

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 57 80 years after the Bombing of Darwin - Building a foundation for the future

1 March 2022



HE Ambassador Yamagami Shingo and NT Chief Minister Michael Gunner at the Unveiling Ceremony of the new memorial listing the names of the 80 I-124 crew members (18 February 2022)

February 19 marked the 80th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin. HE the Ambassador of Japan to Australia Yamagami Shingo and I travelled to Darwin to attend a series of events. I felt it was an opportunity to strengthen the foundation for the future of Japan and Australia by remembering the victims of past wars and reflecting on the history of reconciliation and cooperation together.

In this issue of my newsletter, following Ambassador Yamagami's [“News from under the Southern Cross”](#), as I give an overview of this trip, I would like to reflect with you on the significance of Japan-Australia history in Darwin for the future.



Ambassador Yamagami delivering his address to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly (17 February 2022 – photo courtesy of NT Government)

● **Ambassador Yamagami's address to the NT Legislative Assembly**

I arrived in Darwin on 16 February to prepare for the series of events beginning the next day. Ambassador Yamagami arrived from Canberra at noon on 17 February and that afternoon he delivered an [address](#) to the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. This was probably the first time that the Japanese ambassador had addressed the NT Legislative Assembly since it was established in 1974, and I think it was a fitting historic occasion to mark the 80th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

In his remarks, Ambassador Yamagami reflected on the history of reconciliation, friendship and cooperation between Japan and Australia, and he stressed the importance of further deepening the relationship for the future, focusing on security and defence cooperation, including joint training exercises in the NT; economic relations, including INPEX's LNG and hydrogen, Nissui's prawn farming, and space; and tourism, cultural exchange and Japanese language education.

All 25 members of the Legislative Assembly were in the chamber to listen to the address. In addition, the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition welcomed the Ambassador and spoke warmly of the importance of the NT's relationship with Japan. All these proceedings were made available online as part of [Hansard](#) (parliamentary records) on the next day.



The old and new I-124 memorials and the healing tree
(18 February 2022)

● Unveiling Ceremony of the new I-124 Memorial

In the morning of 18 February, a ceremony was held to unveil the new I-124 memorial recording the names of the 80 crew members. In [one of my newsletters from last month](#), I explained the background to the sinking of the I-124 submarine which sank off the coast of Darwin leading to the loss of all 80 crew members about a month before the Bombing of Darwin.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin in 2017, the Australian-Japanese Association of the NT (AJANT) erected the first memorial to the I-124 with the support of both the Japanese and Australian governments, and in 2019, AJANT organised the planting of a healing tree. Then, in this the 80th year since the Bombing of Darwin, AJANT and the Government of Japan and the NT Government cooperated to erect a new memorial on which the names and ranks of all 80 crew members are inscribed. As shown by the photo, seeing the three in a row conveys the strength of the feelings of the Japanese and Australians involved.

Among the dignitaries attending the unveiling ceremony were Her Honour the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AO, Administrator of the Northern Territory and Mr Craig O'Halloran, Chief Minister Michael Gunner, Mrs Lia Finocchiaro – Leader of the Opposition, and Ambassador Yamagami and Mrs Yamagami. Chief Minister Gunner and Ambassador Yamagami unveiled the memorial and gave speeches. Ambassador Yamagami expressed his condolences for the crew in [his remarks](#). It was moving to hear Chief Minister Gunner quote [the words](#) of Turkish President Kemal Ataturk at Gallipoli: “ Your sons are now living in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they become our sons as well.”



Performance of original composition featuring Japanese taiko drums at concert presented by the City of Darwin (18 February 2022)

- **Concert presented by the City of Darwin**

In the evening of 18 February, the City of Darwin presented a concert held at Christ Church Cathedral in the city centre featuring music and performances from the time of the Bombing of Darwin. Ambassador Yamagami, Mrs Yamagami and I attended as invited guests.

At the concert, Arafura Wind Ensemble, a local group, played “[Largo](#)” composed by YAGISAWA Satoshi, a piece for which the Ensemble won gold at the 2021 Australian National Online Festival of Bands. Local composer Cathy Applegate’s work “[Darwin 1942](#)” included Japanese drums. I could feel the depth of exchange between Japan and Australia.

The day of the Bombing of Darwin has become an occasion for local people to hold cultural events, and I was very happy to see the natural way in which Japanese culture is being incorporated.



**Laying wreaths at the Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service
(19 February 2022)**

● **Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service**

In the morning of 19 February, the Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service was held at the Darwin Cenotaph. Being the 80th anniversary, among the dignitaries present who gave speeches and laid wreaths were Governor-General David Hurley, Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Federal Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese, among others. Ambassador Yamagami and his wife, Defence Attaché Aso, AJANT committee members and I also laid wreaths.

In his [speech](#), Prime Minister Morrison stated that the Bombing of Darwin was the event when Australia “took charge of its destiny”, and that at the very place of Cenotaph, he laid a wreath with Prime Minister Abe “so it could become a place of reconciliation”, and that a former enemy was now one of Australia’s “most trusted and loyal friends”.

In his [speech](#), Chief Minister Gunner emphasised that Darwin was attacked in 1942 because it was the key strategic location in the region and that today it remains “the key strategic location in the region – standing ... at the centre of the Indo-Pacific, so critical for the Quad, AUKUS, and to [Australia’s] neighbours and friends.” He urged people to look at who was attending the commemorative service in Darwin: Australia’s leaders – the Prime Minister, the Federal Opposition Leader, standing together, and representatives from not only the United States, but also Japan, asking rhetorically, “How far have we come from this day 80 years ago?”

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**Consul-General's Commendation Ceremony in honour of
Darwin Memorial Uniting Church (19 February 2022)**

●**Darwin Memorial Uniting Church receives Consul-General's Commendation – the ceremony**

In the early evening of 19 February, I presented the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church with the Consul-General's Commendation at a ceremony held at the church in the presence of Administrator O'Halloran and her husband, and Ambassador Yamagami and his wife.

When the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church was established in 1960, it received a donation of 77 crosses made of reclaimed bronze. The donation was from Fujita Salvage Company which had been contracted to salvage sunken vessels from Darwin Harbour. The crosses were installed throughout the church as eternal symbols of reconciliation between Japan and Australia. Exchange continued between the church and the Fujita family, and on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin, a ship propeller, which had marked the Fujita family grave in Japan, was donated to the church, and today it stands out the front of the church. The episode of the 77 crosses has been quoted in speeches by Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Morrison, and has become a strong foundation for Japan-Australia reconciliation.

Following on from [my speech](#) in which I introduced and honoured the above story, [Mr Kevin Davis AM gave a speech](#) about the church's exchange with the Fujita family, and then [Pastor Lauren's speech](#) explained how moved so many people are when they hear the story of the people working for Fujita in those difficult days so soon after the war and their efforts for reconciliation. The ceremony was truly a heart-warming occasion.



**Get-together with committee members of the
Australian-Japanese Association of the NT (AJANT) (19 February 2022)**

- **Building a foundation for the future**

Later that same evening, there was a get-together with committee members of AJANT which led efforts to erect the new memorial to the I-124. AJANT works hard to promote Japan-Australia cooperation in Darwin, and the background and significance of their efforts since the erecting the first memorial 5 years ago is introduced on their [website which includes explanatory videos in English and Japanese](#).

It was the third time I participated in the Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service. There were new developments on the [first time](#), the [second time](#) and on this occasion. This time - the 80th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin – saw the new memorial to the I-124 erected and the Consul-General's Commendation presented to Darwin Memorial Uniting Church.

By reflecting on our history of war and reconciliation, exchange and cooperation, and through the activities of Japanese and Australians to jointly remember this history, we will build the foundation of future cooperation. Building the future through history. I would like to continue to do such work in the future.

Kiya Masahiko, Consul-General of Japan in Sydney

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