

Japan and Townsville:

friends and strategic partners since 1896

Key facts

① Townsville—a major gateway to the Top End of Australia—is also one of Japan’s key trading partners and a Sister City to Japan’s Shunan and Iwaki.

② An important economic and investment partner to Australia in its own right, Shunan has a population of about 140,000. It has been a Sister City to Townsville since 1990, helping to promote two-way trade and investment, governance, security, culture, and people to people linkages.

③ Japan’s first diplomatic mission to Townsville was headed by Consul NAKAGAWA Tsunejiro and was created to support the significant number of Japanese working in the sugar cane and pearling industries, particularly on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. When Japan opened its consulate in the 1890s, there was already a large population of Japanese migrants in North Queensland. At that time, around 3,000 Japanese were living and working between Mackay and the Torres Strait.

④ By Federation in 1901 Australia had about 4000 Japanese immigrants, mostly based around Townsville where the Japanese government had established its first consulate in 1896. These immigrants worked mostly in the sugar cane and maritime industries, including turtle, trochus, trepang and pearl diving.

1



Did you know?

The first Japanese person known to have settled in Australia was a circus performer, SAKURAGAWA Rikinosuke, who migrated to Queensland in 1871. On arrival in Australia, his name was incorrectly recorded phonetically as ‘Sacaranawa Dicinoski’, a name which he adopted and used for the remainder of his life, including by establishing a family circus act called the ‘Dicinoski Troupe’. The Dicinoski family still live in Australia today.¹

Economic

- Australia and Japan held the Second Ministerial Economic Dialogue in January 2020. The dialogue offers a regular mechanism for high-level engagement on strategic economic and trade cooperation, and complements the high-level defence and security cooperation and annual leaders’ meetings.
- The dialogue also supports the strong and growing trade and investment relationship between Australia and Japan in new areas such as energy—including hydrogen—and critical minerals.



¹ <https://www.nikkeiaustralia.com/the-first-recorded-japanese-in-australia-steve-dawsons-family-story/>

Did you know?

There are 107 sister city and sister state agreements between Australia and Japan, including two with Townsville, which has sister city agreements with Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture and Shunan City, Yamaguchi Prefecture. In addition, over 650 sister schools exist between Australia and Japan. In fact, Australia is the most popular destination for Japanese school study tours and sister school exchanges².

Australia Japan Commerce Agreement



- Just 13 years after the end of World War II, Japan and Australia began working to create economic ties, and in 1957 the Australia–Japan Commerce Agreement was signed.
- This agreement provided the framework for a mutually beneficial partnership and has been the backbone of our robust economic relationship which continues to this day.
- On the back of the partnership—and in a post war period—cultural and people-to-people ties were formalised under the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. This treaty, also known the NARA Treaty, was signed in 1976.
- The treaty established a broad framework of principles to guide and enhance future bilateral relations in the political, economic, cultural and other fields. It significantly progressed the bilateral relationship, which now enjoys deep and diverse ties on government and non-

² <https://japan.embassy.gov.au/tkyo/sistercities.html>

Sister cities

Shunan City

In 1987 Tokuyama City began to consider Australia, the US, Canada and other countries as sister city partners. The initiative was in response to calls for greater internationalisation through sister city exchanges with English-speaking countries.

In 1989 Queensland's State Government introduced Townsville as a possible partner city. Talks progressed quickly and on 30 September 1990 Tokuyama City welcomed the mayor of Townsville and his delegation to Japan to sign a sister city agreement.

On 30 September that year, Japan welcomed the Mayor of Townsville and his delegation to Japan to sign a sister city agreement.

On 21 April 2003 two cities (Tokuyama and Shin-Nanyo) and two towns (Kumage and Kano) merged to form the new Shunan City, and on 10 October 2003 the mayor and his delegation visited Townsville to re-sign the sister city agreement.

Iwaki City

The first Iwaki and Townsville education visit involved a student from Iwaki who stayed in Townsville for a year studying English at James Cook University. This was the beginning of many opportunities for community groups to interact with each other in Iwaki and Townsville.

In 1991—due to trade with the Port of Onahama—the two cities signed an international sister city agreement. Since then, there have been deepening exchanges through education, culture, the arts and sport.

The Sister City Agreement was signed on 21 August 1991 providing a sound economic base for the relationship. The agreement was founded on minerals exports from Townsville to Iwaki's international port of Onahama.



The Japanese Consul to Queensland and guests, outside the former Japanese Consulate in Victoria Street, Townsville, February 1969.

Photo: Alex Trotter photo, held by City Libraries Townsville Local History

Did you know?

Japanese is the most widely studied foreign language in Australian schools and universities, and has the highest number of learners in the world per capita. Queensland has the largest number of learners of any state in Australia³

Relationship between Townsville and Japan's private sector

Business and commerce has thrived between Townsville and Japan over the decades, with two-way investment and business-to-business initiatives forming a solid and fundamental base that continues to grow.

- Energy company Origin and Kawasaki Heavy Industries are collaborating on an export project to produce 36,500 tonnes a year of green liquid hydrogen using renewable energy and sustainable water.
- Origin has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Port of Townsville to collaborate on the port's potential expansion as well as developing a liquefaction facility, new berth and associated infrastructure.
- The greater Townsville region is abundant in agriculture, and is a resources hub. Grains and pulses, processed foods, seafood, fruits and vegetables, health and functional foods are highly sought for their quality and health benefits. These commodities are being exported to Japan through the Port of Townsville.
- Defence, financial services, ICT and legal advisory services to Japan – as well as sporting events – round out a mixed and varied two-way trade.
- Many Japanese companies are located in Townsville, and the economic relationship between Japan and the region is important. Townsville is recognised as a central hub for both resources and agriculture, and exports to Japan.
- Townsville will play a key role in developing Queensland's hydrogen industry over the coming years. Japan is a major player in this industry, and the Japan–Townsville economic relationship will strengthen on the back of this.

³ *ibid.*