

Speech by Consul-General Masato Takaoka
National Day Reception
on the Occasion on the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor
Tuesday 1 December 2015

Mr Michael Miller, representing the Governor of New South Wales,

The Honourable John Ajaka, Minister for Multiculturalism,
representing the Premier of New South Wales,

The Honourable Tom Bathurst, Chief Justice of New South Wales,

Members of Parliament,

Mayors,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

冒頭挨拶

Thank you all for joining me this evening to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's birthday. It is a tremendous honour to host this national day reception and to welcome so many friends of Japan and the Japan-Australia relationship. On the 23rd of December, His Majesty will turn 82. I would like to take this opportunity to wish His Majesty continued good health.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to mention Leading Seaman Tracy Kennedy from the Royal Australian Navy who just performed the national anthems. I first heard her sing in May last year when I attended the service for HMAS Kuttabul

which commemorates the victims of the attack on Sydney Harbour in 1942. I was so impressed and even surprised by how beautifully she sang *Kimigayo*, the Japanese national anthem. So, I wanted to share my amazement with you and therefore asked her to sing for us this evening. Please join me in thanking Tracey [拍手].

Speaking of the HMAS Kuttabul service, it was remarkable this year because for the first time it paid tribute not only to the 21 Allied victims, but also to the six Japanese submariners who lost their lives in the service for their country. It was particularly moving to hear the Japanese submariners' names read out by students from the Sydney Japanese International School. 70 years ago, who could have imagined that happening? I was touched by the Australian open-heartedness, and renewed my appreciation of the closeness and friendship our two countries have fostered over the years.

日豪政治・経済関係

Today Japan and Australia enjoy an excellent partnership.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull met for the first time a few weeks ago at the G20 in Turkey. They reaffirmed that our two countries share a 'special relationship' based on common values – including

freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law – and mutual strategic interests.

And just two weeks ago here in Sydney at the so-called 2+2 Meeting, our two countries' ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence discussed further cooperation in the Pacific region to support economic prosperity and regional peace and stability.

We are hoping that Prime Minister Turnbull will visit Tokyo shortly to further our partnership.

Trade and economics have always been strong between us, and we have entered a new chapter of close business engagement with the entry into force of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement earlier this year. We have already witnessed significant pick-up in our bilateral trade and investment. We shall expect a further boost to bilateral and regional trade with the TPP, Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement.

日豪間の幅広い絆

The friendship and close ties between us are supported at various levels and in a broad range of fields.

Premier Mike Baird for instance is a great friend of Japan. He chose to go to Japan in May as his first overseas visit after the election.

This evening I am grateful to have many mayors and Members of Parliament representing places with amazingly warm sister-city relations with Japan.

Academics and intellectual exchanges continue to play an important role in enriching our ties. I would like to thank government, academic and corporate stakeholders for all their support. The passion and firm professional commitment to Japanese language studies are always impressive.

It is a matter of pride that the Japanese community, the seventh largest outside Japan, and our friends are an important part of Sydney's vibrant multiculturalism. Food is a great example. And I personally like sake too. There are many people from the world of arts and music joining us this evening, even from such subcultures as bonsai and koi fish.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales has recently chosen Japanese architects SANAA to design Sydney Modern. I am sure this will further contribute to Sydney's beautiful cultural landscape.

スポーツ

Here in Australia no speech is complete without mentioning sport.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have to apologise; at last year's national day reception I arrogantly predicted that Japan's Samurai Blue would face the Australian Socceroos in the final of the Asian Cup in January – and that we would win. I was utterly wrong. Australia is a sporting superpower. I was impressed when just two months later Australia also won the World Cup Cricket.

Well, I can say with some pride that the winner and runner-up in the men's Sydney Marathon were both Japanese runners. But there is no doubt that one of the highlights for Japanese sports fans this year was the Rugby World Cup.

Japan's performance against South Africa will go down as one of the great upsets in the history of rugby. Thanks in no small part to Australian and half-Japanese Eddie Jones, Japan's Brave Blossoms won three of its four round matches, and unprecedented in cup history, the team was unlucky not to proceed to the next stage. So, in 2019, when Japan hosts the Rugby World Cup, I bravely predict, in the final, Japan's Brave Blossoms will be taking on the Australian Wallabies.

結び

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To close, I would like to thank you again for your friendship and for being with me this evening.

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