

JAPAN HONOURS DISTINGUISHED AUSTRALIAN

The Hon Robert James Lee Hawke, AC, GCL, recognised for his role
in promoting goodwill between Japan and Australia

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan has today (3 November 2011) conferred the Award of the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun upon Mr Robert James Lee Hawke in recognition of his outstanding contribution and achievements in promoting good relations between Japan and Australia.

For many years, Mr Hawke has endeavoured to strengthen the bilateral relationship between Japan and Australia. During his term as Prime Minister, the Australian government despatched several missions to Japan to promote relations in various fields, leading to a profound development in investment, tourism and people exchanges between the two countries. The National Science and Technology Centre (Questacon) was established in 1988 as a joint program between both governments which has in turn contributed to fostering cooperation in scientific fields between Australia and Japan.

Mr Hawke was also instrumental in promoting the idea of Australia and Japan as partners in the Asia-Pacific region. While serving as Prime Minister, the Japanese and Australian governments expanded the amount of bilateral activities undertaken by both governments, such as cooperation in development aid for Pacific Islands and peace building activities in Cambodia. Both governments also worked closely on the creation of APEC.

Even after his retirement from Parliament, Mr Hawke has made a number of visits to Japan and has promoted the bilateral relationship through grass-roots exchanges. Since 2003, he has supported a study abroad program for Japanese students known as "The Bob Hawke Scholarship", which has invited many young Japanese to Australia every year.

He is one of only five foreign nationals to be bestowed with this highest of honours this season (Japanese awards are conferred two times a year).