HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

SPEECH

Tuesday, 8 July 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (11:06): On this historic day I first acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the first law-givers of our nation, and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Prime Minister Abe, on behalf of the opposition, it is my great pleasure to join with the Prime Minister in welcoming you, and your wife, Mrs Abe, to our parliament and our nation. You honour all of us with your presence here today. There is so much our two countries share: faith in democracy, deep respect for the rule of law, cooperation in peacekeeping missions and global leadership in nuclear nonproliferation—and I acknowledge today the work of our former foreign ministers Yoriko Kawaguchi and Gareth Evans. We share a steadfast commitment to a stable, prosperous and peaceful Asia-Pacific.

For more than a century, Japanese demand for Australian resources has helped build our nations' shared prosperity. Japan is an investor as well as a customer—a true trading partner. For more than 50 years Japanese investment has driven the development of northern Australia, from the iron ore fields of the Pilbara to the North West Shelf and Darwin Liquefied Natural Gas to coal mines in the east.

Japan has long been much more to Australia than a leader in technological innovation or a market for our resources. We have traded and shared our values and our ideas too. Australia's arts and our architecture, our food and philosophy and even the way we do business have been enhanced and enriched by the Japanese. All Australians are grateful for these gifts. We celebrate this diversity. We understand that it helps us gain and grow and learn—or, as the Japanese saying goes, juunintoiro: 10 people, 10 colours.

In embracing our differences, we are stronger, and ours is a friendship that shares hardship. When Fukushima was devastated by earthquake and tsunami in 2011, Australian hearts went out to our friends in Japan. Within days Australian search and rescue personnel, defence operations response officers and three C17 aircraft were on the scene helping with the clean-up, the search and the rescue effort. They were soon followed by donations and contributions from hundreds of thousands of ordinary Australians.

Prime Minister Gillard was the first world leader to visit the region following the disaster and personally conveyed our condolences for your loss, and our admiration for your resilience. In those tough times, Australia was indeed proud to stand by our friend. We gave our help gladly, knowing that Japan would not hesitate to respond with the same speed and generosity. This understanding, this respect and care for each other's welfare, lies at the heart of our friendship—a friendship built on the open-hearted generosity and the wisdom of our two peoples.

It has long been this way. Three years after your grandfather's term as Prime Minister, Yamato Takada city and the town of Lismore in New South Wales became 'sister cities', the first such partnership between Australia and Japan. Today 109 communities across our nation and yours share this bond, joined together in the spirit of friendship, of understanding, of learning from one another. People from our two nations are building personal connections through the student exchanges, the cultural exchanges and the local government visits. Friendships are flourishing through the email and the Skype—the long-planned catch-ups, be it in Bundaberg and Settsu city, Inakawa town and Ballarat, Geraldton and Kosai city, and of course your ancient capital Nara and our capital, Canberra.

Every year in the Canberra-Nara Peace Park, a patch of Japanese maples and cherry blossoms amongst the gum trees, Australians and Japanese people gather together for a festival. Surrounded by Japanese sculpture, accompanied by Japanese music and delighting in Japanese food, festival-goers light 2,000 candles in celebration of peace and friendship. In that spirit, by those lights, today we say to you that Japan will always have a friend in Australia, a partner in prosperity and a partner in peace. Prime Minister Abe, you are most welcome in Australia—and the people of Japan always will be.
The SPEAKER: Mr Prime Minister, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to address the House.

His Excellency Mr SHINZO ABE (Prime Minister of Japan) (11:12): The Hon. Tony Abbott MP, Prime Minister of Australia; the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Senator the Hon. Stephen Parry, President of the Senate; the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, Leader of the Opposition; members and senators; distinguished guests: I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which this event is taking place and their elders, past and present.

Ladies and gentlemen, when we Japanese started out again after the Second World War, we thought long and hard over what had happened in the past and came to make a vow for peace with our whole hearts. We Japanese have followed that path until the present day. We will never let the horrors of the past century's history repeat themselves. This vow that Japan made after the war is still fully alive today. There is no question at all about this point. I stand here in the Australian legislative chamber to state this vow to you solemnly and proudly.

Our fathers and grandfathers lived in a time that saw Kokoda and Sandakan. How many young Australians, with bright futures to come, lost their lives? For those who made it through the war, how much trauma did they feel years and years later from these painful memories? I can only stay humble against the evils and horrors of history. May I most humbly speak for Japan and on behalf of the Japanese people here in sending my most sincere condolences towards the many souls who lost their lives.

There is a story from 1968 that pulls at my heartstrings even now. Australia invited a Japanese woman to come here. Her name is Matsue Matsou and she was 83 years old. She accepted Australia's invitation and, in memory of her son, poured Japanese sake into Sydney bay. Her son was on a small submarine that had sunk in Sydney bay during an attack on Australia. The people of Australia kept his valour in memory for so many years and brought over the brave soldier's mother from Japan. This is so beautifully open minded.

‘Hostility to Japan must go. It is better to hope than always to remember.’ These are the words of Prime Minister RG Menzies, when he restarted Australia-Japan ties after the war. Again, speaking both for Japan and the Japanese people, I wish to state my great and whole-hearted gratitude for the spirit of tolerance and for the friendship that Australia has shown to Japan. When in Japan, we will never forget your open-minded spirit nor the past history between us. Prime Minister Menzies was the first to welcome a Japanese prime minister to Australia after the war. That was 57 years ago. We signed a commerce treaty between us, and that propelled us on the road to prosperity, which we still enjoy today. It was my grandfather Nobusuke Kishi who signed it. This was the start of Australian coal, iron ore and natural gas coming into Japan. The second coming of Japan's industry after the war first became possible through the help of Australia, our indispensable partner.

Just as Prime Minister Menzies and my grandfather did, Prime Minister Tony Abbott and I hope to make a truly new basis for our relations. This afternoon Prime Minister Abbott and I will sign the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement. Seven years ago, when our task on this EPA began, many asked if we would ever see this day. I think even many members of this honourable body felt the same way. Let us congratulate each other for the many efforts that brought us here today. The next step for us will be the TPP, after that RCEP and then the FTA.

Let us walk forward together, Australia and Japan, with no limits. Yes, we can do it. After all, when Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and Japan's Prime Minister Masayoshi said that the creation of a Pacific community was a significant long-term objective, we built the cornerstone for APEC. That was no less than 34 years ago. Visions always come from a longitude of 135 degrees east, do they not? Of course, we are the ones who benefit by making markets that are broad, open and free.

Ladies and gentlemen, opening up Japan's economy and society is one of the major engines for my growth strategy. I am now working to reform systems and norms that have not changed in many decades. Japan will grow by increasing its productivity while keeping good fiscal discipline. To do that, I will become like a drill bit myself, breaking through the vested interests and the norms that have deep roots. Reforms are now starting in the fields of agriculture, energy policy and medicine. For the first time in decades we have also started to reform old norms in our labour relations. Since the beginning, I have stressed that I want to make Japan a place where women shine. I have also said, time and again, that for non-Japanese with a can-do spirit and ability Japan and Japanese society must be a beacon of hope.
This EPA with Australia will be a great catalyst to spark further changes as we open up Japan's economy. It will also give us a great push forward as we work towards the TPP. Japan and Australia have deepened our economic ties. We will now join up in a scrum, just like in rugby, to nurture our regional and the world order and to safeguard peace.

Today, I stand in front of you who represent the people of Australia and state solemnly that now Japan and Australia will finally use our relationship of trust, which has stood up through the trials of history, in our cooperation in the area of security. Australia and Japan have now freed ourselves from one old layer and are now moving towards a new special relationship. Prime Minister Abbott and I confirmed that already on 7 April in Tokyo. Today, Prime Minister Abbott and I will sign an agreement concerning the transfer of defence equipment and technology that will make the first cut in engraving the special relationship in our future history.

That is not all. As far as national security goes, Japan has been safe for a long time. Now, Japan has built a determination as a nation that longs for permanent peace in the world and as a country whose economy is among the biggest. Japan is now determined to do more to enhance peace in the region and peace in the world. Ladies and gentlemen, it is to put that determination into concrete action that Japan has chosen to strengthen its ties with Australia. Yes, our countries both love peace. We value freedom and democracy, and we hold human rights and the rule of law dear. Today is a day that we bring life to our new special relationship. To mark its birthday today, I should have brought a huge cake to share with every one of you!

There are many things Japan and Australia can do together by each of us joining hands with the United States, an ally for both our nations. Japan is now working to change its legal basis for security so that we can act jointly with other countries in as many ways as possible. We want to make Japan a country that will work to build an international order that upholds the rule of law. Our desire is to make Japan a country that is all the more willing to contribute to peace in the region and beyond. It is for this reason that Japan has raised the banner of active contribution to peace. Whatever we decide to do, I will tell you that Japan will continue to work together with our neighbour at the longitude of 135 degrees east. This is why we have made this special relationship.

Let us join together all the more in order to make the vast seas from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean, and those skies, open and free. In everything we say and do, we must follow the law and never fall back onto force or coercion. When there are disputes, we must always use peaceful means to find solutions. These are natural rules. I believe strongly that when Japan and Australia, sharing common values, join hands, these natural rules will become the norm for the seas of prosperity, that stretch from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian. Today is the day our special relationship is born.

It is fitting that I conclude my speech with words of gratitude to our dear friends, and with an appeal to our young people. I ask the members of this esteemed body to please look to the gallery, where you will see Mr Robert McNeil of Fire and Rescue New South Wales. Mr McNeil, to you I give my deep appreciation. Minamisanriku, in Japan's Miyagi prefecture, was one of the towns that suffered the very worst damage from the tsunami that hit our Tohoku region on 11 March 2011. Mr McNeil, leading a team of 76 people and two dogs, immediately came to Minamisanriku. There he worked together with firefighters from Japan. Mr McNeil said:

When the Japanese firefighters were grieving, we were able to share their grief. There were no walls of communication between us.

We will keep his words in our hearts warmly forever.

Then Prime Minister Julia Gillard stood motionless with her upper lip tight upon seeing the terrible sight of Minamisanriku. I would like to express once more my sincere thanks for the leadership that Prime Minister Gillard showed. Furthermore, this is an excellent example indeed showing that Australia-Japan relations go beyond the fences between political parties.

Andrew Southcott, Michael Danby, Gary Gray and, of course, Andrew Robb are some of many who have advanced exchanges with Japanese Diet members, which will become more and more important. There are many more who have been active in this way, so forgive me for naming only these very few. I wish to thank all those who have made an effort to connect with your fellow law-makers in Japan. I very much hope you will continue those efforts.
Japan and Australia also have ties made through the Japan Exchange and Teaching, JET, program. The New Colombo Plan will certainly give rise to the leaders of the future. Tokyo will become a place where these young Australians come across new chapters in their personal stories. Japan will become a country that will take these young people, visiting from Australia, as important members of society. Japan and Australia will each work to make our youth exchanges stronger, bigger and better. This is an era that has now begun. I ask all honourable members of this body to take back to your home districts the message that Prime Minister Abe said—that young people should head to Japan! I will do the same for you. I will tell the youth of Japan that they should head to Australia.

In 2020 Tokyo will once again host the Olympic and Paralympic Games. As for me, I watched the 1964 Olympics and I was one of the many who were dazzled by the power of Ms Dawn Fraser, who is in the gallery today. Ms Fraser, to me you are Australia! Thank you very much for coming here today. What spirited athletes will you send to Tokyo in six years? We all look forward to seeing that. Ms Fraser, in 2020 I hope we will see you in good shape in Tokyo once more. I hope very much that you bring forth a new dawn to Japan and a new dawn to the future of Australia-Japan relations. Thank you very much.

The SPEAKER: Mr Prime Minister, on behalf of the House, I thank you for your address and I wish you and Mrs Abe a successful and enjoyable stay in Australia.

Honourable member and senators: Hear, hear!

Members and senators rising and applauding, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Mrs Abe left the chamber.