

A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney (Edition 14)
The gala dinner to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation

27 August

It's some time now since I attended the gala dinner at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra on 30 June, hosted by the Australia-Japan Society and the Australia-Japan Business Cooperation Committee to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia. Albeit belatedly, I would like to report on the event.

Canberra was a little colder than Sydney, but as soon as I entered the venue, I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the approximately 600 attendees in the magnificent hall.

As I searched for my seat among nearly 60 tables, I saw Australian federal government ministers, including Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers, Treasurer, Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Trade, and the Hon Madeleine King, Minister for Resources, as well as federal parliamentarians such as Senator the Hon Sue Lines, President of the Australian Senate, and Mr David Smith MP, Chair of the Australia-Japan Parliamentary Friendship League. Also present were former Prime Minister the Hon John Howard and opposition leaders, and I realised that this ceremony was a celebration beyond partisanship.

In addition to many leaders from both countries' business communities who have contributed to the development of Australia-Japan economic relations, Ms Natsuko Ogawa, Chair of the Australia-Japan Foundation, Mayor Paul Smith of Cowra Shire Council, and Ms Steph Cooke MP, Co-Chair of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Japan, also attended. Many people involved in Australia-Japan relations from various fields such as politics, business, cultural exchange, and community exchange were present. Although I could only speak with some of them, it was a very meaningful opportunity to once again understand the broad scope of relations between the two countries.

From the Government of Japan, in addition to the attendance of His Excellency SUZUKI Kazuhiro, Ambassador of Japan to Australia, State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao visited from Tokyo and gave a speech. Video messages from Prime Minister TAKAICHI Sanae and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese were sent to the dinner, and Foreign Minister Wong also gave a speech.



Video message from Prime Minister Albanese



Remarks by State Minister Horii

Prime Minister Takaichi in her message stated, "The Japan-Australia relations, which began with trade of wool and coal, have continued to develop through the enhancement of economic ties, and have now expanded into deeper cooperation across numerous areas, including security, as exemplified by Australia's decision to select Japan's Mogami-Class frigates. Japan and Australia, cooperating closely in every respect, have built a relationship as front runners in cooperation among like-minded countries by advancing pioneering security cooperation, reaching a level that could even be described as a 'quasi-ally'.", and "such a close relationship cannot be built through government-to-government cooperation alone. The foundation of our strong Japan-Australia relationship lies in the vibrant, multi-layered people-to-people ties that have been cultivated over many years. Today's dinner is a perfect illustration of this."



Video Message from Prime Minister Takaichi

In her remarks, Foreign Minister Wong noted that while relations between the two countries developed in the early 1970s, this was largely due to maritime trade, with Australian iron and coal helping the development of Japan's steel industry, and Toyota and Datsun gaining a foothold in Australia. However, she added, it was realised that expanding the relationship required more than trade and that there was a need to deepen friendly relations, and so it was that when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited Nara in 1973, he proposed the idea of

a treaty that would later become the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. After mentioning that Nara is the hometown of Prime Minister Takaichi and State Minister Horii, and noting that Mr NAKAGAWA Motonobu, Mayor of Nara City, was also attending the gala dinner, Foreign Minister Wong continued to explain that in 1976, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser from the Liberal Party succeeded Labor Prime Minister Whitlam and signed the treaty, which is a testament to the “enduring bipartisan support” for the bilateral relationship.

In addition to these greetings from representatives of both governments, a dynamic performance by Byron Taiko, a shakuhachi performance by Anne Norman, and a didgeridoo finale by Yoshitaka Saegusa were presented.

In between, there was a lighthearted and humorous exchange between Ms Melanie Brock, former President of the Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan, and culinary researcher Mr Adam Liaw about the influence of Japanese food on Australia's multicultural fusion cuisine. (Photo right)



After the official dinner concluded, the same venue continued to serve sake from Nara, *shochu* (a traditional distilled beverage) brewed from Australian barley, and whisky from a Japanese distillery with a long history. It was impressive to see many participants discussing their thoughts on Japan-Australia relations from various perspectives, both formal and informal. The evening offered a glimpse into the close Japan-Australia relationship, firmly underpinned by people-to-people exchanges in various fields, not just trade relations, which was the very aim of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.



With Consul-General Furuya and people from AJBCC Future Leaders and others