

Good morning,

It is my great pleasure to say a few words at today's 21st Annual Japan Festival. I am more than delighted that the Japan Festival has finally returned after three years of absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also my first time attending the Japan Festival in Box Hill, so I am very excited to explore everything this festival has to offer. I hope you are too!

This year's Japan Festival is co-hosted by the Japan Club of Victoria, as well as the Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Melbourne and the Japanese Society of Melbourne, which has been hosting the Melbourne Japanese Summer Festival in Federation Square. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to these organisers, for coming together to make this event possible. I would also like to thank all sponsors, supporters, volunteers, and everyone involved in this festival for their generous help and support.

I have been told that this year's festival theme is “紡ぐ TSUMUGU”. It is difficult to find the English equivalent for this word, but it means “to connect or to weave together”. I think this festival is an excellent example of “紡ぐ TSUMUGU”. People from different backgrounds come together to enjoy Japanese culture in various forms, including food, cultural performances and demonstrations. Undoubtedly,

community events such as today's festival greatly contribute to the strengthening of friendships between Japan and Australia.

In terms of government events, the G7 (Group of Seven) Summit is taking place right now in Japan in Hiroshima Prefecture. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is also joining the Hiroshima G7 Summit as one of the guests of Japan. The political ties between Japan and Australia remain very strong and I am very much looking forward to seeing further developments in our bilateral relationship.

I know everybody here is eager to explore the stalls and see the performances, so I will wrap up my speech now. Thank you for listening and enjoy the festival!