

News From Under the Southern Cross (Edition 45): Business Trip to Melbourne

7 December

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I visited Sydney two weeks in a row, last week and the week before. This week I made a trip to Melbourne. Let me report to you about this trip.



Melbourne's Flinders Street Station

1. **Governor Dessau's kind hospitality**

During this trip, I had the privilege to receive truly heart-warming hospitality from the Governor of the State of Victoria, the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, and her husband, which I was deeply touched and humbled by. I was treated to lunch in exclusive company at the sumptuous Government House, which boasts 145 years of history with its 180 rooms. Furthermore, I shared the Governor's company at the opening ceremony and dinner for a special exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, and was given the honour to lodge overnight at Government House.

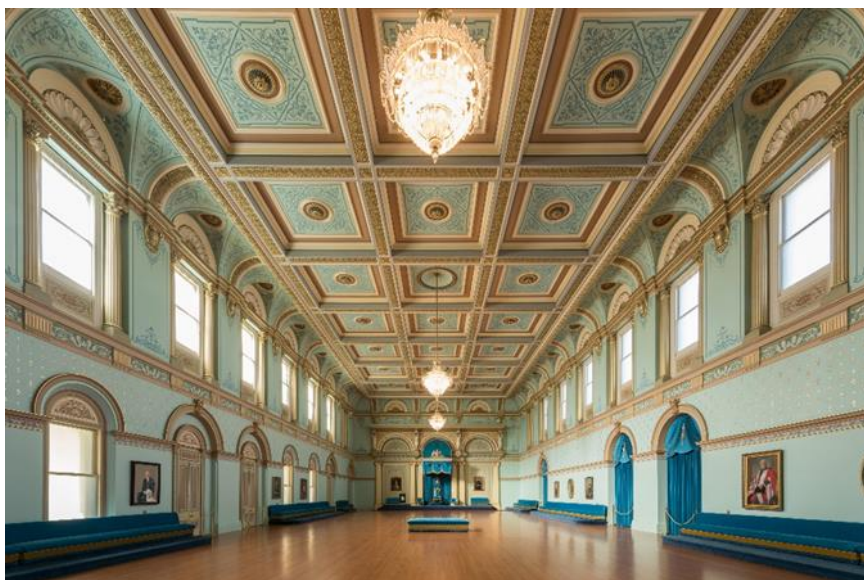
I learned that Governor Dessau is a great fan of Japan, and that she has even enjoyed the ski fields of Niseko and Hakuba and strolling on Nakasendo, not to mention Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima. The Governor of Aichi Prefecture, the sister prefecture of Victoria, and others

have also previously stayed at Government House. I certainly had my fill of Victorian-style “*omotenashi*” (hospitality).

Both Governor Dessau and her husband Mr Anthony Howard AM QC are mainstays of the legal world, having previously served as judges. We were able to share views replete with intellectual stimulation about a number of pressing issues, including the importance of “the rule of law” in the Indo-Pacific region.



Sharing the company of Governor Dessau and her husband



Resplendent Government House, which boasts 145 years of history and 180 rooms

(Source: Office of the Governor of Victoria)

2. The devotion of the Gandels

One of the main purposes of my business trip was to attend and make a speech at the opening ceremony of a special exhibition of the traditional Japanese art '*kai-arwase*' underway at the National Gallery of Victoria. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Gandels, who themselves are highly regarded within Australia's philanthropy circles, and particularly Dr Pauline Gandel AO (who was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in 2014) in gathering together a range of traditional Japanese art work, an exhibition of '*kai-arwase*', beloved in Japan since the Heian era (8th Century to 12th Century in Japanese history), has opened in Melbourne.

Not only was the range of the collection overwhelming, so was the exquisite beauty of the picturesque designs depicted on the shells laid with gold leaf, and which took as their motif the flora of Australia. These designs show traditional Japanese art can thus be passed on to current and future generations. I was deeply touched to see the 'good old traditions' of Japan being so tirelessly carried on here in Australia (my speech can be read [here](#)).



Shaking hands with the Gandels



The exhibition of *kai-arwase*

3. The affinity for Japan in Melbourne

Since taking up my post in Australia, I have already travelled to Sydney seven times, but this was only my second visit to Melbourne. This is because Melbourne had been in an unprecedented six-month long lockdown. I could not visit the city despite my strong wish to do so.

Yet, there are so many figures in Melbourne, including Governor Dessau, the Gandels, and many others from the political and business worlds who care for and have great affection for Japan. I am truly heartened by them. While cherishing the relations built by our predecessors, I was made keenly aware of the importance of maintaining and strengthening these ties which transcend the generations.

4. Meetings with the opinion leaders in the media

Another thing that made me happy about my trip was the abundance of opportunities to meet and share views at length with major journalists based in Melbourne. Through arrangements made by Consul-General Shimada, I was able to have a frank exchange of opinions on a range of issues with Mr Greg Sheridan AO of the Australian newspaper, and the headline commentator for Sky News Australia, Ms Peta Credlin AO and her husband Mr Brian Loughnane AO. These are what makes Melbourne a uniquely exciting city.



With Ms Peta Credlin, Mr Brian Loughnane, and Consul-General and Mrs Shimada

I also had an interview with The Age newspaper, to reach out to a wider audience (the article can be read [here](#)).

5. “I’ll visit frequently!”

Melbourne is a beautiful city: abundant space and greenery, boulevards where you can feel the history, tasteful architecture, quality cuisine. All these explain why Melbourne frequently appears among the top of ‘liveability rankings’ of the world’s major cities.

Next year the development of a hydrogen project is anticipated in which Japanese corporations are heavily involved. My heart is also pounding in anticipation of the performance by Japanese tennis players in the 2022 Australian Open. It is not that I only want to come back again to Melbourne. Melbourne is a city that I want to visit frequently!

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