

～Arrival in Sydney～

My name is YAMANAKA Osamu. On 18 October, I assumed the post of Consul-General of Japan in Sydney.

It has been just over a month since I arrived in Sydney. In that time, I have met with NSW and NT government officials, business representatives, people promoting culture and the arts, and those supporting people-to-people exchange. I also had the opportunity just over a week after my arrival here to visit the city of Dubbo and attend the 35th anniversary event of Dubbo's sister-city relationship with Minokamo City, and last week, I went to Cowra where I participated in an event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the dedication of the Japanese war cemetery.



As the Consul-General in Sydney, I am looking forward to engaging in exchange with many more people. I intend to introduce my thoughts and feelings about the multifaceted Japan-Australia relationship that I will have through these exchanges, by writing in “在シドニー総領事交流録 (Zai-shidonii-souryouji-kouryuu-roku)” or “A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney”. My two immediate predecessors both wrote their observations in detail, so please forgive the many duplications. I would be delighted to receive your feedback, suggestions and comments, including from those of you who have been involved with Japan-Australia exchange over many years.

First of all, what I have realised through my exchanges here so far is that the closeness of the Japan-Australia relationship is due to the fact that many people have been involved in strengthening the relationship, that it is a deep and multilayered relationship, and that at its base is the accumulation of many years of efforts towards post-war reconciliation. Around the world, the presence of emerging economies is growing, and there are voices that say that Japan's presence is shrinking in comparison. However, here in Sydney, I feel that the trust in Japan built up over many years has been reaffirmed in terms of not only our economic ties, but also our values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law as we have come through the difficulties of the pandemic, and Japan's presence has grown accordingly. In fact, I learned that in NSW the largest number of high school students choose to take Japanese as a foreign language, and the number of Australian tourists visiting Japan has almost recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels, even double the number of Japanese tourists coming to Australia.

Many people and organisations are working every day to take the high profile that Japan already enjoys locally to an even higher level. This week I had the opportunity to meet with members of three Japan-related organisations, and although I think many people would already be aware of them, this time I would like to take up these three groups.

To begin, allow me to review some basics. The Japan Club of Sydney (JCS) is a group mainly comprising Japanese permanent residents in Australia. JCS organises events such as Matsuri Japan Festival, operates Japanese language schools and does charity activities, among others. The Japanese Society of Sydney Inc. (JSS) mainly consists of Japanese companies and organisations which have offices in Sydney. JSS conducts a variety of cultural and recreational activities for exchange between members and with Australians, and it also cooperates with the running of the Sydney International Japanese School. The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) in Sydney comprises 167 companies and organisations that are based in Sydney. JCCI holds lectures and seminars, conducts activities for industry subcommittees, edits “The Outline of Australia” (オーストラリア概要 Ousutoraria-gaiyou) and so on.

These three organisations collaborate and cooperate with one another. They co-host various events, with Japanese permanent residents, who have put down deep roots in Sydney, and Japanese company representatives, who operate at the frontline of business, joining forces. I would like to express my sincere respect to them for their role in deepening the ties between Japan and Australia. On 1 December, the three organisations are co-sponsoring the Matsuri Japan Festival 2024, which I will also attend and become part of this local “All Japan” effort myself.

In addition to representatives of these three organisations, I would like to make my own contribution, no matter how small it might be, to deepening Japan-Australia relations through further exchanges with local people who have been actively promoting culture and the arts and supporting people-to-people exchange over many years, with representatives of local governments in Japan which have sister-state or sister-city relationships with the state of NSW and cities in NSW, and with government officials in NSW and the Northern Territory.

I welcome your feedback and suggestions and would greatly appreciate your continued support.