

Joint Statement

Australia-Japan Defence Ministers' Meeting

18 April 2026, Melbourne, Australia

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence of Australia, the Hon. Richard Marles MP, and the Minister of Defense of Japan, Koizumi Shinjiro, met in Melbourne to discuss the development of the Australia-Japan defence partnership and mark a significant milestone in our shared efforts to bolster Australia's naval capability.

We welcomed the release of Australia's 2026 National Defence Strategy and reaffirmed our commitment to the productive exchange of information in support of our respective defence strategies. We affirmed it was Australia and Japan's shared responsibility to work with partners to uphold regional security through arrangements that protect our shared interests and shape a region governed by rights and rules, not fear or force. We recognised that Australia-Japan cooperation is essential to ensuring a peaceful, stable and prosperous region.

We exchanged views on developments in the Middle East, stressing the need for continued negotiation between the parties to resolve the conflict and ensure unimpeded and safe navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. We stressed the importance of ensuring the unimpeded flow of critical supplies, including to our region. We called for the protection of civilians and adherence to international humanitarian law, and condemned actions that have killed UN peacekeepers and significantly increased the risks faced by humanitarian personnel in southern Lebanon. We welcomed the US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon and called on all parties to the conflict, including Hezbollah, to adhere to it. It is an important contribution to realising peace and stability in the region. We expect good-faith negotiations on an end to the conflict to be prioritised, with Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity respected and Hezbollah disarmed. We reaffirmed support for international efforts aimed at dialogue, diplomacy and de-escalation for long-term stability.

We reiterated our serious concerns about the situations in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. We reaffirmed our strong opposition to any unilateral actions, including by force or coercion, which escalate tensions and undermine regional peace and stability. We strongly opposed unlawful maritime claims, militarisation of disputed features and other dangerous and coercive activities in the South China Sea. We expressed concern about instances of unsafe and unprofessional behaviour by the People's Liberation Army and its other maritime forces. We reemphasised the importance of upholding freedom of navigation and overflight, lawful uses of the sea, unimpeded commerce, and the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes in accordance with international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We reiterated the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal Award is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute.

We reaffirmed that peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is essential for regional and international security and prosperity, and reiterated our strong opposition to unilateral attempts to change the status quo. We encourage dialogue rather than a resort to coercion or use of force.

We reiterated our determination to work together with our shared ally, the United States, and key partners including India, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea, and with regional institutions such as ASEAN, to strengthen regional resilience and uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient. We underscored the important contribution of our

trilateral partnership with the United States to enhancing deterrence and stability in the region. We committed to continuing close coordination through existing ministerial frameworks such as Trilateral Defence Consultations, and to deepening defence cooperation.

We reaffirmed our commitment to supporting Pacific partners and to strengthening regional resilience through close cooperation with, and respect for, Pacific-led institutions and priorities. We welcomed the announcement of Australia, Japan and Fiji's collaboration on a design for the new 3rd Battalion Fiji Infantry Regiment Headquarters, highlighting our shared commitment to regional security, capacity-building and strengthening our cooperation in the Pacific.

We announced the finalisation of contracts for the acquisition of Australia's first three general purpose frigates, and the signing of the accompanying Memorandum of Implementation and an arrangement between our defence authorities. On this occasion we signed the 'Mogami Memorandum', signifying our shared commitment to the successful delivery of Australia's general purpose frigates and deeper defence industry cooperation. We looked forward to working closely to deliver the first Royal Australian Navy general purpose frigate in 2029, and to establishing the associated sustainment base and shipbuilding capability in Australia.

We recognised the recent success of the deployment of Japan Ship (JS) *Kumano* Mogami class frigate to Australia for participation in naval exercises, including Exercise KAKADU and the Royal Australian Navy's KAKADU Fleet Review in March. We highlighted the early achievements of our cooperation on Australia's general purpose frigates program, including having Royal Australian Navy sailors recently join the crew of JS *Kumano* to observe the ship's operations at sea.

We welcomed increased Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) participation in Australia-based activities in recent years and discussed our shared ambition to expand our cooperation in the future. We recognised the growth in cooperation between our operational headquarters since the establishment of JSDF Joint Operations Command, and noted the positive impact this has had on interoperability. We emphasised the importance of pursuing increasingly practical and advanced activities such as joint training in Japan and Australia, including together with the United States. We acknowledged progress on joint cooperation through further alignment of activities, Flexible Deterrent Options and Maritime Cooperative Activities with the Philippines and the United States.

We reflected on the steady and positive developments of our broader defence industrial collaboration. We welcomed the finalisation of an Implementing Arrangement regarding the MQ-28A Ghost Bat, which establishes the framework to conduct formal Collaborative Combat Aircraft activities between Australia and Japan under the Provision of Defence Articles and Defence Services Memorandum of Arrangement. Australia also welcomed Japan's approach to review the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology as well as the Implementation Guidelines, recognising the importance of trusted partners providing defence equipment to each other to help safeguard regional and global peace and stability.

We welcomed the signing of the Letter of Intent between the Department of Defence of Australia and Ministry of Defense of Japan Concerning a Defence Cyber Partnership. This will enable us to enhance our collective cyber readiness, resilience and capacity, capitalising on our respective strengths to meet our national interests.

We noted this was the second meeting of Defence Ministers this month, and the third Defence Ministers' Meeting under the Framework for Strategic Defence Coordination established in December 2025 to support greater alignment of defence policy. We considered how these meetings serve as a strong symbol of our deepening cooperation to the international community, as we look

to elevate Australia and Japan's Special Strategic Partnership during this year's 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Australia and Japan and chart the course for the next phase of our defence partnership.