A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney (Edition 15)
The 63rd Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference

4 November

I recently participated in the 63rd Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference, which was held in Makuhari, Chiba Prefecture, from 4 to 6 October. In this Record of Exchange, I will report on my participation in the conference, along with the Australia-Japan Business Forum which was held as a pre-event on 2 October in Kashiwa-no-ha, also in Chiba Prefecture.

As many of you may know, the Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference has been co-hosted annually since 1963 by the Japan-Australia Business Cooperation Committee (JABCC), representing the Japanese business community, and the Australia-Japan Business Cooperation Committee (AJBCC), representing the Australian business community, alternating between Japan and Australia. This year, being Japan's turn to host, the conference was held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba, drawing nearly 700 participants from the Japanese and Australian business communities.

In addition, a forum organised by the AJBCC to discuss urban development and innovation was held in Kashiwa-no-ha two days before the joint conference. Although this was a pre-event, it attracted approximately 150 participants from both Japan and Australia.

I must admit that I had not heard of Kashiwa-no-ha until recently. I first heard the name last October, when Governor Kumagai of Chiba Prefecture who had attended the 62nd Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference in Perth last October as the representative of the next host region, stopped off in Sydney on his way back to Japan. As the governor of Chiba Prefecture, which is home to Narita International Airport, he had visited the facilities surrounding Western Sydney International (WSI) Airport, then under construction. When I mentioned to him that New South Wales (NSW) was working on a large-scale development of a vast area called the Aerotropolis, which includes not only the airport but also its surrounding areas, Governor Kumagai suggested that the urban development of Kashiwa-no-ha might serve as a useful reference.

In Bradfield, located near WSI, NSW is building the first new city in a century since Canberra. They have opened the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility (AMRF), are proceeding with land readjustment, and are constructing a metro line to connect with WSI. However, it still gives

the impression of a vast, blank canvas. In this context, I thought that the history of Kashiwa-no-ha's development—where the US Military Kashiwa Communication Site was returned in 1979, Chiba University established a farm in 1991 (later reorganised into the Center for Environment, Health and Field Sciences in 2003), the University of Tokyo opened its Kashiwa Campus in 2000, the Tsukuba Express line opened in 2005, and rapid urban development followed—could serve as a reference for the development of Bradfield.

With this in mind, I consulted Mr Christopher Brown AM, who is the Chairman of the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue which works to raise awareness and provide information about Western Sydney development. He is also a board member of the Bradfield Development Authority (BDA). Mr Brown attended the pre-event in Kashiwa-no-ha and gave a talk about the planning of Western Sydney development. During the event, he also exchanged views with other participants, and I would like to thank him for attending at his own expense.

What I found interesting through the event was that, although the opening of the Tsukuba Express was the catalyst for development, development did not proceed because of that alone; rather, the close collaboration among the government, private sector, and academia was extremely important. Specifically, in 2006, the Urban Design Center Kashiwa-no-ha (UDCK) was established with the participation of the government, private sector, and academia to take on part of the planning and coordination functions for urban development. At this centre, local stakeholders—including Chiba Prefecture, Kashiwa City, universities, private companies, residents, and NPOs—took part in formulating the International Campus Town Initiative in 2008 to practise cutting-edge, self-sustaining urban development that maximises the potential of Kashiwa-no-ha. Then, in 2014, they also clearly defined the three pillars of "Environmental Symbiosis", "Healthy Longevity" and "New Industry Creation", and they continue to collaborate and work together toward realising the initiative. A tour of the town was also arranged for the event participants, and I was inspired by the futuristic streetscape. In addition, what I thought was surprisingly important was the explanation that right next to UDCK is a bar district called “Kakedashi Yokocho”, where people exchange ideas beyond the boundaries of their daily work, leading to the birth of interesting ideas. Being contrarian, I wondered if exchanging ideas while drinking at night would just result in grumbling, but the guide explained that since the people who live and work here share a common awareness of issues, their conversations mesh easily, which impressed me greatly.



Presentation about the Urban Design Center Kashiwa-no-ha (UDCK)



Speech by Mr Christopher Brown AM, Chairman of Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

Additionally, that evening, a grand commemorative event for the 50th anniversary of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Australia and Japan was held at the Meiji Kinenkan (Meiji Memorial Hall). Hosted by the Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan, the venue was filled with excitement and attended by many people involved in Japan-Australia and New Zealand relations. As the day also happened to be the birthday of Mr Michiaki Hirose, Chairman of the Japan-Australia Joint Business Conference, the splendid evening also served as a birthday celebration.

Now, as for the Japan-Australia Joint Business Conference itself, it began with a welcome reception on the evening of the 4th.

Since the content of this conference will be introduced on the websites of JABCC and AJBCC, I will refrain from explaining it in detail here, but I would like to introduce a few interesting scenes from my perspective.

First of all, as a prelude to the conference, I was given the opportunity to brief the Japanese delegation on trends in the area of my jurisdiction. When I previously interviewed NSW State Government officials about the selling points of their state, they indicated that the Western Sydney development and advanced technology development hubs were the main points, so I focused on those aspects. Furthermore, this August, the NSW State Government released "The Sydney Plan," which outlines Sydney's development plans up to 2046. Since it emphasised the idea of proceeding with development not only around Western Sydney Airport but also in Newcastle and Wollongong, I also introduced the attractiveness of both cities as investment destinations.

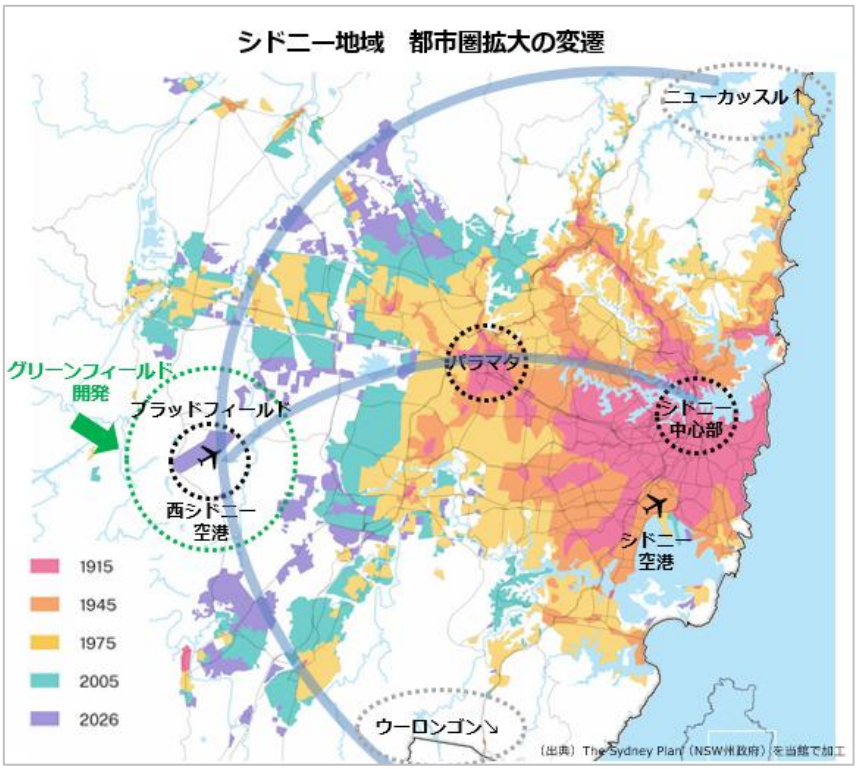


Image about urban development including a strategic land use plan, The Sydney Plan

At the welcome reception that followed, Chiba Prefecture and other organisations set up booths to promote locally produced goods. Also, Chiba-kun, the prefecture's mascot, , went around the venue and worked up a sweat to enliven the reception. In addition, Chiba Prefecture is the largest producer of peanuts in Japan, producing 80% of the domestic peanut crop. Not only the peanuts themselves, but also the peanut-salt sable biscuits I received at the reception were really delicious.

I was saddened to hear about this year’s heavy rains in Chiba. Iwould like to express my heartfelt sympathy to everyone affected by this recent heavy rain in Chiba Prefecture, and I pray for everyone's safety and the earliest possible recovery.



Chiba Prefecture’s mascot “Chiba-kun”

Regarding the following day, the 5th, I would like to touch upon the Future Leaders Program (FLP) session "Strengthening the Australia-Japan Talent Ecosystem for the Next 50 Years" conducted by next-generation leaders of the AJBCC and JABCC. The issue raised by these leaders is that, despite our bilateral relations becoming so close—with many young Japanese people interested in Australia and many young Australians interested in Japan, staying in each other's countries on working holidays, or studying about each other at universities and other institutions—surprisingly few people actually find employment involved in Japan-Australia relations after graduating from university. At our consulate as well, we recruit and select JET Programme participants every year, send them to Japan, and host welcome-back receptions for those who return after spending several years in Japan. When I ask about the situations of JET alumni at such events, not many of them are in jobs involved in Japan-Australia relations, so I felt a strong sense of empathy with the issue raised by these leaders. The leaders conducted a survey of Japanese and Australian companies and presented the compiled results. Based on those results, they emphasised that it is important to explicitly indicate positions in job postings where experience related to the partner country can be utilised; to first hone professional and technical skills and then leverage linguistic and cultural strengths; to connect participants of JET, MEXT scholarship, and New Colombo Plan programs to corporate internships and job openings; and to support career pathways that allow for easier movement back and forth between the two countries. To provide support from our side, our consulate would like to exchange opinions with members of the Japanese Society of Sydney and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sydney.



AJBCC＆JABCC Future Leaders

In the evening, a banquet was held. Dishes using fresh ingredients from various parts of Chiba Prefecture were served, and on this occasion, "Waltzing Matilda," often called Australia's second national anthem, was performed, with the attendees singing along. The lyrics of the song were

printed on the back of the menu. As many of you may know, the lyrics tell the story of a poor wanderer who steals a sheep, gets cornered by the police, and, refusing to surrender to them, leaps into a billabong to die by suicide. I had heard that this, in some aspects, expresses the spirit of the Australian pioneers—forging their own path and resisting official authority during an era when the relationship between convicts and authorities still defined society—so I thought it was a stylish touch to celebrate Australian mateship. However, I recalled being told by a British Consul when I arrived in Sydney two years ago that he was surprised that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Australians, unlike the British, strictly observed home quarantine. Therefore, I would like to add that there is also an aspect of Australians where they firmly follow social rules when necessary. At this banquet, the Choshi Hane-daiko team also took the stage to present a powerful drum performance. After their performance, Ambassador Suzuki was unexpectedly called up in front of the large drum on the stage. Handed the drumsticks, he paused for a moment and then struck the drum powerfully, sending vibrations through the venue and further enlivening the banquet.



An energetic Taiko performance by Ambassador Suzuki

On the final day, 6 October, the joint statement of the 63rd Joint Conference of the Australia-Japan and Japan-Australia Business Cooperation Committees was released by Chairman Hirose and Mr Peter Grey, President of the AJBCC. This was followed by the announcement regarding the AJBCC presidency that President Grey would step down on the following day, 7 October, and be succeeded by Ms Debra Hazelton, Chair of Export Finance Australia. I would like to express my sincere respect for President Grey's five years of service.

Following this, Chairman Hirose announced that it had been officially decided to hold the 64th Joint Conference in Sydney. Noting that there were approximately 700 participants this time, he expressed his hope that the Sydney conference next year would attract an even larger number of participants.

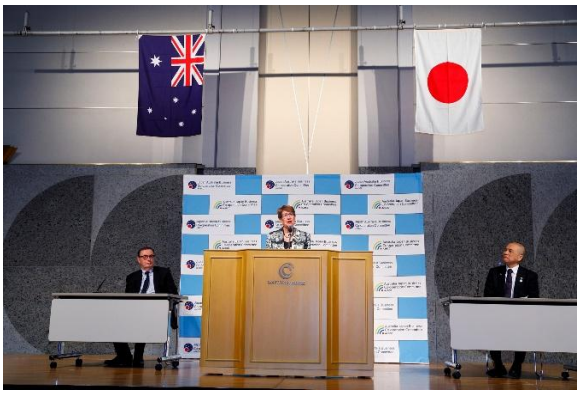
In her speech, Her Excellency the Governor of NSW referred to this year being the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and that next year will be the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement on Commerce between Australia and Japan. In addition, she mentioned that Japan is NSW’s largest export destination, and that there is no doubt that business with Japan has contributed greatly to economic growth and innovation in NSW, and by extension, in Australia. When referring to the new city being developed around the 24-hour WSI, Governor Beazley stated that Japanese business is

expected to have a major role in innovation, hi-tech industries and economic growth, and she concluded her remarks by accepting the honour for NSW to host the next Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference.

Finally, President Grey announced that the 64th Joint Conference would be held in Sydney on 17 October, 2027. At the same time, Chairman Hirose noted that since the Rugby World Cup 2027 will be held across Australia starting 1 October of that year, he hopes the excitement of rugby leading up to the conference will help increase the number of participants, resulting in an even greater attendance than this year's conference. With this, the Joint Conference for 2026 concluded.



Then AJBCC Chairman Peter Grey AM（left）and JABCC Chairman Michiaki HIROSE（right）



Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales

I sincerely hope that the participants of the Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference coming to Sydney next October will reaffirm the importance of the economic relationship between Japan and Australia, and experience the dynamism of various parts of New South Wales, including Western Sydney International Airport and its surrounding areas. I also hope that, during breaks in the conference, they will be energised by the performance of Japan's national rugby team, the Brave Blossoms, making the conference a great success.



With Ambassador Suzuki and Governor Beazley