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Robb confirms January start-date for Japan trade deal

TK15

16 December 2014

The landmark Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA) will enter into force on 15 January 2015, paving the way for Australian exporters to benefit from two rounds of tariff cuts in the first half of next year.

Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Robb said Australia and Japan will 'exchange notes' in Canberra today, to confirm that both countries have completed their domestic processes, and are ready to bring JAEPA into force.

"JAEPA will deliver substantial benefits for the Australian economy, and the deal means that our exporters will benefit from an immediate round of tariff cuts by Japan on January 15, followed by a further round of cuts on the 1st of April 2015," Mr Robb said.

"Like the back-to-back tariff cuts provided by the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement, this will deliver immediate benefits for exporters and significantly enhance their competitive position in the Japanese market," he said.

Mr Robb said more than 97 per cent of Australia's goods exports to Japan will receive preferential access, or enter duty-free, once the Agreement is fully implemented.

"JAEPA will expand opportunities with our second largest trading partner across a wide range of industries, including agriculture and processed foods, resources, manufacturing and services," Mr Robb said.

Australian beef for example – with exports to Japan last year worth \$1.4 billion – will be a major beneficiary with the 38.5 per cent tariff to be halved over 15 years, with heavy front-end loading, including an eight per cent cut in the first year. This will give Australian exporters a major advantage over the United States – our major competitor.

"This is the most ambitious Free Trade Agreement Japan has concluded with anyone, let alone a major agricultural economy. The Agreement will also support growth in investment from Japan – already our third largest investor – by raising the foreign investment screening threshold for private Japanese investment into Australia," Mr Robb said.

JAEPA will be the second of three historic trade agreements concluded by the Abbott Government to enter into force following Korea. The recently concluded China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) forms the third in a powerful trifecta of agreements with the major economies of North Asia.

It is hoped ChAFTA will enter into force in the second half of 2015 following completion of domestic legal and parliamentary processes in both countries.

“These three agreements will be transformative for the Australian economy, supporting economic growth, job creation, greater prosperity and higher living standards for Australians,” Mr Robb said.

JAIPA was signed in Canberra on 8 July 2014 during Prime Minister Abe's visit to Australia. Further detailed information can be found at: <http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/jaipa/>

New Colombo Plan Mobility Grants Announced

TK14

24 November 2014

More than 3,000 students from 37 universities will live, study and work in the Indo-Pacific region during the second year of the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan.

Foreign Minister the Hon Julie Bishop MP and Education Minister the Hon Christopher Pyne MP today announced around 3,150 undergraduate students would be supported by the New Colombo Plan mobility round for 2015.

"New Colombo Plan mobility grants will support these students to study in 32 locations across the Indo-Pacific from India in the west, to Mongolia in the north and the Cook Islands in the east," Ms Bishop said.

"The expansion of the New Colombo Plan in 2015 reflects the strong support of partner governments for the Plan's aims of lifting knowledge of the region in Australia and for the Plan to become a 'rite of passage' for Australian undergraduate students."

"The continued strong interest of students in gaining first-hand experience of business in the region will ensure they are well placed to make a valuable contribution to the regional engagement of our business community and to driving economic growth in Australia and our region in the years ahead."

Mr Pyne said New Colombo Plan mobility grants are awarded to Australian universities to support their students to undertake semester or short-term study in the region.

"These grants will support students to study at a university overseas for anywhere from a few weeks to a full semester," Mr Pyne said.

"The grants cover study, practicums, clinical placements, internships and mentorships, and short-term research across a broad array of disciplines.

"The flexibility of this approach ensures that the Programme can support a wide range of students to experience the benefits of studying and living in the region.

The government has committed \$100 million in new funding over five years to implement the New Colombo Plan. The New Colombo Plan pilot year of 2014 is supporting 40 scholars and more than 1300 mobility students to live, study and undertake a work placement in the four pilot locations of Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore.

An announcement on outcomes of the New Colombo Plan 2015 Scholarship round is expected in coming weeks. For more information on the NCP visit www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan

Robb welcomes JSCOT backing of landmark Japan-Australia trade agreement

TK11

28 October 2014

Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Robb today welcomed the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) strong endorsement of the the landmark Japan Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEP A).

Japan is Australia's second-largest trade partner, with total two-way trade exceeding \$70 billion in 2013. Japan is also our third-largest source of foreign investment, having invested \$131 billion in Australia.

JSCOT made a single emphatic recommendation that binding treaty action be taken for an agreement that "will substantially liberalise Australia's trade with Japan".

"The Committee noted that JAEP A will give Australian industries, particularly agriculture a major first-mover advantage over our competitors in the Japanese market," Mr Robb said.

"It observed that the agreement will afford Australian exporters significantly improved market access in goods and services, eliminating or dramatically reducing tariffs on a wide range of Australian goods exports, including beef, dairy, horticulture, seafood, wine as well as energy and resources products."

The agreement also guarantees access for a broad range of Australian services equivalent to or better than the highest levels of access Japan had provided to any other trading partner. "If Japan gives more favourable commitments in services to other trading partners in the future, it will also extend them to Australia," Mr Robb said.

JSCOT also noted that Australian consumers will enjoy cheaper Japanese imports, notably cars and household and electronic consumer goods.

JAEP A is expected to enter into force in early 2015, following the completion of domestic procedures in both countries.

Australia's economic diplomacy: our prosperity, global prosperity

TK10

18 August 2014

Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Robb today launched the Coalition's Economic Diplomacy policy at the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney.

Minister Bishop said economic diplomacy would boost both Australia's prosperity and global prosperity.

"The global economy is a highly competitive space and sustaining Australia's position as the 12th largest economy globally requires strong international engagement," Minister Bishop said.

"Today we have launched two charters that set out the expertise on offer to Australian businesses and State and Territory Governments from DFAT, Austrade, Tourism Australia, the Export Finance Insurance Corporation and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research."

Trade and Investment Minister Andrew Robb said Australia's trade with the world is equivalent to 42 per cent of GDP and our economy's historical reliance on trade has meant that, since 1900, this figure has never been below 25 per cent.

"Our economic diplomacy drive is intrinsically linked to the Coalition's aggressive trade and investment agenda. Better outcomes from our economic engagement with the world result in stronger economic growth, more jobs and greater prosperity for Australians," he said.

"Since the First Fleet Australia has been reliant on foreign investment and that remains today and we are determined to significantly bolster current levels, to help fund important new infrastructure and further development in areas like Northern Australia."

Minister Robb said the government's quick conclusion of landmark free trade deals with Japan and Korea, and its priority on concluding an agreement with China; are strong examples of the new intensity of our economic engagement. "These agreements, with the major economies of North Asia can deliver enormous benefits for Australia in the years and decades ahead," he said.

Minister Bishop said it was fitting to launch the Coalition's Economic Diplomacy initiative in Australia's G20 Presidency year because global growth was at the core of the Government's Presidency agenda.

"In addition, as economic growth is the real driver of poverty elimination, we've placed it at the heart of Australia's aid program," she said.

"Economic diplomacy is a collaborative process, beyond government. Australia's business community, our think tanks, our NGOs and our community are an integral part of our economic diplomacy efforts. We look forward to working together to pursue shared opportunities to drive economic prosperity, in Australia and in our region."

Australia's investments around the world total A\$1.6 trillion and we are ranked 5th in the world for GDP per capita.

For more information about the economic diplomacy agenda, visit: www.dfat.gov.au/trade/economic-diplomacy.

New Colombo Plan scholars announced

TK13

25 June 2014

Forty of Australia's best and brightest undergraduates have been awarded scholarships under the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan which gives them the opportunity to live, study and gain work experience in Japan, Indonesia, Singapore or Hong Kong in 2014.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Julie Bishop MP, said the New Colombo Plan is a flagship program of the Australian Government that provides scholarships to students to study at leading universities in the region and offers short term work placements to provide industry experience, whilst learning about another culture, developing a second language and fostering friendships that will last a lifetime.

"Tonight I am pleased to join the Governor-General – and New Colombo Plan Patron – His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), to award forty inaugural scholarships under our pilot program and announce the New Colombo Plan Fellows for 2014," Ms Bishop said.

"This talented and adventurous group of students are wonderful ambassadors for the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan and, once abroad, will be excellent student ambassadors for Australia," she said.

The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education and Leader of the House, said the New Colombo Plan scholarships will help our best and brightest enhance their education and give it a global edge.

"A foreign country rich with culture, language and a vast array of new and interesting experiences provides an invaluable learning environment for Australian students," Mr Pyne said.

"These students will go on to be leaders in our community, in business and in government and will take their experience from their New Colombo Plan scholarships into these important areas," he said.

Scholarship award winners will be heading to the four pilot destinations - Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

This year's scholarships include:

- Emma Roberts is the inaugural Yudhoyono Fellow to Indonesia: an Australian National University (ANU) Asia-Pacific Studies and Law student, will study at Indonesia's Gadjah Mada University and the Parahyangan Catholic University and undertake an internship.

- Jason Emanuelle is the Kishi Fellow to Japan: a student of languages at Melbourne's Monash University, will join a linguistics and immersion program at Osaka University. Jason also plans to undertake an internship in Japan.
- Rebecca Wardell is the Singapore Fellow: a Philosophy in Science undergraduate at ANU, will study immunology and public health at the National University of Singapore and intern at the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.
- Sarah Mitchell is the Hong Kong Fellow: currently undertaking a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Adelaide. She will study linguistics and history at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and undertake an internship.

The New Colombo Plan will be expanded to other nations in the region from 2015.

For more information visit www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan

Fifth Australia-Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations

TK08

10 June 2014

The following is a joint statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP and Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon David Johnston issued today.

Developments in regional and international security and ways to deepen bilateral defence and security cooperation will be the focus of the fifth Australia-Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial (2+2) Consultations this week.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, and Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon David Johnston will travel to Tokyo to meet their counterparts and build on Prime Minister Abbott's recent successful visit to Japan where leaders agreed to elevate the strategic partnership.

Australia and Japan share strategic interests in regional peace and stability, underpinned by common democratic values and a commitment to the rule of law.

Ministers are expected to agree on the substantive conclusion to negotiations on a Defence Science, Technology and Materiel Agreement, announced during Prime Minister Abbott's visit. The Agreement will allow Australia and Japan to jointly develop defence technologies, establishing a basis to deepen defence cooperation.

On 12-13 June, Minister Bishop will meet Foreign Minister Kishida and other senior Japanese ministers, Diet members and academics to discuss international and bilateral developments and Australia's signature foreign policy initiative, the New Colombo Plan. She will meet Gender Diversity Minister Mori to discuss Japan's policies to promote the empowerment of women. Minister Bishop will also visit the Kansai region, meeting senior business leaders to promote the tangible benefits of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement.

Minister Johnston will also meet Japanese Defence Minister Onodera separately to discuss progress in bilateral defence engagement in areas including logistics cooperation, exercises and training, and peacekeeping and disaster relief responses.

One thousand students head to the region under New Colombo Plan pilot

TK12

16 May 2014

A further 1000 students will have the opportunity to study in the region following the announcement of the second tranche of mobility funding for Australian universities under the Government's New Colombo Plan.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said around 300 students are already studying and undertaking work placements in the pilot destinations of Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong under the first tranche of mobility program funding provided earlier this year

"A strong response has been received from Australian universities and their students to the New Colombo Plan. The innovation in course design is a credit to the institutions involved and sets the scene for the wider roll-out across the region from 2015," said Ms Bishop.

"Thirty-eight universities, across all states and territories, and two university consortia, have been offered funding under this second tranche, covering 48 projects across the four pilot locations. This second tranche brings to \$4.72 million, the funding offered to universities during the New Colombo Plan's pilot phase.

"Today I met students from Sydney, Macquarie, Wollongong and Newcastle universities heading to Hong Kong and Singapore under the first round of mobility grants. These students are undertaking programs in areas such as primary education, language study, housing policy and business."

Education Minister Christopher Pyne said the program offerings cover a wide range of disciplines including architecture, law, business, language training, construction, occupational therapy, veterinary science, manufacturing, teaching and international studies. Many opportunities include work and clinical placements and semester-based study.

"The diversity of courses and professional placements are providing exciting opportunities for our undergraduates to get into the region, to develop their capabilities and to build relationships which will stand them in good stead for the future," said Mr Pyne.

"Ten NSW universities have received funding in this second round: Charles Sturt University, University of New England, University of Technology Sydney, University of Wollongong, University of Newcastle, University of Western Sydney, Macquarie University, Southern Cross University, University of NSW and University of Sydney."

Global tax reform top of the agenda at G20 Tax Symposium

TK07

8 May 2014

Australian G20 Finance Deputy, Barry Sterland and Commissioner of Taxation, Chris Jordan will attend the G20 International Tax Symposium in Tokyo tomorrow.

They will join a large contingent of decision makers, industry leaders and taxation experts thanks to the support of Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia, Institute of Chartered Accountants England and Wales, and the Global Accounting Alliance.

Mr Sterland said that a strong and efficient international tax system is an essential ingredient for economic strength and resilience, however, the current system is vulnerable to being exploited.

"There's global recognition that the international system has failed to keep pace with the rate of change in global commerce," Mr Sterland said.

"There's a need for an inclusive, unified response to address the challenges facing the international tax system. The symposium broadens the engagement with non-OECD and non-G20 countries and will help to address this need.

"In holding the symposium in the Asia-Pacific, we are hoping to further engage key developed and developing countries in the region, in addition to the G20 and OECD countries that are a part of the formal process."

Commissioner Jordan agreed a multi-lateral approach was needed to tackle global tax avoidance.

"We need structural change, law change and also a change in the way countries view and cooperate to address tax minimisation," Mr Jordan said.

"This symposium is an opportunity to bring together a wide range of different perspectives from a cross-section of the community. This diversity of views will be key to finding practical ways to drive greater collaboration on the G20 tax agenda.

"We are hoping to achieve acknowledgement that jurisdictions, both within the G20 and more broadly, need to take a new and collaborative approach to tax avoidance. We need to work across borders and develop new mechanisms to solve this problem."

Mr Sterland said for the first time, this symposium will bring together a unique mix of more than 200

delegates from business, government and academia, representing more than 40 countries to discuss a range of issues, including:

- how current international tax rules contribute to tax bases being eroded
- the challenges posed by the digital economy
- the global standard for the exchange of tax information and how to achieve the right balance between providing useful information to tax administrations and minimising the cost to business, and
- tax base erosion and tax transparency challenges for developing economies.

Mr Sterland said the tax symposium is an important event on the G20 agenda.

"We will present a report to finance deputies at our next meeting in Melbourne in June and to ministers at their meeting in Cairns in September."

The symposium will run for two days concluding on Saturday 10 May.

Hiroshima Nuclear Non-Proliferation Meeting

TK06

11 April 2014

The following is a Media Release by Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, issued today.

The City of Hiroshima will provide a symbolic and historically significant setting for the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPD) which I will attend on 11-12 April.

Formed by Australia and Japan to strengthen efforts under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the NPD aims to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In Hiroshima I will participate in a town hall meeting hosted by Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in his electorate. I will also visit the Cenotaph and the Peace Memorial Museum which provide a reminder of the devastation caused by nuclear war and the importance of our efforts to work toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

My visit follows the historic Australia-Japan free trade deal agreed by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Trade Minister Andrew Robb with Japanese counterparts earlier this week.

My meeting with Minister Kishida will provide a valuable opportunity to build on this significant development in our bilateral relationship as well as to discuss regional cooperation and advancing our security and defence relationship.

We will also discuss Japan's participation in the pilot phase of the New Colombo Plan which will see around 150 students from 10 Australian universities undertake study at a Japanese university in 2014.

The shared interest of Australia and Japan in ASEAN in the 40th year of our dialogue partnership with ASEAN will be the focus of my keynote address at the *Asialink Conversations* dialogue on 11 April.

Trade and Investment Minister to Visit Japan and Hong Kong

TK05

25 March 2014

The following is a Media Release by Minister for Trade and Investment the Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP, issued today.

Trade and Investment Minister Andrew Robb will visit Japan and Hong Kong between 25-31 March to strengthen economic ties with key Asian trading partners and highlight the attractiveness of Australia to international investors.

Mr Robb will travel first to Tokyo on 25-26 March to further discussions on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan. He will be holding meetings with key Japanese ministers on the EPA, which is already at an advanced stage.

In Hong Kong, Mr Robb will speak at the Credit Suisse 17th Annual Asian Investment Conference, one of the region's premier business and investment events. The annual forum hosts an audience of more than 2,300 investors, who represent \$18 trillion in assets under management, as well as more than 250 corporations.

"I look forward to meeting decision-makers and business leaders from the international investment and trade community to promote Australia's many strengths as an attractive investment destination," Mr Robb said.

In addition, he will also deliver a keynote address at Mines & Money, one of the largest mining investment conferences in the Asia Pacific, and meet with major corporations, important global institutional investors, and senior government figures.

Finally, Mr Robb will outline the Australian Government's economic philosophy in an address to the Australian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong, the largest chamber outside of Australia.

"As a Government we are pursuing an aggressive trade and investment agenda to help drive sustainable economic growth and job creation. In my visits abroad my clear message is that Australia is indeed open for business and unequivocally welcomes inbound investment," Mr Robb said.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has identified trade and investment as key themes that Australia will look to progress in its role as the Chair and host of the G20 and B20 later this year in Brisbane.

Remembering the Great East Japan Earthquake

TK04

10 March 2014

The following is a comment from Australian Ambassador to Japan Bruce Miller, issued today.

Tomorrow, 11 March, I will attend the Great East Japan Earthquake Memorial Service, as we commemorate the third anniversary of the disaster. Representatives of the Australian Embassy will also pay their respects at a service in Minami Sanriku, the Tohoku town where the Australian urban search and rescue team gave assistance immediately after the earthquake, and where then Prime Minister Julia Gillard visited a month after the disaster, as the first head of government to visit the affected region.

Many Australians feel a strong affinity for Japan. Indeed, cooperation between Japan and Australia on economic and security issues is crucial for the promotion of peace and prosperity in our countries, as well as for the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. However, I believe that the foundation for this relationship is the people-to-people links that exist between Japan and Australia. As Ambassador, this belief is reaffirmed every time I interact with the citizens of Japan.

In the three years that have passed since the earthquake and tsunami, the Australian Government, Australian enterprises, and many individual Australian citizens have provided various kinds of support to contribute to the Tohoku recovery effort. One example of this support is a study tour organised for junior high students from Minami Sanriku to Australia, sponsored by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia-Japan Foundation. The next group of students will set off on their trip later this month. Another example of joint collaboration is the work being done by Australian oyster farmers to support their colleagues in Ishinomaki rebuild their industry.

As the people of Japan continue on the road to recovery, Australia will be right there by their side, every step of the way.

Strengthening Trade Ties to Boost Economic Growth

TK03

3 March 2014

The following is a Media Release by Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP issued today.

In April, I will visit Japan, Korea and China to further strengthen ties between our countries, broaden and deepen our relationships and help boost trade activity to drive growth and job creation in Australia.

These countries represent 40 per cent of Australia's total two-way trade in goods and services – valued at \$250 billion.

I will be accompanied on each leg of my visit by a group of senior Australian business people and I am also inviting the Premiers and Chief Ministers to accompany me and bring key businesses from their States and Territories.

The prosperity of our country and other countries in our region depends on increased trade and investment.

I said on election night that Australia is 'open for business' and I committed to driving the finalisation of three key Free Trade Agreements with Japan, Korea and China.

Those negotiations are well advanced and I hope to sign the Korean Free Trade Agreement during my visit next month.

A key activity will be the inaugural *Australia Week in China* with key business delegation activities taking place between April 8 and 11. This will be one of the largest promotions of Australia ever held in China.

Australia Week in China will promote trade, investment, tourism and education partnerships through a program tailored to major industry sectors. Events will be held across the cities of Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu and Guangzhou.

Participating Australian businesses will get the opportunity to explore business opportunities with potential Chinese partners, participate in sector-specific networking events, enhance existing relationships and develop new contacts.

I encourage Australian businesses – small, medium and large – with an interest in China, Korea and Japan to take the opportunity and join this ministerial trade delegation.

Details are available at www.austrade.gov.au. Expressions of interest for *Australia Week in China* will close on 14 March 2014.

Pioneer students announced under Government's New Colombo Plan

TK02

13 February 2014

The following is a joint Media Release by Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Julie Bishop MP; Minister for Education, The Hon Christopher Pyne MP; and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Issued on 12 February 2014

More than 300 undergraduate students from 24 universities across Australia will soon set off to study abroad in the Indo-Pacific region under the Australian Government's \$100 million New Colombo Plan.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Education Minister Christopher Pyne and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator Brett Mason today announced 24 universities have been successful in their applications for New Colombo Plan mobility grants to support students commencing study programs in Semester 1, 2014.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said the 300 pioneer students will soon be setting off to broaden their knowledge of the Indo-Pacific across four pilot destinations.

"The first band of Australian students travelling abroad under the New Colombo Plan will take up places at universities in Japan, Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong," Ms Bishop said.

"The students will undertake study experiences ranging from semester-based and short-term study to teaching practicums, research, field studies and clinical placements.

"Programs being funded span a wide range of academic disciplines from law, health and education, language and culture to science, technology and engineering."

Education Minister Christopher Pyne said that Australian universities have responded enthusiastically to the New Colombo Plan pilot.

"There has been a high level of support for the New Colombo Plan. Universities have assisted with the design of the plan and many applied for the first round of mobility grant funding," Mr Pyne said.

"The practical approach of the New Colombo Plan, encompassing both formal study and internships, will help equip Australian university students with the skills and experience needed to engage with the dynamic Indo-Pacific region."

Senator Mason welcomed the broad range of innovative New Colombo Plan study programs being devised for students by universities during the 2014 pilot phase.

"The New Colombo Plan is designed to deepen Australia's connections with the Indo-Pacific and to bring about a cultural shift by helping to make study in the region the rule and not the exception for Australian students," Senator Mason said.

"In 2014, Australian undergraduate students also have the opportunity to apply for 40 prestigious New Colombo Plan scholarships for longer-term study of up to a year."

The Government has committed \$100 million in new funding over five years to implement the New Colombo Plan. The program will be rolled out more broadly across the region from 2015.

[Summary of New Colombo Plan Tranche One Offers](#)

Appointment of the Governor-General

TK01

29 January 2014

The following is a Media Release by Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, issued on 28 January 2014.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has approved my recommendation to appoint General Peter Cosgrove AC MC as Australia's next Governor-General.

He will be Australia's 26th Governor-General.

General Cosgrove is a remarkable Australian who served with distinction until his retirement as the Chief of the Defence Force in 2005.

A former Australian of the Year, General Cosgrove has dedicated his life to serving and supporting the Australian community.

His army service included postings in Malaysia, Vietnam, the UK, India and the USA. In 1999, he commanded the international force that secured peace and oversaw East Timor's transition to independence.

His compassion and commitment to service was displayed during his time as chairman of the recovery taskforce that helped rebuild shattered communities following Cyclone Larry in Far North Queensland.

I can't think of a finer Australian or a more suitable one to serve as Governor-General and, in this great office, make a contribution to the leadership of our country.

As representative of the Crown, the Governor-General's task is to provide leadership beyond politics.

The Governor-General has important constitutional responsibilities, is looked to by community groups and their members throughout the length and breadth of our country for support and encouragement, and – in Sir Zelman Cowen's words – can help to interpret our nation to itself.

The usually-behind-the-scenes role of the Crown, in Bagehot's phrase, is "to be consulted, to encourage and to warn".

General Cosgrove will carry out his duties as the Queen's Representative in Australia with vigour and integrity.

He will take up his appointment in March when Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce's term ends.

I thank the Governor-General for the contribution she has made since her appointment in 2008 and wish her and Mr Bryce well for the future.

Ms Bryce has discharged her duties as Governor-General with distinction and grace.

Along with previous incumbents, she will remain a highly regarded national figure.

I congratulate General Cosgrove on his appointment. Along with wife Lynne who partners with him in this role, he has the best wishes of all Australians as he shoulders these new responsibilities.

General Peter Cosgrove, AC MC

General Peter Cosgrove retired as Chief of the Defence Force in 2005 after a distinguished military career.

Throughout his career in the army he served in Malaysia, Vietnam, the UK, India and the USA. He became a national figure following his appointment in 1999 as Commander of the International Forces East Timor (Interfet) which oversaw East Timor's transition to independence.

In 2000 he was appointed Chief of the Army. In 2002 he was appointed Chief of the Defence Force, an appointment he held until his retirement in 2005. General Cosgrove was appointed Chairman of Operation Recovery Task Force after Cyclone Larry devastated Far North Queensland and he led the successful recovery until completion in early 2007.

In recognition of his service, General Cosgrove was named Australian of the Year in 2001.

General Cosgrove held positions on several boards including the boards of Qantas and Cardno which he has relinquished upon accepting the offer to become Governor-General.

He is married to Lynne and has three sons.