

Speech by Consul-General Kiya Masahiko

Memorial Service for the I-124 80 Crew Members
and Memorial Tree Plaque Unveiling Ceremony

20 January 2022 (Thursday) – 6pm

The Honourable Michael Gunner – Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Ms Yumiko Shaw – President of the Australian-Japanese Association of the
Northern Territory (AJANT)

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen

We have just heard from AJANT Vice-President Kathleen Bresnehan about the history of the I-124 and how the idea was born for the I-124 memorial plaque which was erected in 2017.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to AJANT for taking the lead and to the NT Government for its support.

The unveiling of the memorial tree plaque today will help to pass on the story of the Australia-Japan community here in Darwin.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the NT Government for protecting the site of I-124 for many years and for undertaking further studies to deepen our understanding of its history.

It is an honour to be able to speak on this significant occasion of the commemorative service for 80 crew members 80 years after the incident on behalf of the Government of Japan.

Standing here at this beautiful location, I reflect on the post-war history of Japan and Australia – from reconciliation to exchange, cooperation and partnership.

The development of the current Japan-Australia relationship and the peace and prosperity we enjoy today are built on the sacrifice of precious lives lost during World War II.

When attending commemorations such as this, in Darwin, Sydney and Cowra, I feel this fact anew each time.

As I reflect on the past, I am also struck by how far Japan and Australia have walked together down the road of reconciliation, exchange and cooperation. The “Special Strategic Partnership” that our two countries enjoy today is so strong.

Two weeks ago, the leaders of our two nations signed the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement. This facilitates reciprocal access and cooperation between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Australian Defence Force.

The agreement was an epoch-making achievement, which leads to a new chapter for strengthening security and defence cooperation between our two forces. Japan and Australia are now working together toward the realisation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” to promote peace and prosperity for future generations.

This is an occasion, here in Darwin on this day, to remember and to renew our determination for this cause.