

**Speech by Ambassador of Japan
HE Mr Hiroyasu Kobayashi for the
77th Anniversary of the Featherston Incident**
Tuesday, 25 February 2020



Your Worship Alex Beijen, Mayor of the South Wairarapa District,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to attend the commemoration of the 77th Anniversary of the Featherston Incident today. While it is now my second attendance to this memorial, it is my first with the new Mayor of South Wairarapa District, Mayor Beijen. It is a pleasure to be here with you today to see how far both Japan and New Zealand have come in the past 77 years to build a positive and mutually beneficial relationship. I would like to express my deep gratitude for the efforts of Japanese and New Zealanders of the past and present, who have worked towards the strong relationship our countries now share.

We are commemorating a time in which our ancestors struggled to understand one another. However now, it is a great honour to be here today in this Memorial Garden uniting Japanese and New Zealand people. This beautiful place symbolises the reconciliation, mutual understanding and positive relationship between Japan and New Zealand. I am sure this relationship will continue to flourish and the garden will continue to represent our two countries' strong connection. One based on respect for one another, mutual understanding, and shared fundamental democratic and societal values.

On this day 77 years ago, 48 Japanese prisoners of war and one New Zealand guard lost their lives and many others were injured. This was a time

when Japan and the Allied Forces, including New Zealand, were at war with one another. It is a great accomplishment that we now commemorate this day in peace, paying tribute together as friends. I hope that in continuing this each year, we are reminded about the disastrous outcomes of war, and inspired always to keep peace. I hope that we may strive toward further strengthening our countries' long-standing friendly relationship, while sparing our thoughts on days like this one to the people who were sacrificed in days less peaceful.

In conclusion, I would like us all to reaffirm our commitment and determination to advance and deepen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. I hope for Japan and New Zealand to continue to have peaceful, productive and positive relations in the future. Thank you.