

Ambassador's Message No.56
(Handover ceremony of Japanese company records)

29 November 2017

Dear friends,

In this message, I would like to share with you details of a ceremony that was held at my residence and co-organised by the National Archives of Australia on the 21st of November to mark the handover of pre-war Japanese company records. These records originally belonged to Japanese companies operating in Australia at the time of WWII and were subsequently stored at the National Archives of Australia until this year.



Delivering my remarks



(From left) AJF Chiar Murry McLean, Mr Flickr, Mr Katoh and myself

The records, which belonged to Japanese companies operating in Australia during World War II, were created between 1899 and 1941 and include a number of archival documents, from ledgers, shipping documents and financial statements to journals, personal records and photographs.

They were preserved and stored for the past 60 years by the National Archives of Australia, which will gift them to Japan under a memorandum of cooperation signed with the National Archive of Japan in July.

The documents – contained in 3300 archival boxes measuring more than 800 metres in length – began their journey to Japan in October this year and recently arrived at National Archives of Japan.

These records will no doubt be an invaluable snapshot of the history of business activities of Japanese enterprises in Australia. It will now be possible to obtain a broader understanding of Japanese people and their businesses in this country in the early 1900s, providing us with considerable insight into the very early stages of trade and business relations between our two nations.



Answering questions from media



With Mr Flicker and my wife Ikuko

More interestingly, however, these archival documents will go even further by providing far greater detail and understanding into the professional and personal lives of the Japanese company employees and their families, adding another dimension to the shared history between the people of Japan and Australia.

The gifting of these records to Japan is a significant step in the ever-evolving relationship between Japan and Australia. It signifies not only how far our two nations have come since World War II, but also how broad and multi-faceted our relationship has become.

In my remarks at the ceremony, I have expressed my sincerest appreciation and gratitude to Mr Flicker and his staff at the National Archives of Australia as well as the Australia Japan Foundation for the enormous task of preparing these records for shipping.



President Takeo Katoh of the National Archives of Japan participated in the ceremony, where he remarked that he had an opportunity to view the records upon their arrival in Japan. Looking at large volume of records lined up in front of him, President Katoh was struck by just how such important records had spent over 70 years in Australia and how well they had been preserved. In addition to saying how impressed he had been by the dedication shown by the NAA towards preservation of the records, he also expressed his profound gratitude to the people of Australia for their generous donation of the records.

With an expected public opening Japan's springtime next year, I'm sure the full bloom of the cherry blossoms will provide a symbolic backdrop to officially welcome the records to Japan.

(Photos below are provided by the National Archives of Australia)



Diaries:

SP1098/16

Miscellaneous records of Iida & Co
Pre-1941 Records



Fabric samples:

SP1099/247

Miscellaneous records of Yokohama Specie Bank
Pre-1941 Records



Picnic group:

SP1098/16

Miscellaneous records Iida & Co
Pre 1941 Records



Group in front of house:

SP1098/16

Miscellaneous records of Iida & Co.
Pre 1941 Records

Yours sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka
Ambassador of Japan to Australia