

**Speech by Consul-General Kiya Masahiko**

Consul-General's Commendation Ceremony for the  
Darwin Memorial Uniting Church

19 February 2022 (Saturday) – 5pm

Her Honour the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran, Administrator of the Northern Territory and Mr Craig O'Halloran  
Mrs Jo Hersey MLA, Member for Katherine, representing Mrs Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Leader of the Opposition  
Ambassador Yamagami and Mrs Yamagami  
Ms Yumiko Shaw – President of the Australian-Japanese Association of the Northern Territory  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to welcome you all here this evening.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we gather on the traditional lands of the Larrakia people and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

I am delighted to be able to present the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church with the Consul-General's Commendation.

They are such a worthy recipient as I will briefly explain to you now.

When speaking of the relationship between Japan and the Northern Territory, I mention three points of deep connection: they are – history, business and security.

Darwin Memorial Uniting Church has played a key role in deepening this historical connection by working as a catalyst and a symbol of reconciliation and friendship between Japan and Australia from its very inception through to the present day.

Today, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin, is a very fitting occasion for me to acknowledge this contribution by presenting them with the Consul-General's Commendation.

Many of you may know the story of the 77 crosses in this church.

Darwin was bombed by the Imperial Japanese Navy 80 years ago today, and the bombing continued till November 1943.

After the war, the salvage contract for removing wreckage in Darwin Harbour was awarded to a Japanese company, Fujita Salvage, which undertook the work from 1959 to 1961.

The CEO of the company, Mr Fujita Ryugo, strove for reconciliation between Japan and Australia. When Darwin Memorial Uniting Church was established in 1960, Mr Fujita donated 77 crosses made of bronze salvaged from the wreckage to be permanently displayed as a sign of peace and reconciliation. Exchange between Darwin Memorial Uniting Church and Mr Fujita's family has continued since that time.

When you arrived here today, you probably noticed a large propeller that stands outside this church. This salvaged propeller fin had marked Mr Fujita's grave in Japan. It was returned by the Fujita Family five years ago, on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin, standing as a symbol of friendship.

I myself have met with family members of Mr Fujita – his son, Mr Fujita Senichiro, and his granddaughter, Ms Fujita Yoshiko – online at this Church. This history of reconciliation and friendship has inspired both our prime ministers.

In November 2018, then Prime Minister Abe Shinzo referred to the 77 crosses in his speech on the occasion of commencing the Ichthys LNG project in Darwin. Prime Minister Abe said: "Salvage brought salvation. I cannot help but admire the great power of forgiveness."

In August 2020, Prime Minister Scott Morrison introduced the same episode of the 77 crosses in moving terms during his commemorative address at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

This story of reconciliation and friendship at Darwin Memorial Uniting Church has now become a solid foundation on which our business and security cooperation flourishes. They have paved the way for the peace and prosperity

that Japanese and Australians enjoy today, not only here in Darwin and the NT but throughout our two countries.

That is why the contribution of Darwin Memorial Uniting Church should be recognised and this story should continue to be told. It will be a cornerstone of future cooperation between us for many years to come.

I am pleased to know that the church is now receiving study visits by students from around Australia, showing the 77 crosses and this Fujita Hall to the next generation.

Thank you to Darwin Memorial Uniting Church – that is, to its congregation – for helping to build our cooperation for the future and creating living ties between the people of Japan and Darwin, the NT and throughout Australia.

(End)