



PRIME MINISTER

AUSTRALIA/JAPAN MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

OPENING STATEMENT

By the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. William McMahon, CH, MP.

12 OCTOBER 1972

Good Morning!

On behalf of the Australian Government, I welcome to Australia five Japanese Ministers - the Foreign Minister, Mr Ohira; the Minister of Agriculture and Fishery, Mr Adachi; the Minister of International Trade and Industry, Mr Nakasone; the Minister of Transport, Mr Sasaki, and the Minister of State for Economic Planning, Mr Arita.

This is the largest group of Ministers ever to have come to Australia from any single country - and I can assure you, we in Australia welcome you - just as the Australian delegation of eight Ministers is, I understand, the largest group we have had at an international conference in Australia.

This important gathering is the inaugural meeting of the Australia/Japan Ministerial Committee which it was agreed last year should be established:

"to hold consultations on bilateral and multilateral trade and related problems, as well as other matters of common interest concerning the trade and economic relationship between the two countries that may subsequently be considered necessary."

In accordance with this policy, the Committee is to discuss economic and financial issues, multilateral trade matters, bilateral trade, energy and natural resources, transportation matters and Papua and New Guinea.

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The creation of the Committee underlines the great importance of the many-faceted relationship between Australia and Japan. Our trade has grown to the point where Japan is our largest trading partner and Australia is Japan's second-largest trading partner after the United States. Australia recently had its first loan placement ever in the Japanese capital market.

But while the economic relationship forms the bulk of the bilateral contacts between our two countries, our dealings with each other extend into many other fields - political, scientific and cultural, and we co-operate extensively and intimately in international organisations.

So we look at this Ministerial Committee Meeting as a particularly important means of supplementing the established pattern of Ministerial visits, and of way of furthering the frank and friendly exchanges which are now a settled part of our relationship - that is the relationship between our two countries.

I am confident that Australia and Japan can enlarge their friendship and co-operation to the benefit of both nations, and can together contribute, each in its own way, to the prosperity and peace of the region in which we live.

If I can make this comment to you, Mr Foreign Minister, Mr Ohira, I very much welcome the statement you made yesterday immediately after you arrived in Australia. It was, I think, a very helpful beginning to what I can hope to be a successful meeting between your Ministers and my own, and I am sure that our belief in success will turn out to be a reality.

As Treasurer, it was my pleasure to be involved with many contacts in economic and financial matters between the Australian and Japanese Governments. And in truth, I think I can take credit for the formation and the subsequent working of the official meetings as between the officials of the Government of Japan and my own officials which were established at the time I was the Foreign Minister.

And at that time, too, as Foreign Minister, I was even more closely involved with the strengthening of the warm relationship between our two countries, and was able to give a great deal of thought to the methods by which that relationship should be able to develop.

It was during my period as Foreign Minister, as I have said, that the initiatives by our Governments were taken to establish the Ministerial Committee as well. As Prime Minister, I was naturally delighted to give my full backing to the proposal to establish this Committee.

I am certain that it will prove to be one of the most significant steps our peoples have taken in furthering our common goals of friendship, co-operation, prosperity and of peace.

It therefore gives me great pleasure, Mr Chairman, to declare open the inaugural meeting of the Australia/Japan Ministerial Committee.
