

Speech

Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo,
Ambassador of Japan to Australia
On the Occasion of the 40th anniversary of Adelaide-Himeji ties
19 April 2022

Good afternoon, everybody, Lord Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate the relationship between Adelaide and Himeji.

I had the privilege of receiving a tour of the beautiful Himeji City from Mayor KIYOMOTO just prior to being posted to Australia.

Having visited Adelaide on several occasions, I must say these two highly liveable, vibrant cities make a wonderful pair.

I've heard Adelaide described as 'a twenty minute City', with just about anywhere within a twenty minute reach.

I believe the same can be said for Himeji, although you may need a bit more time to stop and try delicacies like Himeji *oden* stew, octopus and conger eel.

With a magnificent church around every corner, I also hear that Adelaide is known as the City of Churches.

Incidentally, Hyogo Prefecture, in which Himeji is located, is regarded as the Prefecture of Castles, with over one thousand castle remains scattered throughout the region.

Both therefore are a delight for architecture buffs.

But the romantic backdrop of ancient buildings should not fool us; these two Cities are also superbly forward-looking.

Adelaide, the first city in the world where women gained equal political rights, is now also an advocate of innovation as the centre of Australia's growing space industry.

And Himeji, home to Japan's first registered UNESCO world heritage site, Himeji Castle, also has a lively manufacturing sector complementary to South Australia's.

In the forty years of Adelaide-Himeji ties, there have been some wonderful stories.

I must admit I did have a little laugh when I heard that, back when this beautiful garden was first created, dozens of fish sent as a gift from Himeji were picked off by Aussie birds.

As you may have heard, in my own garden at my Official Residence in Canberra, I have something of a 'magpie problem'.

Besides this beautiful garden we stand in today, I also enjoyed the story of one of the lesser known gifts from Himeji to Adelaide.

It was a souvenir brought here on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of sister city ties by the sixty Himeji officials who travelled to Adelaide.

They gifted the City a *Shachihoko*, difficult Japanese, which is an enormous roof sculpture in the form of a Japanese mythical creature with the head of a tiger and the body of a carp.

Such intricate sculptures have adorned the edges of castle roofs in Japan for centuries.

Believed to have the power to cause rain, they were installed in the hope of warding off fires.

At the time this gift was given, Australia was experiencing record drought.

After all the rain Australia has had lately, I'd understand if you'd like to send it back.

In all seriousness, I have no doubt that the goodwill fostered through four decades of Adelaide-Himeji ties has done much for the overall Australia-Japan relationship.

I know that for those who went on the dozens of exchange programs facilitated by the two cities it has been life-changing.

In the pages of the Blackwood High School newsletter for example, both Adelaide and Himeji students write fondly of their exchange experiences, what they learnt about the differences in school systems, the kindness of their host families, and how their world view was broadened forever.

While the pandemic threw a spanner into these fabulous initiatives, it brings me great joy to see our countries reopening to each other's students in recent months.

I sincerely hope that the next forty years of the Adelaide-Himeji relationship will bring even stronger people-to-people ties, not only through education and cultural exchange but also through trade and investment.

And along with that, more interesting stories to tell at the 80th, or 100th anniversary celebration!

Thank you!