

## News from under the Southern Cross - Edition 41. Diplomacy restarts

29 October



The long-awaited end to the lockdown has finally arrived. From midnight on October 15, we started the process of moving towards normalisation. So I have put the pedal to the metal restarting my diplomatic activities.

### **1. First comes appearance**

Speaking of which, the thing that most concerned me during the 2 months or so of the lockdown was my hair, which was growing out of control. Looking back, I started losing my long friends from my mid-40s onwards as a result of the stress of life as a police officer. However they have luckily grown back through the painstaking use of Japan-made hair growth products and oral medication.

Thanks to the abundant sunlight in Australia at the moment, my hair just kept growing and growing. I very much resembled a defeated samurai.

In my line of work, “the conservative cut” is a well-established creed. And so I had my hair neatly trimmed by a highly skilled Japanese hairdresser living in Canberra.

## **2. Dining engagements, exchanges of opinions**

Next comes my meetings with various individuals to gather information and share views.

There’s been no end to the variety of conversations I’ve had, be they about the Quad, AUKUS, or the TPP, etc. Looking at things from my counterparts’ point of view, there’s been a lot of interest in changes within the Japanese government. I’ve been asked many times about whether there will be any change in government policy, and where its emphasis will be.

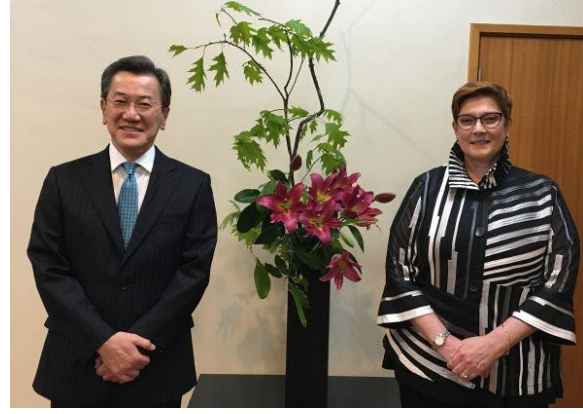
First off, I’ve been inviting close counterparts among the diplomatic corps to my Residence to have an earnest exchange of views over lunch or dinner. India, Indonesia, Vietnam, the EU, Taiwan, the UK, the US etc., the list grows ever longer. One of the strengths of face-to-face conversation is its frankness and the depth of its insights, which is completely different from the online meetings and telephone conversations that I had under lockdown, and is the best part of diplomacy.

## **3. Exchanging views with a number of ministers**

With the ever-expanding depth and breadth of Japan-Australia cooperation in the background, as soon as the lockdown was lifted I could meet with important ministers of the federal cabinet, with whom I was able to enjoy a fruitful exchange of ideas. Last week I invited Defence Minister the Hon. Peter Dutton MP and Foreign Minister the Hon. Senator Marise Payne respectively to my Residence. While appreciating both ministers’ deep insights into various issues, I was able to frankly share opinions with them on a variety of interests to both Japan and Australia.



Meeting with Defence Minister Dutton on 18 October



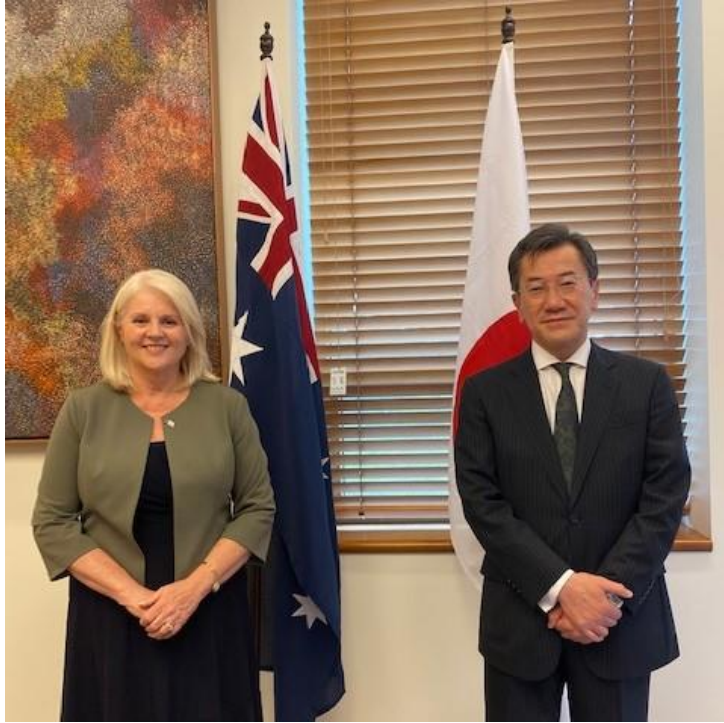
Meeting with Foreign Minister Payne on 20 October

Both Japan and Australia have brought together our respective defence and foreign ministers to conduct 2+2 dialogues on a number of occasions. I was able to directly appreciate the strong degree of trust built up between Minister MOTEGI, Minister KISHI, Foreign Minister Payne and Defence Minister Dutton through their everyday interactions with one another.



The 9th Japan-Australia Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations (2+2)

In addition, I was fortunate to be able to pay an office visit to Home Affairs Minister the Hon. Karen Andrews MP despite her extraordinarily busy schedule. We look forward to even further developments in cooperation between Japan and Australia on various fronts including cyber and counter-terrorism measures.



Meeting with Home Affairs Minister Andrews on 19 October

#### **4. The Residence culinary staff**

One of the major pillars of support for all of this diplomatic activity are the Residence culinary staff. They are often envied by diplomatic staff from other foreign missions. Simply put, they don't just serve meals, but help to promote Japan through its unique cuisine.

As introduced in Edition 2 of 'News from under the Southern Cross', this team, centered around Chef Ogata who came to us from Cerulean Tokyu Hotel in Shibuya (Tokyo), has been pulling out all the stops in support of my activities. It is greatly encouraging to see our new addition, namely Yuriko, our Chief of Wait Staff, and Daphne to the Residence team of Chef Ogata and long-serving staff member Maream. The team is certainly working more actively than ever! Without their work, I would not be able to fulfil my role as an ambassador.



Their activity runs the show at the Residence  
(Left to Right: Maream, Yuriko, Daphne)

The tempura counter at the Residence is getting a good workout, especially given it hasn't been used for a number of years. "Use everything at your disposal to promote Japan" – I'm doing my best with this as my motto.



### **5. Continued restrictions**

Restrictions resulting from COVID-19 still continue, however, I went on a business trip to Sydney over the weekend, the first such trip in a long time. Since I moved across state lines, I will have no choice but to undergo quarantine within my Residence for the rest of October following my return to Canberra.

I will continue to promote the Japan-Australia relationship with every fibre of my being amid the restrictions imposed upon me.

YAMAGAMI Shingo