

## News from Under the Southern Cross - Edition 8.

### Visit to Melbourne

30 March

#### (1) On the 'Road of Death'?

You guessed it- I made another visit. In February it was Darwin and in March it was Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. And to top it all off, I'm planning a visit to Perth at the end of the month.

Fans of Japan's 'Hanshin Tigers', a baseball club which is popular in the Kansai area, might be reminded of the so-called 'Road of Death'. This is the one period of the year in summer in which the Tigers are unable to play on their home turf whilst it is used for Japan's highly popular National High School Baseball Championship.

My own home turf of Canberra has already said farewell to summer and hello to the lovely autumn sunshine. It's enough to make you want to stay home and 'lay back, kick your shoes off, close your eyes' (I'm hoping those of my generation will get the reference). How nice it would be to just relax with a few classics from Olivia Newton John and a nice Jasmine tea every once in a while.

#### (2) The vastness of Australia

Travelling does, however, allow me to admire the sheer vastness of the Australian landscape. Perhaps that's to be expected. Australia does, after all, boast a land mass on par with the United States excluding Alaska. I felt a similar sense of wonder when I visited the Midwestern cornfields, the Great Plains, the Grand Canyon, and the deserts of Nevada, whilst on my five year posting to the United States. The difference I feel is that in Australia, even in large cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, one can find themselves completely alone amongst vast farmland and wilderness just by driving twenty or thirty minutes out of the suburbs. This wondrous vastness can be felt on a daily basis.



Brown coal beds in Latrobe Valley

Australia has over twenty times the land mass of Japan with just one fifth of the population. If you calculate that roughly, the population density is around one-hundredth that of Japan. In other words, one Australian has the land mass that one-hundred Japanese people share all to themselves. It's no wonder then that it often feels to me as though there is so much space yet so few people.

### **(3) Hydrogen project commencement ceremony**

The impetus for this visit to Melbourne was an invitation to attend the commencement ceremony of the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain Project (HESC) in Victoria, a project which is being driven by a consortium consisting of Kawasaki Heavy Industries, J Power, Iwatani Sangyo, Marubeni, Sumitomo Corporation.

I visited an enormous brown coal bed and attended the commencement ceremony which was held at a coal gasification and hydrogen production facility in Latrobe Valley, located about 160 kilometers outside Melbourne. I was joined by federal Energy Minister Taylor and Veterans' Affairs Minister Chester, as well as Victorian Treasurer Pallas. The ceremony left me with a strong sense of just how great the expectations from both the federal and state governments for this project are.

In what will be an enormous, historic undertaking, hydrogen produced from brown coal is to be transported by truck to Hastings (located 75 kilometres to the south-east of Melbourne). There it will be liquefied at a temperature of minus 253 degrees, before being shipped in an innovative, world-first carrier to Kobe, Japan.

This cutting-edge project is a pioneer of our times. As the need to reduce carbon dioxide in order to address climate change intensifies, the project aims to use hydrogen as a new energy



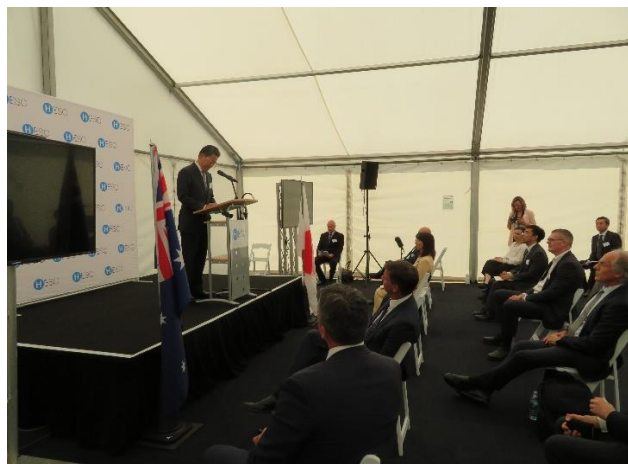
Coal gasification and hydrogen production facility



The ribbon cutting ceremony

source, utilising coal in a low-emissions manner. It also signifies the expansion of Japan and Australia's traditional complementary trading relationship into a new frontier.

After a congratulatory speech presented by Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Kajiyama via video link, I also expressed my warm congratulations ([which can be viewed here](#)). I found myself nodding in agreement when I heard the Australian side express the sentiment that 'Japan is the only country that Australia can partner with in a project that requires such advanced technology and trust'.



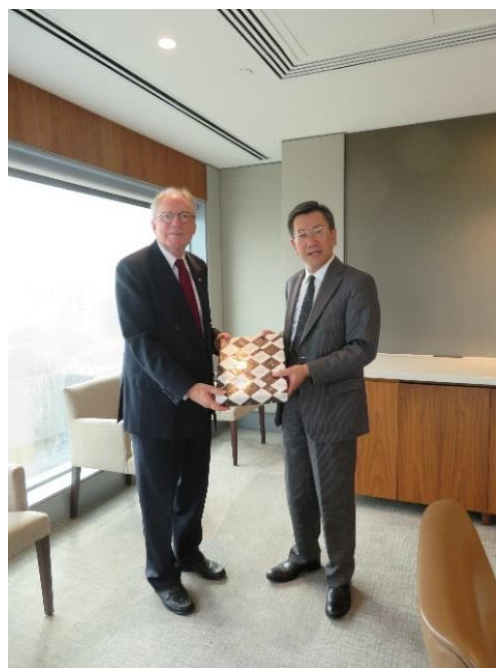
Delivering my remarks

I concluded my visit by expressing my deep hope that the project would successfully pass its test phase and move onto commercialisation, creating a new golden era for Japan-Aussie relations.

#### **(4) Meeting with Sir Rod**

I took the opportunity to travel on to Melbourne, where I exchanged candid views with Sir Roderick Eddington, who has long served as the Australian Chairman of the Australia-Japan Business Cooperation Committee.

I was particularly struck by his deep understanding of the business landscape. Having spent a successful career as the CEO of British Airways and the Chairman of JP Morgan Bank in Australia and New Zealand, he spoke persuasively and passionately about the current circumstances of the Japan-Australia relationship and his vision of its future.



With Sir Rod Eddington

We had endless topics to discuss, including; 'How could Japan's presence in Australia and Australia's presence in Japan be increased while making the most of our great government-to-government relations today?', and 'How could further exchange be encouraged between our politicians?'

### **(5) Discussions with Japanese executives**

Just as with Sydney, Melbourne too is home to many branches of major Japanese companies. For some major companies, including Toyota, Mitsubishi Cooperation and Mitsui & Co, Melbourne is also the location of their Australian headquarters.

Therefore, with the help of Consul General Shimada, with whom I have shared many ups and downs with over the years, I exhaustively exchanged opinions with over ten representatives of major Japanese companies.



With members of the Chamber of Commerce, Melbourne

Our conversation was truly diverse. We covered topics like; ‘How can we make Japanese luxury cars more appealing to Australians?’, ‘How could we make hydrogen cars commercially available?’ and ‘Could Japanese construction technology used to build residential houses and commercial buildings in Japan become more prominent in Australia?’. We also discussed topics such as ‘How can we make technology which is popular in Japan, such as reheating baths and washlets, known to Australians?’ and, ‘Could we import more fine Australian wine to Japan?’.

Having received so many valuable insights and requests from the Japanese business leaders, I am determined to do my utmost to undertake tasks with ‘all-Japanese’ teamwork between Japanese leaders in both the public and private sectors.

These discussions filled me with such excitement for the future that the weariness from my travels just evaporated away.

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