

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 38 Preparing for "Japanaroo 2021"

7 May 2021

When I arrived in Sydney one and a half years ago, I was delighted to see various Japanese cultural and Japan-Australia exchange activities were being conducted by a wide range of organisations. There were also large-scale events such as the Matsuri Japan Festival at Darling Harbour (Sydney) and the Japanese Film Festival which are held annually. However, many of these activities and events have had to be cancelled, postponed or moved online due to the effects of COVID-19 since last year.

In these circumstances, is there a way for Japanese cultural and Japan-Australia exchange organisations to synchronise and showcase their respective activities, like a type of BYO party, to make them into one high-profile large-scale event? As a result of discussions between both public and private stakeholders since the end of last year, "Japanaroo 2021" will be held from 20 to 29 August, centred on Sydney. It will bring together in-person, online and hybrid events.

In this issue of my newsletter, as I report on the discussions and preparations up to this point, I would like to encourage organisations and companies engaged in Japanese cultural and Japan-Australia exchange to consider participating by holding events as part of "Japanaroo 2021".



**Meeting of Japanese cultural event stakeholders
(3 December 2021) [Photo courtesy Nichigo Press]**

● **Meeting of Japanese cultural event stakeholders**

On 3 December last year, organised by the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, major stakeholders of Japanese cultural events met to share information about dates and policies as well as exchange views on how events would be held in the coming year given the continuing effects of COVID-19.

Every group agreed that it is difficult to plan events because the fact cannot be overlooked that restrictions would be strengthened if there were a case of infection in Sydney. However, at the same time, they agreed that if it were held in the second half of 2021, it should be possible to hold a Japan festival comprising a series of events organised in parallel over one or two weeks, in a format that synergizes with the Matsuri Japan Festival and the Japanese Film Festival.

At the time of this initial meeting, the JCS Rainbow Project's commemoration on the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake was coming up on 11 March 2021, which would involve many Japanese cultural performances. So it was decided to meet again and reexamine the idea after that date.



**Planning and coordination meeting for “Japan Live Week” (provisional name)
(19 March 2021)**

● Japan Live Week?

To follow up the December discussions, on 19 March at the Japan Foundation Sydney, a planning and coordination meeting was held to organise a new Japan-themed festival. A consensus was reached to hold a ‘Japan Live Week’ (provisionally named) from 20 to 29 August with the following three objectives.

- (1) Organise a wide range of face-to-face, online and hybrid Japan-related events in Australia while COVID-19 still prevents people from travelling to Japan.
- (2) Promote Japanese culture, Japanese food, quality Japan-brand products and services in Australia to further enrich people’s lives in Australia, which upholds multiculturalism.
- (3) Invigorate Japan-brand shops, restaurants and businesses in Australia to further contribute to the Australian economy.

Regarding the name, instead of “Japan Live Week”, the idea of “Japanaroo” being a better name to convey the acceptance and development of Japanese culture in Australia was presented, and it was agreed that the name would be decided at the next meeting.



**Japanaroo Platform meeting
(16 April 2021)**

● Deciding on the name “Japanaroo 2021”

Later, as no viable alternative for the name was proposed, the framework was provisionally named “Japanaroo Platform” and the upcoming Japanese festival provisionally named “Japanaroo Fest”. Work also began on calling for events and developing event proposals by participating groups.

On 16 April, a Japanaroo Platform meeting was held at the Japan Foundation Sydney, and in addition to confirming the procedure to call for events, more than 10 groups explained their basic event proposals. Among the various ideas were a Japan-Australia cultural performance and concert at the Sydney Conservatorium on the

opening day of the event week, an online cultural exchange event by Sydney and Nagoya, online Japanese cultural experiences and tours, a kimono-wearing experience, a sake-tasting event, a Japanese film festival, a Japan-related seminar and a QR-code stamp rally.

Regarding the name of the festival, since “Fest” of “Japanaroo Fest” is not commonly used in this context in English, the participants came to the conclusion that “Japanaroo 2021” would be effective as it could convey the idea that the event would continue in future years.



**An Onikenmai performance at the East Japan Earthquake 10 Year Event
(11 March 2021)**

● Call for events to join “Japanaroo 2021”

And this week, we have begun to call for events to become part of “Japanaroo 2021”. The call-for-events document begins as follows:

“Japanaroo’ is a new initiative to celebrate multiculturalism and exchange with Japan in Australia. It will provide an ecosystem under which multiple Japan-related activities will be developed and rolled out, enabling a wide range of interaction and

cultural dialogue. This ecosystem will create opportunities to discover and access Japanese culture, businesses and brands. Japanaroo will be a unique way to enable exciting cultural experiences for Australians, enrich people's lives, and contribute towards business innovation and job creation nationwide.

"This initiative will be launched at 'Japanaroo 2021' to be held from 20 to 29 August 2021, during which time government, community and non-profit organisations as well as shops, restaurants and other businesses will organise special events related to Japan coordinated by the Japanaroo Platform.

"To prepare for Japanaroo 2021, the Japanaroo Platform is calling for expressions of interest from non-profit community and cultural exchange organisations, shops, restaurants and other service providers, state and local government organisations, to organise events during this festival..."

The complete expression of interest (EOI) document can be found here:

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/Japanaroo2021_0506.html

More than 20 names of a diverse range of public and private organisations are listed as partners and supporters of the Japanaroo Platform on the EOI document calling for applications. The plan is to promote Japanaroo 2021 so that by the end of May there are more than 50 groups organising events. This can be a wonderful opportunity for Japanese cultural and Japan-Australia exchange organisations to meet with each other and together create a successful experience for all.

Using the Japanaroo Platform as a foundation, the aspiration is to hold Japanaroo 2021 in late August and then to continue holding the festival every year. By maximising the use of online tools that have become widespread during COVID, this initiative may go beyond greater Sydney and connect the rest of Australia and Japan as well in the future.

It is my wish that Japanaroo 2021 will raise the profile of Japan in Australia, leading to enhanced popularity of Japanese culture, products and cuisine as well as increased travel to Japan post-COVID. I am hoping that, through this initiative, Japan will contribute to Australia's multiculturalism and business and that Japan-Australia exchange will develop even further. I would be delighted if you became involved in Japanaroo 2021.

Nichigo Press article about the 3 December 2020 meeting of Japanese cultural event representatives (*Nichigo Press* January 2021)

(Japanese)

<https://nichigopress.jp/ausnews/community/202328/>

Call for expressions of interest to hold a “Japanaroo 2021” event (Opened 6 May, closing 31 May 2021)

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/Japanaroo2021_0506.html

(End)