



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIA JAPAN BUSINESS COUNCIL VICTORIA GALA DINNER
Friday 8 September 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

His Excellency Mr Kazuhiro Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan to Australia

Junji Shimada Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne

Natsuko Ogawa and Ross Ciaravolo, Co-Chairs of the Australia-Japan Business Council of Victoria

Mikiyasu Yuasa, President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Melbourne

Takayuki Kanno, representing the Japanese Society of Melbourne

Tim Kane, State Director, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

And other distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this building stands – the Wurundjeri people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to join you this evening to celebrate the sixtieth Anniversary of the Australia Japan Business Council of Victoria.

This State has had a long engagement with Japan.

In Victoria's early decades of growing its economy, its ambitions were to draw upon the best in the world.

The first official World Fair in the Southern Hemisphere took place in Melbourne between 1880-81. It included a wide range of goods from Japan including significant decorative art from the early Meiji period.

It was not surprising that Victoria so vigorously embraced the world fairs and exhibitions which were important to stimulating trade and engagement with other regions and nations.

The gold rush of the 1850s meant people of many nations came to Victoria and before colonisation, Victoria was home to many First Peoples language groups.

Cross-cultural collaboration grew over time particularly for Japan and Australia from the 1970s.

This Council was ahead of its time in recognising the potential of the relationship.

Opening its doors in 1963, it was a pioneer in promoting the business and partnership opportunities offered by a modern Japan.

Today, Japan is Victoria's third largest trading partner with more than 200 Japanese companies currently operating in our State.

Collaboration in digital technology, medtech, defence, agriculture and education has also made Japan our State's fourth-largest export market.

And, in 2022, two-way merchandise trade between Victoria and Japan was worth some \$7.75 billion. Of course, the ties between our communities go beyond purely commercial interests.

We were delighted to host His Excellency Mr Kazuhiro Suzuki, at Government House this week on his first official visit to Victoria.

And Victoria will play host again later this year, during the 60th Annual Joint Business Conference of the Australia-Japan Business Partnership.

Governor Ohmura's visit from Aichi during the Conference highlights another important component of the connection between Victoria and Japan. The sister state relationship between Victoria and Aichi reached its 40th anniversary in 2020, marking four decades of cultural exchange and cooperation.

The success of this relationship is another thread in the many aspects of engagement with Japan that this Council encourages.

Whether via roundtables, internships, business briefings or conferences, harnessing the commercial ties between Victoria and Japan has built the relationship.

In particular, the Businesswomen's network and scholarship opportunities ensure the next generation of business leaders can play a role in this Golden Era of the Victoria-Japan relationship.

In his 1880 text, *An Encouragement of Learning*, Yukichi Fukuzawa argued for the promotion of international partnerships saying, "*we should mutually teach and learn from each other without shame or pride. We should promote each other's interests and pray for each other's happiness.*"

I hope you'll allow me to congratulate you on doing just that.