

News From Under the Southern Cross (Edition 70):

Sister City Ties (Adelaide - Himeji)

2 May 2022

One of the indicators of the depth of Japan-Australia exchange is our sister city relationships. An incredible 107 sister city and friendship city relationships (covering 101 Japanese cities and towns and 6 prefectures) have been established between our two nations. Today, I would like to start by discussing these important ties.

1. Adelaide-Himeji

There are a great number of these relationships. The city I now call home, Canberra, has a sister city relationship with Nara. Sydney has one with Nagoya, Melbourne with Osaka and Brisbane with Kobe.

The reason for my visit to Adelaide this time was that its sister city relationship with Himeji City had reached its 40th anniversary and I was invited to attend the ceremony to celebrate it.

(To hear about my previous visit, please see [News From Under the Southern Cross \(Edition 15\)](#).)



Presenting my speech at the Ceremony

With the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Sandy Verschoor (4th from left)

2. Nostalgic for the "White Heron Castle"

Actually, I have a special connection with Himeji City. During my time serving as the Director-General of the Economic Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I was invited by a Japanese local newspaper, the *Kobe Shimbun*, to deliver an address in Himeji City. During my visit, I also had the opportunity to meet with Dr KIYOMOTO Hideyasu, Mayor of Himeji City.

Another reason that I feel particularly connected with Himeji is because a Japanese woman, who worked incredibly hard for me as my secretary during my time at the Japanese Embassy in London, is today a resident of Himeji City. In addition, another extremely capable colleague of mine who worked for me during my time at the Economic Affairs Bureau was seconded to a school in Himeji, Suruga Gakuen, as the head of the institution, and was doing an outstanding job at the time of my visit.

At the commemoration ceremony, hearing Mayor KIYOMOTO speak virtually and seeing a video of the beautiful outline of Himeji Castle sparkling in the sun revived with clarity all of the wonderful memories of my visit there.

(My speech can be found [here](#).)



Himeji Castle surrounded by cherry blossoms (Himeji City website)



Attendees listen to the message from Mayor KIYOMOTO

The horizons of the Japan-Australia relationship are broadening day by day with renewed trade and investment relations as well as increased security cooperation. But the basic foundation upon which it stands is people-to-people ties. Which is why the significance of 40 years of people-to-people links through the Adelaide-Himeji relationship cannot be overstated.

3. The healing powers of a Japanese garden

Having travelled all the way to Adelaide I couldn't leave without paying a visit to the Japanese garden gifted to Adelaide by Himeji. Adelaide is sometimes referred to as a '20 minute city', with just about anywhere you need to go within a 20-minute reach. Even within such a relaxed city, this incredibly beautiful garden seems to slow time down to an exceptionally leisurely pace.



A monument to Himeji in the centre of Adelaide

According to Lord Mayor Verschoor, who kindly gave us a tour, the garden is free for anyone to visit and it is even occasionally used as a venue for weddings. I really got a sense of the high quality of living in Adelaide, which has been constantly ranked as one of the world's most liveable cities.



The Japanese garden which is meticulously taken care of

4. Exchanging views with Premier Malinauskas

In April the South Australian state election was held and won by a landslide by the new Premier Peter Malinauskas. And so, making full use of this opportunity to visit Adelaide, I met and exchanged views with the new Premier.

It was an engaging and fruitful discussion which began with topics such as the geopolitical changes underway within the international community and the importance of the basic values our nations share. We also discussed the establishment of the Adelaide Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and how to strengthen our economic and tourism ties in light of the news that Japan Airlines will begin providing crew training in Adelaide. I truly felt we saw eye to eye.

What left the greatest impression on me, however, was the Premier's natural communication skills and radiant charisma which seemed to defy his relatively young age of 41. I look eagerly forward to having him visit Japan sometime soon.



With Premier Malinauskas (centre-right) and
SA Minister for Trade and Investment, Hon. Nick Champion MP (left)

5. Dinner with Her Excellency Governor Adamson

I was delighted to be invited to a dinner at Government House by an old acquaintance, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Frances Adamson, who was sworn in as the Governor of South Australia in October 2021.

I attended this dinner at the venerable Government House with the Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne, Mr SHIMADA, along with the Honorary Consul-General Mr Adam Wynn and their wives. In her long diplomatic career, Her Excellency has held senior positions such as Australia's representative to Taiwan, Ambassador to China and Secretary of DFAT, and her husband is a former British diplomat. This certainly made for a lively discussion and an exciting and enjoyable dinner.

Above all, I was honoured to be treated to one of the finest shiraz wines from South Australia's Barossa Valley, the kind which would make any Australian gasp with delight. This was a heartwarming gesture from Her Excellency, who of course is fully versed in all of the subtleties of diplomacy.

So thank you for the delightful evening Your Excellency! I'd love to return the favour next time at my Official Residence.



With Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC (4th from the left)

YAMAGAMI Shingo