

## News From Under the Southern Cross (Edition 65):

### Western Australia Revisited

6 April 2022

It's been exactly a year since my last visit to Perth on the Western Australian coast, facing towards the Indian Ocean. As I described in my previous report ('News From Under the Southern Cross Edition 9), the state capital, Perth, is what I would call the "ever-beautiful city". During the week of 21 March, I was again able to pay a visit to Perth bathed in sunshine, and so this is my report about that trip.

#### 1. The Border is finally open

The reason it took me a year to be able to visit Perth again was because the state border had been closed for the entire time as a result of the COVID pandemic. Western Australia has been praised for the successful manner in which it was able to suppress its COVID numbers compared with the states on the eastern seaboard. It is said that the main reason for this success lay in the manner WA thoroughly curtailed the movement of people.

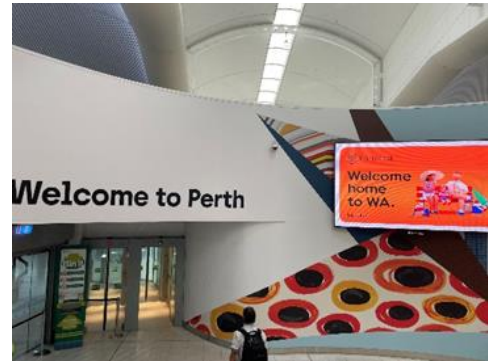
In truth, I had planned to visit the city of Broome in the far north of Western Australia at the beginning of March. However at that time the state border still hadn't re-opened, and so I had to call it off. So finally I was able to cross the border into WA. At the beginning of my speech at a Perth-based think-tank, I said "Thank you for finally letting me in! (to Western Australia)", which caused the venue to burst into laughter.

The response of the audience made me aware that there were West Australians themselves who had changed their minds about the border closure, thinking "perhaps we should finally open it up".

Australia is a vast country. From the eastern cities of Sydney and Brisbane, you need a good 4 and a half hours to fly to such far-off destinations as Perth. Hence I completely sympathised with the federal parliamentarians from Western Australia who have to endure so much flying backwards and forwards between cities, given the lack of any direct flights between Canberra and Perth.



The scenery of the City of Perth (in front of the Supreme Court of Western Australia)

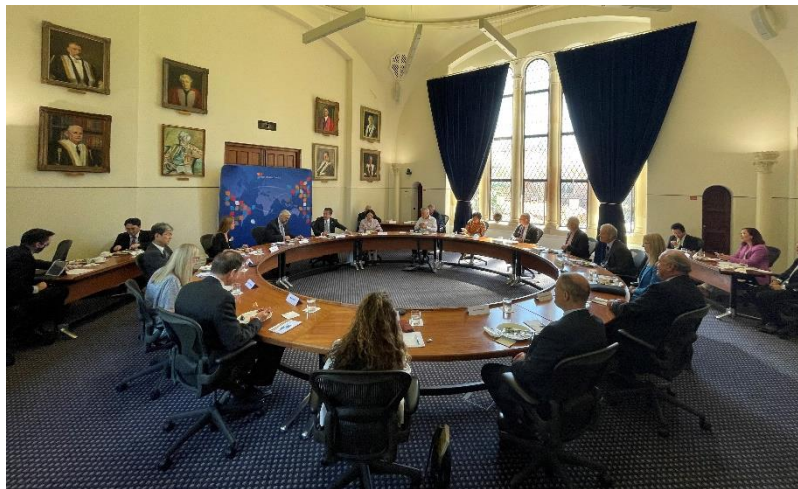


Arriving at Perth Airport for the first time in a year City of Perth

## 2. My speech to the Perth USAsia Centre

Continuing on from last year, I was again asked by Professor Gordon Flake, Director of the Perth USAsia Centre to give a speech at their annual Japan Symposium. The theme of this year's Symposium was Japan-Australia security cooperation. I, together with Deputy Chief of Army Major General Natasha Fox, gave keynote addresses. Afterwards, I joined former Australian Ambassador to Japan the Hon. Richard Court AC and others in a panel discussion (a copy of my speech can be read [here](#)).

Both Major General Fox and I emphasised the importance of the signing of the Reciprocal Access Agreement in January this year. Furthermore, since the Symposium was held in Western Australia with its huge land mass, as expected, the possibility for further space cooperation was also raised.



Upper Left: The campus at the University of Western Australia, where the Perth USAAsia Centre is located

Upper Right: The panel discussion at the Japan Symposium

Bottom: Sharing views with stakeholders

### 3. Re-appraising economic ties with Japan

Another thing that I emphasised in my speeches in Perth was the importance of the economic relationship between Japan and Australia. When it comes to China, Western Australia has been subject to unreasonable economic coercion against their products, such as wine, wheat, barley, and lobster. This development alone appears to have led to a reaffirmation of the importance of the relationship of mutual trust Western Australia shares with Japanese corporations – corporations that have engaged with Australia not for short-term profit, but for long-term commitment. The launch event for the Australia-Japan Business Council (WA) at Government House, which I attended, marked the high point of that reaffirmation.

For its part, Australia shares a very close relationship with Japan not only in trade but also investment. Indeed, in 2020 Japan became the largest foreign investor in Australia in terms of volume of investment. We also share a belief in the promising investment to be made in such sectors as hydrogen and rare earths.





From R to L: Governor His Excellency the Hon. Kim Beazley AC,  
Australia-Japan Business Council (WA) Chair Richard Sandover, the author,  
Consul-General for Perth SUZUKI  
(Photo: Government House of Western Australia)

On that note, I would like to introduce to my readers the Yanchep Development Project led by the Tokyu Group on the outskirts of Perth. I went on an inspection tour of the railway facilities, housing development and large-scale cattle farming operations making use of a broad stretch of land at Yanchep. It enabled me to clearly see the latent potential for further cooperation between Japan and Western Australia in the future.

I was also able to sample some delicious udon noodles made from West Australian flour at the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre (AEGIC) in Perth. They are putting effort into ensuring that the udon noodles have both the colour, taste and texture enjoyed by Japanese consumers. I will feel closer to Western Australia every time I enjoy a bowl of udon noodles in the future.



The wide-open spaces of Yanchep farm



Sampling udon noodles (from a tweet by AEGIC)

4. A strong desire to promote business and tourism

A further point that left a strong impression on me was the dynamism shown by the Western Australian Government. At the reception dinner hosted by Western Australian Deputy Premier the Hon. Roger Cook MLA, which was attended by a wide variety of Australian dignitaries including former federal Foreign Minister the Hon. Julie Bishop and former federal Defence Minister the Hon. David Johnston, together with locally-based executives from Japanese corporations, a selection of the finest products from Western Australia including prawns, octopus, and beef, were served together with exquisite local wines. The strong desire of those present to promote the export of these food products to Japan and to invite tourists from Japan to visit Western Australia certainly pervaded the event.

And on that note, I also heard strong advocacy for the early resumption of direct flights between Tokyo and Perth.

So as Japan and Australia head towards the normalcy of “living with COVID”, this business trip to Perth served to raise my expectations for further developments in the relationship between Japan and Western Australia.



Margaret River Wagyu steak  
served at the reception dinner



In conversation with  
Western Australia Deputy Premier Cook

YAMAGAMI Shingo