have continued to grow and deepen. His unwavering support for the Canberra-Nara Sister City relationship has helped this festival become a remarkable celebration we see today.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I therefore extend our heartfelt gratitude to Chief Minister Barr for his outstanding contributions and unwavering commitment to fostering mutual understanding and friendship between our two countries.

Let us all enjoy this magical evening of light, culture, and connection, and continue to celebrate the spirit of friendship that the Canberra Nara Candle Festival so beautifully represents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now, it is my great honour to present Chief Minister Barr with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon.

I will read in Japanese the certificate of the Order from the Emperor followed by the English translation.

(日本語)

日本国天皇はオーストラリア国人アンドリュー・バーに旭日中綬章を贈与する。皇居において璽^じをおさせる。

令和7年4月29日

内閣総理大臣 石破 茂

内閣府賞勲局長 ささがわ たけし
笹川 武

(英語)

The Emperor of Japan does hereby confer upon Andrew Barr, Citizen of Australia, the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon.

In witness thereof, the Seal of State has been affixed to these presents at the Imperial Palace.

Prime Minister Shigeru ISHIBA

Director-General of Decoration Bureau Cabinet Office Takeshi SASAGAWA,

The 29th day, the 4th month, the Seventh year of Reiwa, 2025