Young Leaders Program – a MEXT scholarship with a difference

Mr Ryan Koh, 2014-2015 YLP scholar, with his favourite lunch—tuna *tataki*

Mr Ryan Koh is a current Young Leaders Program (YLP) scholar studying a Masters of Public Policy in Tokyo on a MEXT scholarship. All MEXT scholarships are very competitive and this is especially so for the YLP. Despite a busy course of study, Ryan kindly contributed this piece explaining the program and his experiences on YLP so far.

Konnichiwa! In June 2014, I received some fantastic news - I was informed by the Japanese Embassy (Canberra) and Consulate (Sydney) that I had been successful in my application to receive a 'Monbukagakusho' scholarship to study a Masters of Public Policy at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Tokyo. The program is the 'Young Leaders Program (YLP)' which was introduced by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in 2001 to foster future national leaders of government as nominated by their respective government agencies [www.grips.ac.jp/en/education/inter_programs/leader/]. As I work for the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (in Sydney) I was able to apply through Australian Treasury. On the 2014/2015 program there are 36 participants from over 25 countries across Australasia and Europe.

On 1 October 2014 I arrived in Tokyo full of excitement and anticipation. I have not been disappointed. GRIPS is an extremely professional organisation and we have been provided with full support both on and off campus. Professors of GRIPS are notable and influential government officials and academics with a lifetime of experience to share. Courses range from Japanese specific subjects such as Japanese economics and government systems to contemporary issues that all government employees are grappling with at a global level such as international relations, security issues and support for developing countries. There are also several other academic programs at the graduate school with both Japanese and international students. The opportunity to study with over 300 students from all parts of Japan and around the world who are primarily focused on improving government systems has truly been enriching. As the Class President for the YLP program, I have also been fortunate enough to be able to represent the group in several forums which has certainly added to the GRIPS experience.

GRIPS has also encouraged us to experience as much of Japanese culture as possible. As part of the YLP program there are two organised field trips throughout the year. Recently, we spent three days in Kagoshima prefecture where we visited Mt Sakurajima, the Ibusuki Sand Baths, and the historic Chiran area including a visit to the Samurai Houses and the Peace Memorial Museum. We have also had plenty of opportunity to experience Japanese culture within Tokyo such as sumo tournaments at Ryogoku Kokugikan and falling leaves of autumn in the many beautiful gardens. I'm really looking forward to the upcoming Sakura Matsuri of spring! The Japanese students at GRIPS have also been extremely hospitable, frequently hosting social events where we enjoy traditional Japanese food and drinks. The majority of the international students agree that it is difficult to have a bad meal in Japan, everything we have is super fresh and full of flavour!

All of the participants of the YLP program have been housed at the Tokyo International Exchange Centre (TIEC) located in Odaiba. Odaiba is a fantastic place to live in, as not only is it extremely convenient but it is also a shopping and food paradise. There are plenty of events on so there is never a dull moment. There also happens to be a giant Gundam robot the size of a building nearby, a sure reminder that you're in Japan!

Given the global society that we now live in, the opportunity to study and socialise with peers from over a hundred countries is truly a priceless experience and something that I am extremely appreciative and grateful to the Japanese Government for. The memories and friendships I build here will last a lifetime and I certainly intend to maintain a positive and collaborative relationship with Japan going forward.

Young Leaders Program (YLP) class of 2014-2015.

Photo taken after colloquium and presentation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

Australia-Japan Society of New South Wales

To describe the Society briefly in its own words—*an active group of like-minded people who care about the relationship between the peoples of Australia and Japan*.

The Australia-Japan Society of New South Wales Incorporated (AJS-NSW) was established in 1968. It is a not-for-profit and non-political organisation that aims to promote common interest and mutual understanding and goodwill between the people of Australia and Japan at all levels.

One of the true strengths of the Society is the great variety of events that it organises through the year. They range from very informative talks by businesspeople and journalists to more social events such as get-togethers to watch sumo or do barefoot bowling. Shaberanaito—dinner events with conversation in either Japanese or English—are particularly popular.

AJS-NSW has links with the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Japanese Society of Sydney and other Japan-related organisations in Sydney and NSW. The Society's co-patrons are the Premier of NSW and the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney. It is affiliated with the National Federation of Australia-Japan Societies (www.austjapanfed.org.au).

Why not find out more about AJS-NSW's activities and how to become a member?

For further information: **www.ajsnsw.org.au**

"The Society truly offers something for everyone interested in the Australia-Japan relationship, from business to culture to education. Members tell me they appreciate the very reasonable membership fees and the great Australia-Japan network to which they gain access."

Mr Philip Mitchell
President of AJS-NSW

MEXT scholarships—a chance to study in Japan

MEXT stands for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The Ministry offers several scholarships known as MEXT scholarships to Australian citizens to study at Japanese universities. These scholarships are often referred to as 'Monbukagakusho' (education and science) scholarships.

Being a national scholarship, the competition for the scholarships is tough and high standards are expected from Australian candidates. The better known MEXT scholarships are the **Undergraduate and Research Scholarships**. The first is for up to five years (Japanese language plus the undergraduate degree) and the second, for up to 18 months.

In addition to the by-recommendation-only YLP program described on the opposite page, there are two other scholarships on offer to Australians: the **Japanese Studies Scholarship** and the **Teacher Training Scholarship**, open to university students currently enrolled in Japanese language or studies and to qualified primary and high school teachers with five years experience respectively. (Applications are now closed.)

If you or someone you know are interested in learning more about MEXT opportunities, visit the Embassy of Japan in Australia website to get an overview of criteria and the yearly timelines for applications. Remember the Japanese academic year begins in April.

Applications for the next round of Undergraduate and Research Scholarships will open in late April 2015, closing early June.
www.au.emb-japan.go.jp/en/education/education_monbukagakusho.html