

It gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to you today at the Australian Catholic University. I'm delighted to see the students and faculty members of the Catholic University. I'd also like to thank Asakura-sensei for organizing this event.

The topic of my speech today is "Japan's Soft Power and how it relates to the Japan-Australia relationship". Let me get started with a general description of our bilateral relations. As you know, Australia and Japan enjoy a robust and stable relationship with excellent economic, political, and cultural links that have developed over the past 50 years. We are not only strategic partners, but friends who share core fundamental values, such as a liberal democracy and respect for human rights.

It is just over one year since I came to Australia. Thanks to our excellent relations, I have found my period in office so far to be enlightening and encouraging. In the wake of the devastating disaster that hit Japan in March this year, I was deeply touched by the offers of sympathy and supports pouring out from all over Australia. This allowed me to reconfirm the closeness and depth of our relationship. PM Gillard became the first foreign leader to visit the disaster-stricken areas in Japan where she was enthusiastically welcomed by the people there. We are all deeply grateful for the support from the Australian people and the Australian Government.

Political ties between our countries are very close not only in terms of our bilateral relationship but also in regional and global matters. Together we address issues such as climate change, disarmament, people smuggling, and regional security.

From an economic perspective, Japan was Australia's largest trading partner for more than 40 years. That position has been taken by China, but that does not mean our trade is declining. It is just because China is just growing too fast. Japan still remains Australia's second largest export market as well as the largest trade surplus producing country. This surplus amounted to 21.5 billion ASD in 2009. (See Charts)

All this, however, has occurred against a backdrop of strong

inter-personal relationships between the people of Japan and Australia which in turn have influenced community attitudes towards one another.

This year our Embassy conducted a Community Attitudes Survey which found that the vast majority of Australians have positive sentiments towards Japan.(See Table)

In particular;

- \* 91% of respondents agreed that Japan is a reliable friend of Australia
- \* 80% indicated they had a positive feeling toward Japan
- \* 82 % rated Japan positively as a cultural exchange partner

Moreover, respondents expressed a great interest in Japanese culture, with the strongest interest directed towards Japan's World Heritage sites, traditional Japanese culture such as the tea ceremony and Japanese gardens; people and their everyday life styles; Japanese food; and popular and cultural events. (See Pictures)

Japanese culture has steadily attracted the attention of many people around the globe from the 1990s onwards. Japanese contemporary culture or Japanese pop culture such as anime, manga, computer games, J-Pop, Japanese food, fashion have attracted the curiosity of many people around the world for the best part of 20 years now.

That in turn leads me rather neatly into the topic of today's speech; Japan's soft power and how it relates to the Japan-Australia relationship.

### **What is soft power?**

Now about this term "soft power". Have any of you heard of this before today? If so, can you tell me what you think it means? Those are all interesting answers, but let me give you a bit of insight into what soft power is and how it is used.

The concept of soft power was first used by Harvard Professor Joseph Nye. Professor Nye gave a lucid yet simple explanation of the

concept of soft power. He began by posing a question; What can you do to get what you want? There are three major ways to do this. The first and the second ways are what he called "sticks and carrots". A stick means threat or coercion, while a carrot means to offer incentives. The third is to attract or co-opt the other party. To threaten someone, just pick up a weapon. To solve problems with money, a strong economy is sufficient. To attract people, however, requires soft power. It is generally recognized that Japan is now offering the world a peaceful and friendly form of soft power.

The process of globalization has greatly influenced, and indeed continues to influence, the way in which international politics is conducted. Issues that transcend the possibilities for use of hard power include environmental destruction, poverty, AIDS and so on. At the same time, developing countries and NGOs are taking up more active roles, roles which are very different from the ones they had played in the past, and this has increased their influence on public opinion.

To more effectively deal with this change of circumstances, the concept of soft power was developed as a possible remedy to the destabilizing effects of using hard power. Nations and governments try to get what they want by co-opting their counterparts overseas using culture and humanitarian aid rather than coercion.

The increased global interest in the concept of "soft power" has a lot to do with advances in telecommunications and an increase in personal interconnectivity. Public opinion has a significant influence on diplomacy, perhaps now more so than ever before. In order to engage in successful relations with other nations, it is vital that the citizens of the host country have a good understanding and a favorable opinion of one's own country.

### **The Spirit of the Innovation and Craftsmanship**

Soft power is the way to achieve this. A country's soft power might also be interpreted as referring to a country's "brand image". Let me ask you a question: what sorts of images do you associate with Japan? Do you think of "Hello Kitty", Pokemon, and Godzilla? Or do

you think of the tea ceremony, origami, or kabuki? Or perhaps you think of sushi?

Have you ever pondered the question of where Japan's culture originated, and how Japan has ended up with the unique culture that it possesses today? Historically Japan absorbed many new albeit foreign ideas, only to be followed by long periods of little or no contact with the outside world. Over time the Japanese developed the ability to assimilate those elements of a foreign culture that complemented their own aesthetic tastes.

It is no secret that Chinese culture played a large part in the early development for Japanese culture. The Chinese civilization was one of the world's earliest and most advanced cultures, and Chinese cultural influences gradually made their way to Japan via the Korean Peninsula. However, the process of absorbing Chinese culture into Japan was not one of pure imitation, but of selective assimilation and adaptation to the unique Japanese climate and way of life.

For example, the Japanese initially adopted the Chinese writing system called "kanji", which consisted of Han pictographic characters. Soon after we developed two simplified phonetic scripts based on these characters, called "hiragana" and "katakana" which could be used to express native Japanese words in a way that Chinese characters could not. As you know, "kanji", "hiragana", and "katakana" scripts are now all indispensable to the written Japanese language. (See Picture)

After the oil shock of the 1970s, Japanese electronics companies had to innovate more cost-effective and energy-efficient forms of manufacturing, and Japanese automotive companies also had to innovate fuel efficient vehicles which are now the most widely recognized in the world.

Karaoke and instant noodles are also other innovative creations of modern Japan. (See Picture) Some people add canned coffee to this list and refer to them as the three major innovations of post-war Japan.

I believe that many of you have Japanese electronic goods in your

house, and may drive Japanese-designed cars. In that context, one of the most unique innovations in personal appliances and convenience is the Washlet, a multi-functioned shower toilet. It is so comfortable that I can't live without it. I even carry a portable shower toilet with me when I travel abroad. I heard from my staff, however, that this wonderful device is not quite so popular here in Australia. Anyway, all of these products derive from the spirit of innovation and craftsmanship which is ingrained within Japanese culture.

## **Japanese Cuisine and Food Culture**

A second example of Japan's soft power is Japanese cuisine.

As you may be aware, the people of Japan currently have the longest life expectancy of all the nations in the world, and this is often attributed to Japan's wholesome diet. Nowadays Japanese food is sold all over the world. Here in Australia, I have seen miso soup, soba buckwheat noodles, and dried seaweed for sale. I've also seen udon noodles available in Coles and Woolies!(See Pictures)

Sushi is also an excellent example of Japanese culinary culture. Sushi developed in Japan, taking advantage of its fresh and abundant aquatic products. Until recently it was unimaginable that Western and Chinese people would ever dare to eat raw fish. Now sushi is widely accepted as a healthy and delicious food. Sushi has also been adapted to suit local tastes. Thus we have the now ubiquitous "California Roll". I have seen "Peking Duck" sushi and "sweet chili calamari" sushi. No doubt, sushi's ability to fuse with foreign epicurean traditions has contributed greatly to its global appeal.

I'm sure all of you know about "sushi trains", or what is more commonly known as a "conveyor belt sushi bar". The invention of the sushi train in Japan in the late 1950s helped to "democratise" sushi for the Japanese people. You see, sushi was once an expensive delicacy reserved only for the rich, but with the invention of the sushi train it was possible to cut down on staffing costs and serve sushi at lower prices. These days, in Japan and also in Australia, especially in Sydney, it is possible to eat both types of sushi; either from an accessible, inexpensive sushi train with friends, or in a first class sushi restaurant! In Japan, accessible sushi restaurants have been

computerised and you can make orders by touching the pictures on a panel screen.

Let me ask you another question. Have you ever heard of the restaurant called "Sepia", located near Darling Harbor? Perhaps, being students, you have not. This restaurant, which is not yet two years old, has recently been voted "Restaurant of the Year" by the Sydney Morning Herald. Can you guess what type of cuisine they serve? It is Australian-Japanese fusion--a blend of Australian ingredients with Japanese techniques and flavors. Here is Head Chef Martin Benn and his work. (See Pictures) To quote Chef Benn... "People say my food is Japanese-French, But I disagree. I call it Australian with Japanese influences. We try to use Australian ingredients together with Japanese techniques and flavors."

## **Contemporary and Pop Culture**

In addition to its traditional culture and cuisine, Japan has spawned a new phenomenon; the rise in global fascination with Japanese popular culture.

I'd like to ask you a quick question: how many of you watched "Pokemon" as a child? I see. How about "Naruto" or "Dragonball"? Did any of you catch "Neon Genesis Evangelion" on SBS? As a child watching Japanese anime dubbed into English, you may not have realized that the cartoon you loved to watch was made in Japan. Older generations of Australians may remember live-action series such as "Monky Magic" and "Shintaro". Members of Generation X may remember "Mazinger Z", "Voltron", "Astro Boy", and "Star Blazers".

It's popular these days to "reboot" older films and cartoon series for new audiences. Many of you may have seen the Hollywood remake of Astro Boy in 2009. Australian audiences no doubt enjoyed series like "Monkey Magic" for their exoticism. But I think that Australian youth enjoyed cartoons like "Sailor Moon" and "Pokemon" because they could empathise with the characters and their struggles.

Another significant milestone for global recognition of the influence of anime came when director Hayao Miyazaki's animated film "Spirited Away" won an Oscar for Best Animated Feature. Despite

animation being regarded as a children's genre in most Western countries, in Japan, animation is a serious medium in its own right and is often used to explore mature issues such as existentialism, as you will know if you have ever watched "Ghost in the Shell", "Appleseed", or the anime classic "Metropolis".

Japan has long embraced a fusion of its literary and artistic traditions, which in part explains why anime and manga are so widely popular. As you may be aware, in Japan there are many large-bookstore chains, such as Kinokuniya (which you have here in Sydney) along with Maruzen and Junkudo. The bookstores themselves often occupy every floor of high rise buildings, and at least two of those floors are filled with nothing but manga for all ages. The Japanese love of reading, combined with their appreciation of quality artwork, ensures that this literary genre has a healthy future both in Japan and further abroad.

I believe the reason that anime series and films have garnered such critical acclaim as well as popular success is because the values they present and the issues they explore are universal. The modern phenomena of anime, manga, computer games, and Japanese pop music or J-Pop appear to be the principal reasons behind the popularity of the Japanese language among Australian youth.

## **Maintaining the Japanese learning environment**

One of the best ways to promote Japanese culture is to increase the number of Japanese language learners. According to the Japan Foundation's own survey results, in 2009 approximately 3.6 million people were studying Japanese in over 133 countries across the world. Since then the number has increased by more than 60,000. In Australia, more than 270,000 students study Japanese from primary to tertiary level. Australia is currently ranked number four in the world in terms of the number of Japanese learners, following Korea, China and Indonesia. (See Chart)

The Australian government has placed an emphasis on learning Asian languages in order to strengthen ties with Asian countries. I expect that the new white paper compiled by the Federal on

"Australia and the Asian Century" will include this sentiment. The Australia-Japan Conference, which was held in Canberra last year, issued a report on how to enhance Japanese language learning in Australia. One of the recommendations stemming from the conference was that a similar program to the JET( Japan Exchange and Teaching)program should be created in Australia in order to encourage familiarity with the Japanese language and people. This in turn could create new opportunities to enhance Japanese studies across Australia. For its part, the Japanese government will continue to provide more opportunities for high school students, Japanese teachers and Japanese researchers to further their studies, and continue to encourage more youth exchange through government-sponsored exchange programs.

## **Conclusion**

When you look at grass-roots exchanges between our countries, there are over 100 sister city relationships between us. This is the largest number of sister city relationships for Australia with another country. From a tourism perspective, Japan is Australia's 5th largest inbound tourism market.(See Chart) Australians visiting Japan to enjoy skiing and hot spring resorts are increasing in number. Although the number dropped sharply as a result of the March earthquake, the situation in Japan is now back to normal and the Australian government has revised its travel advice accordingly apart from those areas around the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. So I hope you will take the opportunity to organize trips to Japan to enjoy the autumn leaves and winter snow of Japan.

Today I have talked mainly about Japan's contemporary culture under the title of Japan's soft power.

It is around ten years since the Western media started to describe Japan as being 'Cool'. Naturally we are pleased to have gained such a positive assessment on our contemporary culture, and the Japanese government itself is making a concerted effort to introduce and promote the culture of Japan to the world under the catch-cry of "Cool Japan". In most of the parts of Asia, this idea of "Cool Japan" has been widely accepted. I was Consul General and Ambassador in



Hong Kong before coming to Australia. Japanese TV dramas, Japanese pop-music, Japanese anime and manga magazines are literally everywhere in Hong Kong. Our office checked with the number of Japanese TV dramas and programs regularly appearing on TV. It was as many as 48 every week.

Australia has not yet reached a similar level of affinity for Japanese pop culture. Still, it seems that Japanese goods and retail outlets are on the increase in Australia. Japan's giant clothing retailer UNIQLO is reportedly coming soon to open its first shop in Australia. Japan's big 100 Yen shop chain DAISO has just opened a shop in Chatswood, although the price per item is not 100 yen but AUS\$2.80, more than double the price in Japan. I hope that the increased presence of Japanese culture in Australia will further strengthen the sense of closeness and familiarity between our people.

Finally, I have predominantly discussed Japan's soft power with you today, but of course it does not mean soft power is a purely Japanese monopoly. By contrast, in Japan, Korean pop culture has become very popular among the Japanese people. Japanese housewives are crazy about Korean TV dramas called Kanryu, a Korean Style of soap opera. K-Pop, or Korean popular music, is also very popular among Japanese young people. As a result of the wide acceptance of Korean culture in Japan, the bilateral relations between Japan and Korea have remarkably improved. This cultural exchange has achieved what politicians and diplomats could not despite many years of negotiations.

Australia, too, has a great deal of soft power influence. At the outset, I referred to the generally positive sentiments that Australians have towards Japan. Likewise, Japanese people perceive Australia in a very positive light. In most of the polls regarding Japanese people's perception of foreign countries, Australia is constantly ranked first or second as the country Japanese people like best. I believe that the generosity and the kindness Australian people displayed at the time of the devastating disaster in Japan will definitely add to that kind of positive perception.

Thank you very much.