

Speech by Consul-General Kiya Masahiko

AJS NSW University Awards

18 May 2022 (Wednesday) – 6pm

Check against delivery.

The Consul-General
spoke using these notes
as his reference.

Acknowledgements

- Ms Anita Byrnes – President, Australia-Japan Society of NSW
- Award recipients from the 7 universities
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen

(1) Thanks & Congratulations

- AJS NSW: Thank them as sponsors of the prize
 - an excellent initiative to encourage those who excel in Japanese studies
 - focus on youth – very important
 - Delighted to be back and it is wonderful to see that this year there are not 6 universities but 7 universities.
The University of Newcastle is also part of the AJS NSW University Awards this year.
- Students: Congratulations on your outstanding achievements.
 - You have excelled at a difficult time, having had to contend with COVID for two years during your time at university.
- Universities: Thank you for your involvement selecting the students to be AJS NSW scholars. I hope this AJS NSW initiative helps to further raise the profile of Japanese studies within your institution.

(2) Importance of AJS-NSW University Awards scholars

- Since coming to Australia, I have formed my own impressions of Australia, as well as ideas about what is important for the Japan-Australia relationship.

- Travelling around NSW and the NT, I have seen the strength of people to people connections via sister city relationships and school exchange. And I have never failed to be impressed by the dedicated and enthusiastic teachers of Japanese language. I also met many young Australians in Japanese and Australian companies who are passionate and know so much about Japan.
- To the AJS scholars: If you haven't already had the opportunity to do so, I hope that you will engage in longer term exchange in Japan very soon – perhaps as a participant on the Japanese Government's Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme.
- The recent situation in Ukraine makes me realise that in times of crisis what we can rely on is mutual trust. As Japan and Australia deepen their cooperation and interdependence in the future, in everything from security to economy and culture, deep ties at the local grassroots level and among the younger generation will be a real asset for both countries.
- It's no overstatement to say that young people such as our wonderful AJS scholars here today are the ones who will take on roles to create the future of the Japan-Australia relationship.

(3) Major Scopes of Japan-Australia relationship

Today, there are many areas of cooperation between the people of Japan and Australia, and the fields that young scholars such as you could explore are many and varied.

Let me explain my key take-aways about the Japan-Australia relationship.

(1) Business and trade

- Trade was what first brought Japan and Australia together.
 - Japan has imported iron ore and coal, beef and wheat, and natural gas, to name but a few. Japan is still the largest market for NSW exports.
- Also, investment: across sectors from insurance and housing to food, infrastructure, energy and ICT, the Japanese private sector has become more active in recent years, making full use of business opportunities in Australia with its growing economy.
 - Hydrogen is a good example. Japan and Australia are currently undertaking a joint hydrogen supply chain project to transport hydrogen produced in Australia to Japan for power generation, replacing fossil fuels – the world's first global supply chain.
 - Smart infrastructure can be introduced as part of Greater Sydney development with Japan's latest technology and investment combining with Australia's innovation capability.
- Japan is one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in Australia. And that investment is growing, particularly following the COVID pandemic.
- The NSW Government's recently appointed Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner in North Asia was just posted to Tokyo last month. This is in recognition of Japan's status as one of Australia's largest sources of foreign direct investment and as NSW's largest export market for goods.

(2) Culture and exchange

- I mentioned earlier people to people connections via sister city relationships and school exchange.
- Today - increasing cultural and people-to-people exchange
- Japanese food has become part of Australia's vibrant food culture. The number and range of Japanese restaurants in Sydney are truly remarkable.
 - *Omakase* in Sydney booked out several months ahead.
- Two-way travel has also been a significant promoter of broader mutual understanding. Japan is a very popular tourist destination for Australians and pre-COVID, record numbers were visiting or indeed revisiting Japan.

We look forward to welcoming Australians again as the borders reopen.

- During the COVID lockdowns, of the many online and in-person events that were part of the Sydney-based Japanaroo, tourism events such as virtual tours and events at restaurants introducing Japan's regional cuisine were very successful.
 - Japanaroo 2022 is being planned for September this year. Please keep an eye out for information about the exciting events that will be organised.
- All of this made possible thanks to the fertile ground of Australian multiculturalism – one of Australia's great strengths
 - I have been frequently aware of the great capacity Australians have to embrace the good aspects of other cultures, and that has been the case for Japan.

(3) Security

- Economic and social prosperity cannot occur without solid foundation of peace and stability – which brings me to our security relationship.
- Security ties have become more important in recent times. Today Japan and Australia share a “Special Strategic Partnership”.
- At the start of this year in January, a virtual summit was held instead, and our two leaders signed the Reciprocal Access Agreement, elevating our security and defence cooperation to a new level.
- In February, Australia hosted the Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Melbourne, and early next week, the Quad Leaders’ Summit will be held in Tokyo, bringing together the leaders of Japan, Australia, India and the US.
- Japan and Australia are now working together toward the realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.
- To ensure peace in the Indo-Pacific, Japan and Australia can cooperate to work together with like-minded friends, including our great friend, the United States, and South East Asian nations.

Concluding remarks

To close, allow me to congratulate the AJS scholars once again on their significant achievements.

- I wish you well in your future endeavours and hope that you will continue your interest in Japan – her people and culture.
- Wherever your future paths may take you, I hope you will continue to contribute to mutual understanding between Japan and Australia.

Thank you.