

Good morning.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the annual Japanese Language Speech Contest today. My name is SHIMADA Junji and I am the Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne.

I'd like to briefly introduce myself. I am originally from Osaka, which has been Melbourne's sister city for over 40 years. Around the time Osaka became Melbourne's first sister city, I went on my very first overseas trip to Sydney as a young university student! Since then, I have been looking forward to returning to Australia, so I am incredibly happy to be able to live and work in Australia now.

Today, I would like to show you this beautiful boomerang which was gifted to me in Sydney in 1983. I have always treasured this. On the backside of this boomerang, it says "guaranteed to return"! What a simple and meaningful phrase this is! I feel that this boomerang has guided me back to Australia.

When I was studying English as a student, we had nothing like the Internet or smartphones. I remember carrying a small English dictionary in my bag so that I could study on-the-go, but times have certainly changed since then – we now have abundant resources on the Internet and the process for learning a second language has never been so convenient or more efficient. I hope that you will all make good use of the resources around us as you continue your Japanese language learning journey in the years to come!

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games ended just last month, while the Paralympic Games is finishing today. I have been receiving many wonderful messages of appreciation in relation to Japan hosting the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games despite the difficult circumstances. Without Australia's presence and achievements, Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics would not have been as successful. I would like to sincerely thank Australia for their support and wish all the best to Brisbane in 2032.

To conclude, I would like to share this quote by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Olympics, with you – "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well". I hope that you will all give your best shot today at the Contest and cherish the experience.

今日は頑張ってください。ありがとうございました。