

**Speech by Ambassador OSAWA Makoto for
the 83rd Anniversary of the Featherston Incident
Wednesday 25th February 2026**

South Wairarapa Mayor, Dame Fran Wilde;

Mana Whenua, (Rangitane o Wairarapa and Kahungunu ki Wairarapa);

Distinguished Members of Parliament;

Colonel Paul Hayward, Assistant Chief of Army and Distinguished guests from RNZ, RSA, ANZAC members;

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today to commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the Featherston Incident. I would like to take a moment to thank everyone who arranged this service, including the South Wairarapa District Council, the Featherston Memorial RSA, and other members of the community. This is my second time joining this commemoration, and I am humbled to meet you all today.

83 years have passed since this tragic event. Since the end of World War Two, Japan has consistently contributed to the peace and prosperity of the world, and New Zealand has become a

“strategic cooperative partner” of Japan with whom we share common values. We stand together here today in the Memorial Garden, a place that serves as a reminder of the progress towards mutual understanding and appreciation that we have made together.

On this commemorative day, we must remember those who were lost. The Featherston Incident stands as a solemn reminder of the profound human cost of war, how fear, misunderstanding, and cultural differences can tragically culminate in loss of life. We should not take peace for granted.

The close relationship between our countries is only possible when there are mutual understanding and support from people on both sides. In this regard, I sincerely thank the local communities of Featherston and South Wairarapa for their kind support to Japanese residents and visitors over the years.

In conclusion, I would like us all to reaffirm our commitment to deepen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Japan and New Zealand. Let us never forget the past while we keep our sights set on the future. Thank you.