

## News from Under the Southern Cross - Edition 6. Official Visit to Queensland

11 March 2021

### (1) Introduction

In the 'News from Under the Southern Cross - Edition 4', I summarized my visit to the capital of Northern Territory, Darwin. In this edition, I will touch upon my official visit to Queensland that I conducted from 1<sup>st</sup> March to the 4<sup>th</sup>.

When I was assigned to serve my duty in Australia, a former ambassador to Australia, my mentor, and a person who has been still admired by many Australians advised me, 'Stay in Canberra one day a week. The rest, go around and see regional Australia. That's how you understand the vast country.'

I followed his advice and squeezed in the visit without hesitation.

### (2) Sunshine State; a long history with Japan

#### A) Major source of resources and food

Queensland (QLD) is a vast state that is 4.6 times the size of Japan with a population of 5.16 million. There is an intriguing statistics revealing the fact that, 22% of coal imports, 31% of beef imports and 69% of sugar imports to Japan comes from this single state!

A federal MP from QLD once told me, 'QLD was just an agrarian state until the Japanese came. It was Japanese companies that dug coal mines, went on developing it, and nurtured coal to be a major export industry. It's a truly prosperous achievement.' Now, QLD has strong interest in Hydrogen.



Courtesy call to The Honourable  
Premier Palaszczuk

When you come to Brisbane from Canberra or Sydney, the sun really strikes you hard and you realize why the state is recognized as the 'Sunshine State'.

## B) History

Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, which was the setting for Ryotaro Shiba's masterpiece short story 'Thursday Island Night Party', is located in the northern most part of Queensland. A land that once was a major destination for pearl picking, with Japanese divers from Wakayama prefecture and elsewhere coming in nonstop.

It was in 1897 that Japanese Government established a Consulate in Townsville, a first diplomatic mission abroad in Australia. This year marks the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. QLD also is a sister state to Saitama Prefecture and the city of Brisbane, a sister city to Kobe.



Courtesy call to His Excellency Governor Paul de Jersey

These connections helps Queenslanders enthusiasm high to learn Japanese with more than 130,000 students taking courses which is the most in all of the state.

### (3) 'Let Gold Coast shine again!'



White sandy beaches of Gold Coast

For many of you, Queensland is better understood when we say it is a state where Gold Coast and Great Barrier Reef is located.

During my trip, I went and met people from the Japanese Association and Business Chambers both in Brisbane and in Gold Coast. During the bubble era, Japanese investment was intense and was well publicized by TV celebrities and sports players spending their vacation here. We exchanged valuable notes to once again put spotlight from Japan on the Gold Coast.

With the great success in covid-19 response, SAFE Australia is a great attraction for real-estate investment and how to bring Japanese tourist and money back is not only the interest of Japanese living in Australia but for all Australians involved.

Gold Coast's endless blue sky, the white spray of splashing waves and white sandy beaches with established infrastructure is a great attraction. Once being a regular Hawaii visitor, I can assure you of my words. I could completely understand why more than 10,000 Japanese live here.

#### **(4) University visits**

During my trip, I was enthusiastic to visit universities. I visited The University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technologies and Griffith University to exchange notes on strengthening relations between Japan and Queensland.

Traditionally, universities in the US and UK have typically been rated higher without much debate. It was a great learning to see how each university was keen to develop more publicity and gather professors and students from around the globe.

As an embassy, we not only like to support more student and research exchanges but also further to this, I personally would like to participate in seminars and address speeches to enhance the relationship.



Visit to QUT

#### **(5) Cairns and Thursday Island, the next destination**

It was unfortunate that due to a cyclone that had affected the weather in Cairns, I had to cancel the planned visit there. In my next visit to Queensland, I would definitely be visiting Cairns but also to Townsville and further to Thursday Island to contemplate the past and the future of Japan-Australian relationships.

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