

Good afternoon,

Thank you for inviting me here for today's AGM of the Australia-Japan Business Council of Victoria. I am delighted to see so many of you here.

I would like to thank and show my support to Celeste Koravos and the directors for all of their hard work over the last 12 months. I hope AJBCV members will continue to show them great support this year and that the board will maintain strong communication with all members. As Patron, I am pleased to see the ongoing growth of the 60-year old Business Council and the increased number of events the team are involved in. I look forward to continuing to work with you all this year.

I also want to acknowledge Ross Ciaravolo on being awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette last month for his ongoing contribution to the Australia-Japan relationship and this organisation in particular.

Last year's AJBCC conference in Melbourne was a remarkable success and highlighted the true strength of the relationship between Australia and Japan. We are all looking forward to this year's conference in Nagoya, which I'm sure will be equally successful. I hope I can convince Tokyo to let me participate!

I want to congratulate AJBCV on such a successful Gala dinner last September, which Ambassador Suzuki, Kaoru and I greatly enjoyed. I'm sure this year's event will be even better! The Golden Era that was announced ahead of last year's Gala is well and truly continuing, with many events for 2025 already being planned. The Osaka Expo is shaping up to be an incredible event, with DFAT and a number of state governments working very hard on their contributions to the Australian Pavilion. I hope the Victorian Government will announce its participation in this event soon – Adam please persuade them to make a good contribution!

I heard from our deputy consul-general that the AJBCV Shinnenkai and International Women's Day events held recently were also a great success; I am glad to see these events are so well supported by the Australia-Japan business community; over 100 guests attended each of these events, which is fantastic to see.

I am delighted that Adam Cunneen is able to be with us in person this year and I encourage all of you to get to know him and the work he is doing in Tokyo. Thank you Adam for all of your hard work and the close collaboration you maintain with our office.

I am very much looking forward to the continued growth of the Australia-Japan Business Council of Victoria and I wish all members the best for the next 12 months. I hope I will still be in this role in a year's time to make an address at your next AGM!

Thank you.