



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 543

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THE AUSTRALIA-JAPAN FOUNDATION

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, today announced that the Government had decided to legislate during the next session of Parliament for the establishment of an Australia-Japan Foundation. The objectives of the Foundation will be to deepen and widen contacts between Australia and Japan in all fields, including business, academic, cultural, scientific and the trade unions.

The Prime Minister said that the relationship between Australia and Japan was of the highest importance to both countries. "We all readily recognise this importance in the economic field," said Mr Whitlam. "But there are wider interests between us which until now have been little explored or developed. It will be the task of the Australia-Japan Foundation to assist and encourage well-motivated and competent Australians and Japanese from all walks of life to build knowledge, understanding and goodwill between the two countries."

The Foundation will promote mutual visits by selected persons and also research and comparative studies in depth of a diverse range of topics embracing but not limited to the social institutions of the two countries, the social and natural sciences, industrial and creative arts and the humanities. Criteria for assistance by the Foundation will be based on the contribution proposals will make to knowledge of one country in the other, to filling key gaps in mutual understanding and to extending the scope for fruitful cooperation between Australians and Japanese in each country. Those receiving assistance will be competent persons who are already making a contribution to their own sphere of activity.

The proposed structure and functions of the Foundation have been under consideration since late last year by a Committee comprising Mr Kenneth Myer, A.C., D.S.C., Professor E.S. Crawcour, Mr D.J. Munro, O.B.E., (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet), and Mr J.R. Rowland (Department of Foreign Affairs), under the chairmanship of Sir John Crawford, C.B.E. The Committee's report recommended that the Foundation should operate as an independent non-governmental statutory body with an invited

national council of not more than 15 members drawn from key elements of Australian society to give it as wide a base as possible in the Australian community.

The Prime Minister said that he had foreshadowed the establishment of the Foundation during the visit to Australia last year by the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Tanaka. It was a logical next step following on the signature in Canberra last November of the Australian-Japanese Cultural Agreement. That Agreement, however, Mr Whitlam said, was concerned with a range of specific inter-governmental activities, and there was a need to go beyond it in order to deepen and strengthen Australia-Japan relations by fostering better understanding and greater tolerance through people-to-people contacts in all fields of mutual experience. Only in this way would each people be able to understand and appreciate the character, culture and outlook of the other.

For the time being, the Office of the Australia-Japan Foundation will be centred in the Prime Minister's Department.

CANBERRA, A.C.T.