A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney (Edition 9)
Sister Cities

9 December

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For the first time since I assumed my post as consul-general about a year ago, in October I returned home to Japan. I took the opportunity to pay courtesy calls on the mayors of Yamato-Takada City, which is the sister city of Lismore, and of Nagoya City, which is the sister city of Sydney.

Did you know that New South Wales has as many as 39 sister-city relationships with Japanese local governments? (Details are at the end of this newsletter.) In this issue of “A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney”, I would like to introduce my visits to Yamato-Takada and Nagoya Cities as well as the other official visits I have made to NSW towns and cities with sister cities in Japan.

● Yamato-Takada City & Lismore City Council

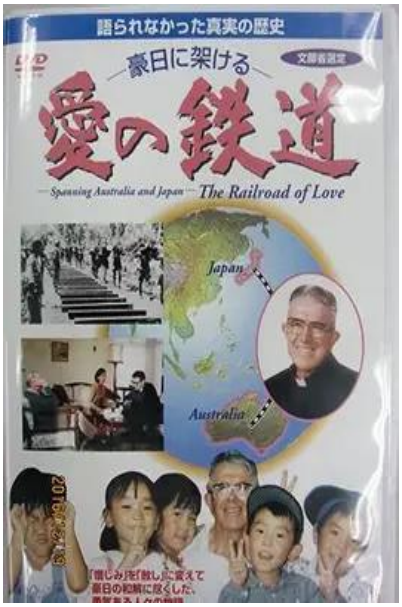
Let’s begin with Yamato-Takada. In Edition 7 of this Record of Exchange, I wrote that in 1963, Yamato-Takada City in Nara Prefecture formed the first sister city relationship between Japan and Australia, namely with the city of Lismore, which is located in northern NSW close to the Queensland border. So, how did their exchange begin? It all goes back to a Father Marsden.

Father Marsden was born and grew up in Lismore. During the Second World War, he became a prisoner of the Japanese Army and a chaplain on the Thai-Burma Railway. After the war, whilst interacting with Australian soldiers who harboured hatred towards Japan, he believed that it was necessary to reconcile with Japan, and in 1949 he travelled there. Two brothers, Tony and Paul Glynn, went to the same high school that Father Marsden had attended, and they learnt about his efforts towards reconciliation. The brothers were inspired to become priests themselves, and in 1953 and 1955, they went to Japan.

The older brother, Father Tony Glynn, worked delivering welfare services in the diocese of Nara, and at the same time, he was involved in a range of activities that promoted reconciliation between Japan and Australia, such as arranging the return of Japanese swords which had been taken home by Australian military personnel and joint Buddhist-Christian memorial services. When Father Tony Glynn passed away in Japan in 1994, his funeral was attended by many people.

The younger brother Glynn, Father Paul Glynn, ministered at Takada Catholic Church in Yamato-Takada City, Nara Prefecture. Realising that there was no sister city relationship between Japan and Australia, he facilitated the sister-city agreement between his hometown of Lismore and Yamato-Takada, and in 1963, the sister-city relationship was realised. Father Paul Glynn has also written many books about the legacy of his brother, Father Tony Glynn. Father Paul currently resides in a suburb of Sydney and is 97 years old. Last year in December, I had the honour of paying him a visit. I was able to learn more deeply about the activities of the Glynn brothers by watching the movie, “The Railroad of Love”.

With Father Paul Glynn



"The Railroad of Love" DVD

In light of these circumstances, in mid-October, I paid my respects at the grave of Father Tony Glynn, who rests in a suburb of Yamato-Takada, and I visited Yamato-Takada City Hall.

At the city hall, I paid a courtesy call on Mayor Taizo Horiuchi. I reported about my meeting with Mayor of Lismore Steve Krieg and I participated in Lismore's Lantern Parade carrying the lantern of "Mikuchan", Yamato-Takada's mascot. We also discussed the timing of Mayor Horiuchi's visit to Lismore and exchanged views about further developing the sister-city relationship.

With Yamato-Takada Mayor Taizo Horiuchi

Carrying the lantern of Yamato-Takada's mascot Mikuchan in Lismore's Lantern Parade

With Lismore Mayor Steve Krieg

● Nagoya City & the City of Sydney

After Yamato-Takada, I visited Nagoya, Sydney's sister city. Cr Robert Kok from the City of Sydney was leading an official delegation from Sydney to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Nagoya-Sydney sister-city agreement, and I accompanied them when the delegation paid a courtesy call on Nagoya Mayor Ichiro Hirosawa. In particular, Nagoya City is supporting small and medium businesses to develop an Australian market, and this can be seen as a prime example of the complementarity of a sister-city relationship and economic exchange. During the courtesy call, participants reviewed the diverse and active exchange which stretches back to 1980, including education, zoo, culture and sports exchange. Nagoya-Sydney Sister City Committee Chair Warwick Miller, who was preparing for the Japan Expo in Sydney to be held on 25 and 26 October, conveyed a message of welcome and anticipation ahead of the visit to Sydney by the Nagoya delegation led by Mayor Hirosawa. After the courtesy call, I also accompanied the Sydney delegation to the Higashiyama Zoo, which is the sister zoo of Sydney's Taronga Zoo. There we first observed the excellent koala enclosure and then I was among the participants in the Nagoya-Sydney 45th Anniversary Tree Planting Ceremony, together with Nagoya's Deputy Mayor Toshinori Matsuo and Council Deputy Chair Koichi Sawada. At the welcome reception hosted by the mayor that evening, I had the chance to speak with Council Chair Manabu Nishikawa and others, including Nagoya high school students who had visited Sydney in July this year, and I realised that active exchange is taking place and encompasses the future generation.

The Sydney delegation's courtesy call on Nagoya Mayor Hirosawa

Nagoya-Sydney 45th Anniversary Tree Planting Ceremony

That concludes what I have to share about my sister-city visits during my trip to Japan.

Although there might be a little repetition with earlier issues of my "Record of Exchange as Consul-General", I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on my visits to sister cities here in NSW since my arrival in Sydney in October 2024.

● Dubbo Regional Council & Minokamo City

First, in the second half of October, shortly after my arrival in NSW, I visited Dubbo, a transportation hub about 400 kilometres west of Sydney, where I attended a dinner hosted by Mayor Joshua Black to celebrate Dubbo's 35th sister-city anniversary with Minokamo City. A delegation from Minokamo led by Mayor Hiroto Fujii also attended the celebration as well as Dubbo high school students who had visited Minokamo on student exchange. The students looked back on their exchange with great fondness. The following day, I visited the Japanese garden which was a gift from the Minokamo. The garden is a symbol of the sister-city relationship and

is popular with Dubbo locals as a place to relax. The garden is named after the novelist Tsubouchi Shoyo, who was born in Minokamo. Located within the Shoyoen garden is a tea house, where unexpectedly I was served authentic Japanese tea and sweets. It was a wonderful experience.

In front of the Shoyoen garden entrance

With Mayor Hiroto Fujii and Mayor Joshua Black

● City of Newcastle & Ube City

Next was Newcastle. In February this year, I paid a courtesy call on Lord Mayor Ross Kerridge. Located about two hours by car to the north-east of Sydney, the City of Newcastle is famous for its port which is the largest exporter of coal and economic ties with Japan stretch back many years.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the sister-city agreement between Newcastle and Ube City in Yamaguchi Prefecture. Ube, known for its cement industry, had been importing coal from Australia and like Newcastle was a modern coastal city, and so, in 1980, Newcastle and Ube entered into a sister-city agreement. In October this year, a group of Newcastle councillors visited Ube, and the top students in a Japanese speech contest for high school students held in Newcastle have been invited to Ube. In February last year, Nihon (Japan) University opened its first overseas campus in the heritage registered former Newcastle courthouse buildings purchased by Nihon University. Student exchange is expected to become even more active. And another thing, Newcastle is close to the Hunter Valley which is famous for its many wineries.

As decarbonisation progresses, Newcastle is proactively pursuing the introduction of new energy sources. In the Port of Newcastle, a hydrogen energy project has received funding from the Australian Government and Japanese companies are cooperating with this initiative. The Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER) and innovation research facilities have been established at the University of Newcastle. Research and development for the manufacturing sector is being actively developed, and there are strong expectations for Japanese companies possessing high-tech capabilities.

With Lord Mayor Ross Kerridge

Aerial view of Newcastle Harbour

● Willoughby City Council & Suginami Ward, Tokyo

The Willoughby City Council area has suburbs where many Japanese nationals live, such as Chatswood, St Leonards, Artarmon and Northbridge.

Since 1990, Willoughby has been engaging in exchange with its sister city Suginami-ku (Suginami Ward) in Tokyo. In June, I paid a courtesy call on Mayor Tania Taylor. As a student exchange program, Suginami runs an annual student exchange program to Willoughby despatching 25 junior high school students for 2 weeks in August. The students experience various activities such as visiting local schools, doing homestays, and visiting the consulate and businesses.

As part of Willoughby City Council's annual Emerge Festival, the Japan Club of Sydney (JCS) holds Matsuri Japan Festival. This year the 10th annual Matsuri Japan Festival was held in September and together with Mayor Taylor I took part in the *kagamibiraki* ceremony and enjoyed all the energy of a Japanese festival.

With Mayor Tanya Taylor

Kagamibiraki at the 10th anniversary of JCS Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood

● Penrith City Council & Fujieda City and Hakusan City

Penrith is located 55km to the west of Sydney at the foot of the Blue Mountains. It is about 30 minutes by car from the Western Sydney International Airport which is scheduled to open next year, and it is developing rapidly as a business district and residential area. It's also the home territory of the formidable Penrith Panthers, that NRL team renowned around Australia!

Penrith has had a sister-city agreement with Fujieda City in Shizuoka Prefecture for 41 years and another with Hakusan City in Ishikawa Prefecture for 36 years. Fujieda and Hakusan are also connected to each another as friendship cities, so all three cities share the bounds of friendship with one another.

In August, Mayor Todd Carney hosted a Civic Dinner celebrating Penrith's international connections. A delegation from Fujieda led by Council Chair Akira Tada and a delegation from Hakusan led by Council Chair Susumu Nakano attended the event, and I was also present. While expressing my profound respect to Mayor Carney for having deepened exchange over so many years between Penrith and both cities, I also conveyed my hope that exchange with Japan would develop even further now that the distance between Penrith and Japan has shortened thanks to Western Sydney Airport.

With Fujieda City Council Chair Akira Tada, Penrith Mayor Todd Carney and Hakusan City Council Chair Susumu Nakano

● City of Wollongong & Kawasaki City

Wollongong is a harbour city which lies about 80km south of Sydney. Having developed as a coal mining and steel producing town, Australia's largest steel manufacturer Blue Scope has a factory there in the suburb of Port Kembla. Wollongong has many beautiful beaches, and with bike lanes here and there throughout the city, cycling is booming.

Since 1988, Wollongong and Kawasaki City have been sister cities. When I paid a courtesy call on Lord Mayor Tania Brown at the end of November, she had just returned from her visit to Kawasaki in October. After greeting me in Japanese, she spoke cheerfully about her visit to Kawasaki. Wollongong and Kawasaki have established annual online exchange, and the grand winners of the Kawasaki Junior Cultural Prize (an essay and art contest open to Year 5 and 6 students in Kawasaki City) are invited to visit Wollongong – this year, Lord Mayor Brown herself was involved in the Cultural Prize. There are hopes to include sports exchange in the future and I expect that exchange between Wollongong and Kawasaki will develop even further.

To mention another distinctive feature of Wollongong, in addition to its main campus, the University of Wollongong has also established an innovation campus with many research facilities located there. Among the facilities at the innovation campus is the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS). ANCORS is committed to developing human resources in the Pacific Islands and South East Asia with knowledge in the area of maritime law and policy and maritime security. The Japan Coast Guard has dispatched Japan Coast Guard Officers to undertake doctoral studies at ANCORS. It was explained to me that amidst concerns in recent years for maritime safety surrounding Australia, ANCORS's role is growing.

With Lord Mayor Tania Brown

Exchanging views with ANCORS

● Cowra Shire

Finally, I come to Cowra. The town of Cowra can be considered the symbol of Australia's post-war reconciliation with Japan, but in fact, it doesn't have a sister city anywhere in Japan. When I visited Cowra for the first time in November last year, Mayor Paul Smith explained to me that the reason for this is that rather than just having one specific place to engage in sister-city exchange, Cowra engages in exchange with the whole of Japan. You might be wondering then why I bring up Cowra when writing about sister cities, but I believe it is not possible to discuss Japan-Australia relations without mentioning Cowra. Therefore, even though some of the following will overlap with a previous "Record of Exchange", I would like to round off this essay by touching on Cowra.

Located in central NSW, 310km to the west of Sydney, Cowra is a small town with a population of around 1,300 people. During the Second World War, there was an internment camp in Cowra, and in 1944, a breakout by Japanese prisoners of war resulted in the deaths of 234 Japanese POWs and 4 Australian soldiers. After the war,

a Japanese war cemetery was established in 1964, and later a Japanese garden was constructed, cherry trees were planted, and all variety of Japan-Australia grassroots exchange have happened in Cowra.

The people of Cowra are carefully preserving this history of war and reconciliation, and of mutual understanding and exchange between Japan and Australia in a way that is visible to all. Even now, there is an annual memorial service held on the 5th of August, the date of the POW breakout. At the Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, the Koyo (Autumn Leaves) Festival is held in May and the Sakura (Cherry Blossom) Festival is held in September, and various Japanese cultural events take place.

This type of exchange conducted over many years lies at the base of today's Japan-Australia relationship, which is so close that we call it a "Special Strategic Partnership". In recognition of the goodwill of the people of Cowra, in August this year, Cowra Shire Council was awarded a Foreign Minister's Commendation. Recently at my official residence, I conferred this award at a ceremony attended, by among others, Mayor Paul Smith, the former mayor and current chair of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, Mr Bill West, and the Member for Cootamundra, Ms Steph Cooke MP, whose state electorate covers Cowra Shire. I should also mention that Ms Cooke is co-chair of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Japan which was established in September this year (the other co-chair is Deputy President of the NSW Legislative Council, the Hon. Rod Roberts MLC). Many members of parliament participated in the inaugural meeting of the friendship group, but there was unanimous agreement that Cowra-local Ms Cooke should be a co-chair. I was also present at the inauguration, and as I thought how good it was that someone was selected who reflects the ideals of Cowra, that is of engaging with not just one town in Japan but with the entire country, I expressed my heartfelt congratulations on the establishment of the parliamentary friendship group.

Presenting the Foreign Minister's Commendation for Cowra Shire Council to Mayor Paul Smith

The Service of Respect at the Cowra War Cemeteries

Cowra's Japanese garden

Inaugural Meeting of NSW Parliamentary Friends of Japan

Travelling around these Australian towns and cities with deep connections to Japan, I realised that the Japan-Australia relationship extends beyond trade, investment and security. Decades of sister-city exchange continues to deepen mutual understanding and cooperation between our two countries.

As I said at the beginning, there are 39 sister-city relationships between Japan and the state of NSW. The reasons for establishing the individual relationships vary – beginning with initiatives towards post-war reconciliation, there are also examples of economic ties, similar environments, and city representatives eager to promote international goodwill between Japan and Australia. Regarding promoting exchange which is not limited to one particular field, for statistical purposes, the Council of Local Authorities of International Relations (CLAIR) considers a sister agreement to exist when the heads of each local government body (the mayors) have signed an agreement and the respective councils have ratified the agreement, however, there are places that are engaging in 'friendship' exchange in fields beyond specified fields.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the Japan-Australia Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The Treaty was established with the aim of broadening mutual understanding and cooperation beyond economic ties, and both countries are considering holding a range of events in the anniversary year.

Against this backdrop, wouldn't it be wonderful if the 40th sister-city relationship between Japan and NSW were realised? There have been expressions of interest from Japanese local governments in fostering international goodwill. If you live in an area of NSW which doesn't have a sister-city relationship with Japan but where interest in Japan-Australia friendship is high, please contact this consulate (japaneseconsulate@sy.mofa.go.jp) or CLAIR Sydney (mailbox@jlgc.org.au). We look forward to hearing from you.

Reference: Table of Japan-NSW sister-city relationships

Japan and NSW Sister Cities (39)

As of April 2020
SOURCE: CLAIR

Local Government - Japan	Local Government - NSW	Date of Agreement	Local Government - Japan	Local Government - NSW	Date of Agreement
Tokyo Metropolitan Government	State of New South Wales	27 October 1984	Edogawa City, Tokyo Metropolis	Central Coast Council ※6	19 April 1988
Hakodate City, Hokkaido	Lake Macquarie City Council	31 July 1992	Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture	City of Wollongong	18 May 1988
Shibetsu City, Hokkaido	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	3 July 1999	Yugawara Town, Kanagawa Pref.	Port Stephens Council	13 November 1998
Sannohe Town, Aomori Prefecture	Tamworth Regional Council	5 July 2001	Toyama City, Toyama Prefecture	Dubbo Regional Council ※7	24 August 1992
Takahata Town, Yamagata Prefecture	Singleton Council	2 October 2005	Hakusan City, Ishikawa Prefecture	Penrith City Council	10 November 1989
Izumizaki Village, Fukushima Pref.	Temora Shire Council	22 July 1989	Minami Alps City, Yamanashi Prefecture	Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council ※8	9 October 1992
Tanagura Town, Fukushima Prefecture	Lake Macquarie City Council	12 May 1994	Minokamo City, Gifu Prefecture	Dubbo Regional Council ※9	2 June 1989
Yamatsuri Town, Fukushima Pref.	Bayside Council ※1	15 May 2000	Fujieda City, Shizuoka Prefecture	Penrith City Council	3 November 1984
Okuma Town, Fukushima Prefecture	Bathurst Regional Council	25 March 1991	Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture	City of Sydney	16 September 1980
Ushiku City, Ibaraki Prefecture	Orange City Council	28 July 1990	Handa City, Aichi Prefecture	Port Macquarie Hastings Council	14 April 1990
Kusatsu Town, Gunma Prefecture	Snowy Monaro Regional Council ※2	10 July 1991	Kyotamba Town, Kyoto	Hawkesbury City Council	7 June 1988
Kanuma City, Tochigi Prefecture	Armidale Regional Council ※3	19 April 2001	Suita City, Osaka	City of Canterbury Bankstown ※10	9 March 1989
Chichibu City, Saitama Prefecture	Northern Beaches Council ※4	26 April 1996	Tadaoka Town, Osaka	Northern Beaches Council ※11	21 November 1995
Koshigaya City, Saitama Prefecture	Campbelltown City Council	11 April 1984	Miki City, Hyogo Prefecture	Federation Council ※12	11 April 1997
Toda City, Saitama Prefecture	Liverpool City Council	1 October 1992	Sanda City, Hyogo Prefecture	Blue Mountains City Council	30 August 1988
Tateyama City, Chiba Prefecture	Port Stephens Council	11 February 2000	Yamato-Takada City, Nara Pref.	Lismore City Council	7 August 1963
Kashiwa City, Chiba Prefecture	Camden Council	11 April 1997	Ube City, Yamaguchi Prefecture	City of Newcastle	21 November 1980
Chuo City, Tokyo Metropolis	Sutherland Shire Council	9 July 1991	Sasebo City, Nagasaki Prefecture	City of Coffs Harbour	6 June 1988
Taito City, Tokyo Metropolis	Northern Beaches Council ※5	14 August 1982	Yamaga City, Kumamoto Prefecture	Snowy Monaro Regional Council ※13	5 November 1975
Suginami City, Tokyo Metropolis	Willoughby City Council	11 May 1990			

Name prior to LGA amalgamation
※1 City of Rockdale
※2 Snowy River Shire
※3 Armidale Dumaresq Council
※4 Warringah Council
※5 Manly Council
※6 Gosford City Council
※7 Wellington Council
※8 Queanbeyan City Council
※9 City of Dubbo
※10 City of Bankstown
※11 Pittwater Council
※12 Corowa Shire
※13 Cooma-Monaro Shire

107 Japan-Australia sister cities across Australia of which 39 are in NSW

(Ends)