

**AJBCC submission to the
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on:
*The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—Proposed Construction and
Decommissioning of the Australian Pavilion at the World Expo 2025
Osaka, Kansai, Japan.***

The Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee (AJBCC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Public Works Committee in support of the Government's plans for an Australian presence at the World Expo in Osaka in 2025.

The AJBCC commends the Government for moving early to commit Australia to participate in the Osaka Expo, ensuring a strong signal is sent to Japan of Australia's commitment to the bilateral relationship and maximising the chances of Australia securing a good location and being able to develop a compelling exhibit in a cost-effective manner. We welcome, too, the selection of an Australian company, Buchan, which has strong links with Japan through its association with Nikken Sekkei, as Lead Designer for the Pavilion. Buchan is a member of the AJBCC.

In considering the proposal before it from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the AJBCC would respectfully urge the Committee to take full account of the following:

- The crucial importance of Australia's multi-faceted relationship with Japan, including the recent burgeoning of the political, geo-strategic and defence relationship as well as the fundamentally important business and economic relationship;
- The importance placed by Japan on the development of long-term, trust-based relationships over short-term transactional considerations, and the value of high-profile participation in the Expo in that context as a clear signal of Australia's commitment to actively contributing to the bilateral relationship;
- The challenges and opportunities for the bilateral relationship currently being posed by rapid change in the geopolitical, climate-related, demographic and economic situations of both countries, and the opportunity to use the Expo exhibit to demonstrate the ongoing complementarity between Australia's and Japan's attributes in the changing world;
- The strong focus of Japanese businesses and the Japanese population on quality;
- The opportunity posed by the Expo to showcase the breadth and depth of existing bilateral partnerships, including in unexpected areas; to highlight areas of potential for future partnerships; and to demonstrate the high level of Japan skills, literacy and interest in our own population, and to continue the development of a cohort of younger Australians who possess these attributes.

Against this background, and in the context of its duty to ensure that public funds are spent in an appropriate and cost-effective manner that safeguards the interests of the taxpayer, we would urge the Committee to:

- Endorse the activity as a necessary and desirable contribution to Australia's crucial national interest in maintaining and developing its relationship with Japan, its key strategic partner in East Asia, second largest export market and source of foreign direct investment and largest market for energy resources;
- Ensure the resourcing of the activity is such as to enable Australia to demonstrate a presence commensurate with the importance of the bilateral relationship to both countries and with its large scale, and with the Japanese focus on quality.

- View the desired return on expenditure in relation to the activity in terms of its broader contribution to the development of Australia’s profile in Japan and beyond, rather than in terms of direct returns quantifiable in dollars and cents.
- Support the proposed focus of the activity on areas of demonstrated existing partnership where significant change is imminent, such as decarbonisation of energy systems and society, to demonstrate Australia’s ongoing suitability as a key partner for Japan in the changed circumstances, including by showcasing leading-edge Australian technologies to the extent possible in delivering a sustainable building with a low carbon footprint; while at the same time using the opportunity to broaden perceptions of Australia’s sophistication, innovation, and technological excellence in areas where cooperation has not been traditionally strong.
- Encourage the organisers of the activity to ensure that opportunities for Australian business participation, and for collaboration between Australian and Japanese businesses, in delivering the activity are maximised; and
- Encourage the organisers to ensure that, to the extent possible, the delivery of the activity – both the building of the pavilion and the activities to be carried out in it – creates opportunities for young Australians to develop skills, experience and networks in dealing with Japan so as to translate into longer-term connections, for example through the use of Japanese-speaking Australian guides and staff.

Background: the Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee (AJBCC)

The AJBCC was formed in 1962, five years after the signing of the Australia-Japan Treaty on Commerce which restored Japan’s Most Favoured Nation trading status with Australia following the Second World War. The AJBCC, and its Japanese counterpart the Japan Australia Business Co-operation Committee (JABCC), bring together the major commercial players on both sides of the business relationship annually to promote the bilateral business relationship and create business opportunities for their members. Their Annual Joint Business Conference is the largest single business networking event in the bilateral calendar with around 450 member delegates attending the 59th Conference in Tokyo in October 2022; the 60th Annual Conference will be held in Melbourne from 8-10 October 2023. Lists of the members of the AJBCC and JABCC are available through the AJBCC’s website at <https://ajbcc.com.au/members> and <https://ajbcc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/JABCC-Members-List.pdf> respectively.

AJBCC

15 April 2023