

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 54 From Japanaroo+ to Japan-Australia Leaders Video Teleconference Meeting

12 January 2022

Happy New Year! I look forward to working with you again in 2022.

Here in Australia, the number of COVID infections has increased rapidly since the end of last year. How did you spend your time over the Christmas-New Year break? In Australia, against the backdrop of high vaccination rates, the government's approach to the current Omicron outbreak is to "ride the wave" while minimizing restrictions. According to modelling released by the NSW Government, the outbreak will peak in January. Please take care against infection as you go about your daily lives.

Last month, I participated in many Japanaroo+ events, and before I could draw breath, in late December and the first few days of January, I was involved in the preparations for Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Sydney. Unfortunately, at the start of this year, the actual visit had to be withheld in the midst of the rapid increase in Omicron cases in Japan. Instead a virtual summit (the Japan-Australia Leaders Video Teleconference Meeting) was held on 6 January and the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement was signed. Before I knew it, it was a month and half since my last newsletter!

In this newsletter, I would like to report to you about Japanaroo+ and the Japan-Australia virtual summit, and in response to this, I invite you to reflect with me about what sort of activities should be promoted in the year ahead.



**Sogetsu Ikebana Exhibition (4 December), Urasenke Chado (9 December),
Sydney Kyudo Kai (19 December), Nihon Buyo (19 December)**

● **The spread of Japanese traditional culture in Australia**

Japanaroo+ was held from Friday 3 December to Sunday 19 December, centred on Sydney. After taking part in a series of events, I was reminded that not only Japanese nationals but also many Australians enjoy various elements of Japanese traditional culture and make them a part of their lives.

On the second day of Japanaroo+ (Saturday 4 December), I attended the Sogetsu exhibition held at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney. There I heard from Australians who had studied directly under Mr Norman Sparnon, who promoted ikebana in Australia from the late 1950s after returning from Japan where he had learnt ikebana after the war.

The following weekend on Sunday 12 December, I participated in a tea ceremony workshop by Sydney Chado Urasenke Tankokai held in the Blue Mountains City. Together with representatives of the city's sister-cities committee and a local environmental conservation group, I learned about the significance and method of the tea ceremony from an Australian tea master.

On the final day of Japanaroo+ (Sunday 19 December), I observed a demonstration by Sydney Kyudo Kai (*kyudo* is Japanese archery) and I was struck by the fact that all the members were Australian. On the same day, at a Japanese (*buyo*) dance workshop, Australians told me they were there because they had been to Japan and were interested to learn. I was again aware of how deeply Japanese culture has embedded itself locally.



Flavours of Fukuoka event (13 December), Hokkaido BBQ (12 December), Saga Prefecture booth at Japan Expo (17 December), takoyaki at Matsuri Japan Festival (18 December)

- **The popularity of Japanese cuisine**

During Japanaroo+, I also felt that Japanese food culture has become so widespread here that we have now reached a stage of promoting the appeal of Japan's regional cuisine. For many Australians, Japan feels close by and they are turning their eyes to regional tourism and regional food in Japan.

Fukuoka Prefecture ran the “Flavours of Fukuoka” campaign at restaurants in the city. At the tasting event in Gogyo Surry Hills, government and media representatives enjoyed cuisine and Japanese sake from Fukuoka.

JTB called their event “Hokkaido BBQ”. Held at an *izakaya* in the city, the event introduced “Genghis Khan” barbecue and Hokkaido’s famous spots – it was so popular it sold out.

Other events held as part of Japanaroo+ introduced the local food culture of Nagoya City and Okinawa Prefecture. Also, at Japan Expo and Matsuri Japan Festival, Saga, Tokushima and Yamanashi Prefectures promoted their local Japanese sake and fruit juice.

And at the Japanaroo+ Opening Night, this consulate also promoted Japan’s food culture and organised a demonstration by the residence’s Chef Saeki of how to make matcha roll cake ([video](#)).



Concert by Aiko Goto and Helena Rathbone (6 December), talk about Japanese art at the Art Gallery of NSW (9 December), Ken Done and Japan exhibition (17 December), Akira Family Sale (18 December)

● **Artists and cultural figures active beyond Japan and Australia**

Japanaroo+ was an opportunity to reach out to artists and cultural figures who are key people in Sydney and whose activities go beyond Japan and Australia. I was fortunate to be involved in their diverse events.

On Monday 6 December, I invited Ms Aiko Goto, who has been a member of the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) over many years, to perform with fellow ACO member, Ms Helena Rathbone, at my official residence. The concert was streamed via InstaLive, and students, parents and teachers of the Sydney Japanese International School were invited to listen to their performance.

On Thursday 9 December, Ms Melanie Eastburn, Asian art curator at the Art Gallery of NSW, gave a talk at the Gallery. The content was very informative – a comprehensive introduction to the Japanese art in the Gallery’s collection, which includes items from the 1879 Sydney Great Exhibition through to the present day.

For a week starting from Monday 13 December, “Ken Done and Japan” was on at the Ken Done Gallery in The Rocks. Mr Done was widely known in Japan for contributing the artwork that was used on the cover of the magazine “Hanako”. On Friday 17 December, Ambassador and Mrs Yamagami visited the exhibition and met Mr Done, who shared various memories of his deep connection with Japan over many years.

Agreeing with the purpose of Japanaroo, Australia’s highly successful fashion designer, Mr Akira Isogawa, created an original Akira Japanaroo T-shirt to be sold at the Akira Family Sale. A stylish design in red and black, I also bought one!

Continues next page



WABORI at Japan Expo and Japanaroo Festive Season Concert (17 December),
Kagami-biraki, Japanese drumming and activity at Matsuri Japan Festival
(18 December)

● **From ‘Japanese festival’ to ‘Japan-Australia co-creation’**

On Friday 17 December, a series of events was held at Town Hall in the heart of Sydney – Japan Expo, Gambare Concert and Japanaroo Festive Season Concert. The following day, Matsuri Japan Festival was held in Chatswood Mall. Ambassador Yamagami attended both events and shared his impressions in his [News from under the Southern Cross – Edition 50 ‘Japanaroo 2021’](#).

It had been two years since Sydney’s long-standing Matsuri Japan Festival was last held at Darling Harbour. The festival at Chatswood was blessed with fine weather. In addition to the festival, as part of the Japanaroo initiative, a Japan-Australia co-creation themed concert and an expo showcasing Japanese culture, cuisine and tourism were held for the first time at Sydney Town Hall in the heart of the city. I feel it is a significant development building on foundations of the “Japan festival” towards “Japan-Australia co-creation”.

A *Tsugaru-Shamisen* and didgeridoo performance. Kimono featuring Aboriginal designs. Not only disseminating Japanese culture but Japan's very striving to create new value with Australia will further deepen understanding and cooperation between Japan and Australia.



Japanaroo+ Opening Night (3 December) , JETAANSW photo exhibition (8 December) , Japanaroo Platform monthly meeting (19 March), Japanaroo task team evaluation meeting (21 December)

● **Towards the creation of a “Japan-Australia community”**

Japanaroo, which was conceived more than a year ago as the first Japanese cultural event to be undertaken as a public-private partnership, has finished. A wide range of major public and private organisations and companies related to Japanese culture, tourism, business and Japan-Australia exchange were involved. More than 50 organisations collaborated for the first time to hold events during the same period, and through this, Japan's profile has been heightened further. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the partners who managed the event and to everyone on the various task teams responsible for coordinating and publicising events.

Building on this success, Japanese and Japan-Australia exchange organisations and business in this place can come together to work towards the greater shared objectives of deepening and promoting mutual understanding and exchange between Japan and Australia. I would be delighted if a “Japan-Australia community” were born that went beyond the existing framework creating new encounters and collaborations.

The week after Japanaroo+ finished, a task team evaluation meeting was held, and we exchanged opinions on the results and issues arising from the event. Based on the lessons and reflections from Japanaroo 2021 and the changing situation surrounding COVID-19, we would like to consider the future direction of Japanaroo, including the possibility of holding Japanaroo 2022 centred around a concert at the Opera House on 2 September (Friday) and Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood on 10 September (Saturday).



● Japan-Australia Virtual Summit

Then, with no time to draw breath, from the end of 2021 to the start of 2022 it was all hands on deck to prepare for the visit to Sydney by Prime Minister Kishida. As I mentioned in the introduction, the visit had to be withheld in the midst of the rapid increase in Omicron cases in Japan since the start of this year. However, a [virtual](#)

[summit](#) was held on 6 January and the [Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement](#) was signed. Ambassador Yamagami outlines the circumstances in his [News From Under the Southern Cross \(Edition 51\):The Japan-Australia Leaders' Summit](#).

While the face-to-face leaders' meeting did not eventuate in Sydney, the virtual summit not only addressed security, but there was also progress on the economic front. The two leaders affirmed to advance Japan-Australia economic relationship with public and private sectors acting in unison such as in the development of Western Sydney, and they concurred on accelerating energy transition in Asia and on promoting cooperation for decarbonisation such as by hydrogen project. The results of this meeting will greatly assist realising Japan-Australia business cooperation from here on.

Continues next page



Central Sydney (1 January 2022)

- **Supporting top-down and bottom-up efforts in 2022**

With no chance to take a break over the New Year, finally I can look back over the last month's events and plan for the year ahead.

Fortunately, the virtual leaders' meeting early in the new year set out the major directions and priorities for promoting Japan-Australia cooperation. Western Sydney development, decarbonisation including hydrogen projects, strengthening efforts in the area of economic security including cooperation concerning critical technology and supply chain resilience, and expanding cooperation to new areas such as space and cyber - many of these issues must be addressed through businesses here in Sydney.

On the other hand, at Japanaroo+ last month, I felt there is potential to significantly develop exchange between Japan and Australia post-COVID. I think that we can further heighten Japan's profile in Australia by building on the foundations of long-standing events such as "Matsuri Japan Festival" as we foster the next generation

and new public-private actors and create connections between culture, food, tourism, regional Japan and business.

How this consulate can contribute is by “boosting” your activities. Anticipating a new era ahead, by supporting such top-down and bottom-up efforts, I would like to help realise peace and development between Japan and Australia and around the world.

I look forward to working with you in 2022.

Kiya Masahiko, Consul-General of Japan in Sydney

(Ends)