

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 61 Resuming tourism and student exchange between Japan and Australia

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At the opening of the Snow Travel Expo (22 May 2022)

How did you spend this May? Australia has a new government after Labor won the federal election on 21 May. Newly elected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, together with new Foreign Minister Penny Wong, was on a plane to Japan just a few hours after being sworn in to participate in the [Japan-Australia-India-US \(Quad\) Leaders' Meeting](#) on 24 May. The [Japan-Australia Leaders' Meeting](#) and the [Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers' Informal Talks](#) were also held on that day. This consulate provided support for these meetings and the close ties between Japan and Australia were once again clear to see. As this was taking place, I participated in various events being held ahead of the resumption of tourism and student exchange, which both promote grassroots exchange – a foundation of the Japan-Australia relationship. Participating in these events, I felt the enthusiasm of those involved. In this issue of my newsletter, I will introduce these latest developments.



The Japan booth at the Snow Travel Expo (22 May 2022)

- **Snow Travel Expo**

On 22 May, the day after the Australian Federal Election, the [Snow Travel Expo](#) was held at ICC Sydney. More than 10 companies and organisations from Japan participated, including the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO), local governments, travel companies and airlines. Together they made for a sizeable presence, having the largest booth and attracting many visitors.

As the representative of the Government of Japan, I participated in the opening ceremony, greeting expo goers and promoting Japan through an interview-style talk with the organiser. I shared my own memories of a really enjoyable family skiing trip to Hokkaido and spoke about the many attractions that only a ski trip to Japan can offer – Japanese food and saké, hot springs, famous sightseeing locations and more.

It was a valuable opportunity for me; I went around the expo and spoke with representatives from each of the Japanese companies and organisations, listening to what they had to say. In famous ski resorts such as Niseko and Hakuba, there are many Australian skiers, so now other resorts are finding that “There are no Aussies here” is an effective sales pitch. I observed that there is still great potential to develop an even bigger market for Australian ski tourists in Japan.



Australian Tourism Exchange 2022 (NHK News broadcast, 16 May 2022)

● Australian Tourism Exchange 2022

Earlier in the month (15-18 May), the [Australian Tourism Exchange 2022](#) was held, organised by Tourism Australia in partnership with Destination NSW. More than 1,000 people attended from around the world, including from Japan. It was the first large-scale tourism event in Australia since COVID and was even covered by Japanese TV news bulletins – NHK broadcast [“Large-scale business meeting calls out to overseas tourists”](#) and TBS broadcast [“Australia holds large-scale travel and tourism exchange event for the first time in 3 years”](#). There was a high level of interest in tourism restarting.

ATE was a B to B event aimed at industry and therefore I didn't attend. However, I did have separate opportunities to speak with tourism representatives who came to Sydney.

I met Mr Derek Baines, Country Manager Japan at [Tourism Australia](#), for the first time, and he revealed that the first contact he had with Japan was through sister city school exchange between Port Stephens in NSW and Yugawara Town in Kanagawa Prefecture. He also spoke fluent Japanese, and I realised how grassroots exchange later leads to the development of business between Japan and Australia.

I also had the chance to meet again with Mr Scott Lovett, Deputy Chief Executive, and Ms Rachel Telford, Senior Director Aviation and Strategy at [Tourism NT](#). We exchanged views about promoting Japanese tourism in the Northern Territory. Uluru is famous in Japan, and before COVID, Japanese tourists were the largest group of tourists to visit the NT. I intend to push for the return to this normality once traffic resumes between Japan and Australia.



At the ceremony for the Australia-Japan Society of NSW University Awards
(18 May 2022)

- **Australia-Japan Society of NSW University Awards**

On 18 May, the ceremony for the Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS-NSW) University Awards was held at The Japan Foundation, Sydney. Organised by AJS-NSW, the awards are presented annually to recognize the best students in Japanese language and/or Japanese studies at universities in and around Sydney. Students receive a certificate and cash prize. This year, the University of Newcastle was involved for the first time, and one student from each of the 7 universities was awarded. In [my keynote address](#), I expressed my hope that the younger generation of Australians learning about Japan, such as the AJS-NSW University Award recipients, would build the future of the Japan-Australia relationship in diverse fields ranging from security to business and culture.

When I attended the AJS-NSW University Awards for the first time last year, I was greatly impressed by students' Japanese-language fluency and their passion for and knowledge of Japan – across all the participating universities. This year, listening to the students' remarks, I became aware of the effort they each made to continue their studies during the COVID-19 situation over the past two years. This situation has meant they haven't been able to visit Japan at all. One of this year's recipients had never even been to Japan before, but the student's speech was delivered in excellent Japanese - I could feel the underlying strength of Japanese studies and Japanese language at the universities.



With Knox Grammar School Headmaster Scott James, Knox Director of Rugby John Rownes, and “Tomodachi 2021” Organiser Peter Gibson (25 May 2022)

● Visit to Knox Grammar School

Last week on 25 May, I visited Knox Grammar School in Sydney’s north and met with Headmaster Scott James and we exchanged views about increasing student exchange between Japan and Australia.

Knox Grammar School is a well-known private school which opened in 1942 and ranks among the top 30 private high schools in Australia. Pre-COVID, in 2019, [approximately 40 members of the school’s rugby team visited Japan for two weeks](#) as part of their extracurricular activities. They played 6 exchange matches with high school students in Fukuoka, Oita, Osaka and Tokyo. Japanese language education is also strong at the school: students can study for 5 years from year 8 onwards and there are students sitting advanced Japanese at the HSC.

In the lead-up to the Tokyo Olympics last year, more than 20,000 students took part in “Tomodachi 2021”, an online school exchange program, which connected approximately 600 classes in Japan and Australia. Among them were three classes from Knox Grammar School, whose students engaged in mutual exchange online with a school in Japan. Mr Peter Gibson, who promoted the Tomodachi 2021 initiative on the Australian Olympic

Committee, has obtained funding from the [Australia Japan Foundation](#) to support a Tokyo Olympic legacy program, “Connect Tomodachi”. This new program was recently launched and the [inaugural webinar](#) is planned for 22 June. I look forward to seeing actual mutual exchange visits in the future between students who have connected via online exchange, further developing exchange between Japan and Australia.



Rugby exchange during Knox Grammar School’s visit to Japan
(Photo courtesy Knox; April 2019)

● **Towards the resumption of tourism and student exchange between Japan and Australia**

Japan’s border measures are gradually being relaxed. On 5 May, Prime Minister Kishida said in his [speech at the Guildhall](#) in London: “We have now eased border control measures significantly, with the next easing taking place in June, when Japan will introduce a smoother entry process similar to that of other G7 members.” In late May, a [trial](#) was held of the small-group, escorted package tours that Japanese travel companies will offer to 4 countries (the US, Australia, Thailand and Singapore) in preparation for the resumption of tourism to Japan.

[Under border measures effective from 1 June onwards](#), visitors entering Japan from Australia will no longer have to do a test for COVID-19 upon arrival nor quarantine after arrival. Moreover, from 10 June, Australian tourists will be able to travel in Japan on small-group, escorted package tours. [Vaccinated travellers have been able to enter Australia for tourism since February this year](#), and with the easing of Japan's border measures, two-way travel has become easier.

Here in NSW and the NT, there are opportunities for people from a wide-range of fields to meet – from politicians to business people and students – but I feel the greatest key to stronger ties and mutual understanding is the promotion of tourism and youth exchange. With the easing of COVID-19 related border measures, I hope that this year mutual visits and exchange will resume in earnest and increase dramatically. I am determined to do all I can to this end.

Kiya Masahiko, Consul-General of Japan in Sydney