

News from under the Southern Cross - Edition 12

Visit to Western Sydney

From the 19th to 23rd of April, I went on another business trip to Sydney. It's already my third time visiting Sydney since I arrived in Canberra to take up my position at the end of last year. The purpose of this trip was to visit sites where infrastructure is being developed in Western Sydney. I headed there with a desire to see for myself the areas of business in which Japanese companies are expanding, and to provide as much support as possible from the perspective of strengthening Japan-Australia relations.

1. The far-reaching expansion of Japanese companies

For a long time, Japan-Australia trade relations have been described as "complementary." Australia exports materials such as wool, agricultural products, coal and iron ore to Japan, and Japan exports automobiles and machinery to Australia. In this way, we have complemented each other by providing the things that the other lacks. An example of this was the one of milling sites of Allied Pinnacle acquired by Nisshin Seifun Group, which I visited on the final day. I was overwhelmed by the scale of this factory, which I feel is unique to Australia.



The Milling site of Allied Pinnacle (Picton site)

At the same time, as trade and investment relations between Japan and Australia have become closer, I have begun to witness (as I will outline below) the way in which our cooperation is progressing to a whole new level.

A) The construction sector

In Parramatta, which is a major commercial suburb in Greater Western Sydney, Japanese construction firm Obayashi has been awarded a contract to construct office buildings in

Parramatta Square. Skyscrapers with the latest design and of over 50 floors, such as those found in Tokyo's most metropolitan areas (such as Otemachi and Toranomom), are being erected one after another. They were truly spectacular.



Obayashi's construction site in Parramatta

B) The housing sector

I also visited the display suites of luxury high-rise apartments built by Sekisui House, and the display homes for Daiwa House and Odakyu Railway's joint residential housing project. I was impressed by the detailed consideration given towards each living space, which Japanese design is known for, such as the installation of storage that makes effective use of space. At the same time, each living space had an impressive structure and floor plan that felt particularly Australian, such as the luxurious size of each building and the way it appeared to support a very high quality of living.



Sekisui House's housing exhibition



Daiwa House and Odakyu Railway's display homes

C) Manufacturing

I also had the opportunity to visit a Toyota parts centre and a Daikin manufacturing plant/logistics centre. What impressed me most was the precise classification and management of parts, which was almost like a library, and the thoughtful approach to management that thoroughly considered and prioritised safety.



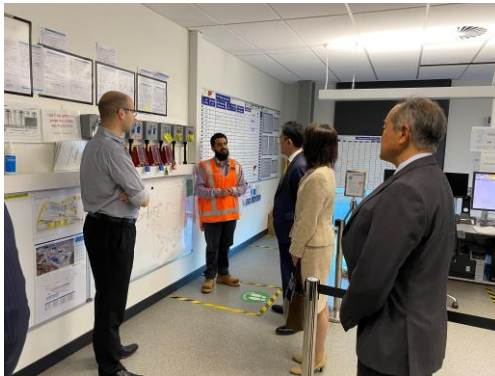
Toyota parts centre



Daikin's manufacturing plant

D) Transportation infrastructure

Whilst in Sydney, I also made sure to take a ride on Australia's first driverless railway, the Metro North West Line, which is operated by a consortium of companies including Marubeni. The station building and the trains were incredibly clean. The ride itself, which was completely unmanned and automated, was very smooth and comfortable.



Sydney Metro Trains Facility

E) Urban development

I had the opportunity to speak in depth with members of the independent administrative corporation set up by the Japanese government known as UR (Urban Renaissance Agency). UR set up an office in Sydney in April and is working on urban development in areas around Western Sydney Airport. It is hoped that their experience of administering urban development projects in Japan will be put to good use in Sydney.



Meeting with UR

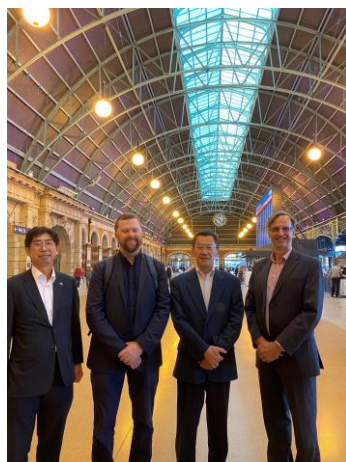
2. Strong expectations from Australia

The New South Wales government has signed Memorandums of Understanding with Japanese companies such as Hitachi, NEC, and NTT, and is working on the development of Western Sydney. For Sydney, which has grown rapidly to a large metropolitan area with a population of over 5 million, the coastline area no longer has enough space to be developed. A new airport will be built inland, in Western Sydney, with plans to build a smart city. Therefore, there are strong expectations for investment and participation by Japanese companies with financial strength, technology and experience in various fields.



The construction site of Western Sydney Airport

Not only did I visited the construction site of Western Sydney Airport, but also "Tech Central", which is about to be set up as a technology hub in the centre of Sydney. I also visited the Westmead precinct which is an area that will be developed into a hub for health, research, education and training institutions in Parramatta. At each site, Australian officials expressed their sincere anticipation and hope that more Japanese companies would become involved.



The planned Tech Central site (Central Station), and the Westmead precinct

We are entering an era in which Japanese and Australian stakeholders will work closely together in terms of urban development and infrastructure development, far beyond the “complementary trade relationship” we have long shared. In this context, I can see why some Australians sighed and asked, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if Australia had bullet trains?" when transportation between Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne became a hot topic.

3. Exchanging opinions with Former Prime Minister John Howard

As I was in Sydney, I took the opportunity to invite Mr. and Mrs. Howard, who I met with on my first visit, to dinner. They kindly accepted my invitation to a dinner at the official Residence of Consul-General Kiya.

According to some Australian political commentators, he has "not only served the longest tenure (11 years) of any Prime Minister in recent years, but he has also been the most popular." Indeed, I found him to be incredibly friendly, down to earth and easy to speak with. Speaking to him, I got a real sense of what it means to be a great Prime Minister.

Would you like to know what we spoke about?

I thought you might, but unfortunately that's classified information.



With Mr. and Mrs. Howard

4. TV interview

In order to promote "Japan", every time I go on a business trip, I try to set up an interview with local journalists. This time, I was interviewed by the Sydney Morning Herald and SBS TV (The articles can be viewed [here](#)).

5. Japan-Australia cooperation in environmental protection

During my stay in Sydney, a screening of a nature documentary movie titled "Save the Reef ~Act Now ~" was held at Broadway Palace Cinema. At the request of its producer Mr. IJIMA Hiroki, I made a brief speech at this event (which can be viewed [here](#)). The movie asked the question; how can we stop the bleaching of coral reefs due to climate change on Kudaka Island, Okinawa and the Great Barrier Reef? The movie was a masterpiece. It reminded me that there is a lot of room for Japan and Australia to cooperate when dealing with such environmental problems.

At the screening, it was a pleasant surprise to meet Mr. TASHIRO Yuzo, a former Japanese national soccer player who once played for the Kashima Antlers. When I was seconded to the Ibaraki Prefectural Police and worked in Mito, he was a striker who was hugely popular amongst the fans at Kashima Stadium. His refreshing smile really left a great impression. It was an encounter that symbolised the breadth and depth of the various kind of Japanese people who really make a difference here in Australia.



Movie screening

YAMAGAMI Shingo