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Mr Dave Sharma MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: jsct@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Sharma

The Northern Territory Government is providing this Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding the Treaty titled *Free Agreement between Australia and Japan concerning the Facilitation of Reciprocal Access and Cooperation between the Australian Defence Force and the Self-Defense Forces of Japan* (Canberra and Tokyo, 6 January 2022).

The Northern Territory Government welcomes the aforementioned treaty and strongly agrees that it is in the national interest. The Australia-Japanese relationship is one built on strength and mutual understanding, with strong bilateral ties and strong ties and cooperation across regional multilateral institutions.

The Northern Territory has its own relationship with Japan, one that is rich and strong, despite a complex past. The strength of this relationship is personified by the significant Japanese investment in the Inpex LNG project, and the annual visits by high level Japanese representatives to the Northern Territory during Bombing of Darwin commemorations, which are times of reflection, understanding and appreciation. Darwin has been visited by Japanese Consul-Generals, Ambassadors and a former Prime Minister.

The Indo-Pacific region is facing increasing tensions as the strategic environment is influenced by great power competition. The Northern Territory is fast becoming Australia's forward operating base into the Indo-Pacific, and a hub for United States influence, power projection and training and exercising. As a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) member and close ally in the United States alliance network, Japan is also one of Australia's primary partners in the region.

The Reciprocal Access Agreement between our two militaries, which the Treaty in question refers to, will further strengthen our relationship and enhance our military interoperability, in collaboration with the United States and other allies and partners. Like Australia, Japan recognises and respects the need for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and will need access to training facilities to increase the preparedness of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) for the years to come. However, Japan lacks the physical space to undertake that training and exercising in its own territory.

The Northern Territory is home to the Indo-Pacific region's best military training ranges, including smaller scale ranges like those at Robertson Barracks and Kangaroo Flats Training Area, to larger ranges like those at Mount Bunday Training Area, Bradshaw Field Training Area and Delamere Air Weapons Range. The Northern Territory's training ranges are unparalleled in terms of space, lack of electronic and signal interference and corridors for land, sea and air forces to train and exercise. Thanks to a Commonwealth Government investment of over \$747 million, the training ranges will also be undergoing significant upgrades over the coming years.

The United States recognises the utility of Northern Territory training ranges, and carries out exercising and training throughout the year at ranges in the Northern Territory, through its Marine Rotational Force. The Northern Territory Government values the presence of the United States Marine Corps and the recognition of the Northern Territory's strategic importance. Aside from the United States, a number of other Australian allies and partners utilise the Territory's training facilities and the Northern Territory Government welcomes and encourages this engagement and strategic diplomacy.

It is the Northern Territory Government's hope that this Treaty will see more JSDF personnel training and exercising in the Northern Territory, both individually and in collaboration with the Australian Defence Force and other Australian allies and partners. The Northern Territory Government views the Northern Territory as an alliance hub, and this Treaty is a step towards incorporating the Japanese further into this vision. Japan and the JSDF are welcome in the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely



MICHAEL GUNNER

21 MAR 2022