

Thank you.

Firstly, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I acknowledge His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan, on his 62nd Birthday Celebration.

I acknowledge my dear friend the Consul General of Japan and thank him for his invitation and his involvement in this Award by His Majesty.

I acknowledge Her Excellency the Governor of NSW and Mr Denis Wilson.

I acknowledge the Speaker, the Hon Jonothan O'Dea and the President, the Hon Matthew Mason Cox. I acknowledge all Ministers, Shadow Ministers, members of Parliament and all Mayors and Councillors.

Please allow me to acknowledge my beautiful wife Mary Ajaka who has always stood by my side, along with our daughters Isabella Ajaka and Gabrielle Ajaka.

I am very humbled to be standing here this evening to receive this recognition from His Majesty The Emperor of Japan.

Especially at this time, with so much tragedy around the world including the unacceptable invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

And, here in Australia and our state of NSW, especially the floods around Lismore, Ballina and other areas.

And before that, the fires, drought and two years of Covid.

We must never forget the strength and sacrifice by so many and continue to thank them for their enormous contributions.

What keeps us going, during these times of tragedy, is our resilience as Australians... Multicultural Australians.

Our success as a nation results from the fact that we not only embrace our multiculturalism, but we use it to ensure the best outcomes for all.

We do this in a harmonious way.

It is our people to people links that is our true wealth.

The close relationship between our state of NSW and Japan is a perfect example of this.

Whether it is trade, investment, education, medical, culture, food or entertainment. It is clear the enormous benefits we both derive from this close relationship.

Your Excellency, please convey to His Majesty my sincere thanks for this honour.

Please assure His Majesty that I will always continue to work to strengthen the relationship between Japan and our state of NSW.