

Thank you for inviting me today.

Before I begin, I would like to thank Monash University for hosting this contest online again, and the members of the Japanese Language Speech Contest Victoria Committee and sponsors for helping to make the contest happen. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee, which is currently chaired by Mr Hiroshi Honda, for being named as a recipient of this year's Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation. Decades of hard work and dedication running speech contest annually in Victoria by past and present members of the Committee are recognized by this commendation. おめでとうございます。

Now to all the contestants today, I would like to commend all of you for the effort you put in to studying Japanese.

Today, I would like to tell you briefly about my initial motivation to study English and the career path I have taken so far. The very first time I became interested in learning English was when Osaka, my hometown and the sister city of Melbourne, held the Japan World Expo in 1970. I was 8 years old then and visited the Expo more than 10 times. I was fascinated by the various exhibits showcasing so many countries! The Osaka Expo made me feel that I needed English skills to communicate with people around the world and it sparked my interest in an international career, which led me to where I am today – working in Melbourne, after working in Tokyo, Washington D.C., Beijing and Jakarta.

Just like visiting the Osaka EXPO and studying English paved the way forward for my career, I hope studying Japanese language and culture will open up many doors for you in the future as well. For instance, there are many Japanese government programmes and scholarships, which can offer you an opportunity to visit Japan. If you are interested in studying in Japan, you can apply for the MEXT scholarships, and if you prefer working and living in Japan, you can apply for the JET Programme. Whichever the opportunity, I hope you will travel to Japan one day and continue studying Japanese.

By the way, did you know the next World Expo will be held in Osaka again? The Kansai region including Osaka will host the World Expo in 2025. And it is expected that more than 100 double-handed yachts

competing in the Melbourne to Osaka Yacht Race will be arriving in the port of Osaka from Melbourne just before the opening of the Kansai Expo. It will be a spectacular event leading up to the Kansai Expo!

高校・大学時代、そしてその後も日本語学習への情熱と努力を持ち続けてください。そして機会があれば、是非関西 EXPO まで足を運んで下さい。

I hope that you will keep up your passion and effort for Japanese language learning throughout your high school and university years and beyond and visit the Kansai Expo in 2025 if you get a chance!

今日は皆さん、頑張ってください。ありがとうございました。