

Speech

Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo,

Ambassador of Japan to Australia

On the Occasion of

the Official Kōyō Mayoral Reception

4 May 2022

Councillor Bill West, Mayor of Cowra

The Honourable Michael McCormack MP, Federal Member for Riverina

Dr Geoff Gallop AC, Orator and former Premier of Western Australia

Mr Bob Griffiths, Chairman, Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre

Mr Mark Baillie, Chairman, United States Studies Centre

Mr SHONO Keiji, Director of the Japan Foundation, Sydney

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Friends,

Good evening

Well, hello again.

This is my sixth visit to Cowra since arriving in Australia as the Ambassador of Japan.

This year alone, I have been here three times!

You must think that I love Cowra that much and yes, I DO love coming back to Cowra each and every time.

I am seriously thinking of lobbying the Japanese Government to build a second residence for me right here in Cowra!

Every time Kaoru and I return to Cowra, we know that the beautiful, tranquil Japanese garden awaits us.

With the change of each season, we are able to enjoy the garden in all its seasonal glory as if we are back in Japan.

Since ancient times, the people of Japan have admired and celebrated the characteristics of each season, particularly autumn and spring.

So I am pleased to see Cowra – the spiritual home of Japan-Australia relations – celebrate autumn and spring with the Koyo Matsuri and Sakura Matsuri.

Koyo Matsuri coincides with the Japanese national holiday of Children's Day and I am told many local school kids will attend the festival and enjoy what Japanese culture has to offer.

I attended last month's Cowra Festival of International Understanding and I was asked to judge a window display competition.

I was thrilled to see a number of entries by kids who incorporated Japanese elements in their designs.

This shows that through learning about Japanese people, culture and language, Japan is embedded in the hearts of Cowra's younger generation.

Exposing young students to Japanese culture will ensure that the mutual understanding and respect as well as the friendship between Japan and Australia will ensure the legacy of Cowra will continue with younger generations.

For that, I offer my deepest respect and gratitude to the teachers and community of Cowra.

As international border restrictions ease, I hope many Japanese tourists return and visit this beautiful part of Australia.

I often say to new staff at the Embassy, 'Do not talk about diplomacy without visiting Cowra first'.

Cowra's history plays an important part in the wonderful relations Japan and Australia enjoy today.

And together with this history, the efforts and contributions of the Cowra community in honouring this legacy need to be widely shared.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce Mr Mark Baillie, Chairman of the United States Studies Centre, and his wife, Robyn, who travelled four hours from Sydney to be here for today's special event.

Mark's parents lived in Cowra and he kindly showed me a photo of his parents meeting my predecessor, Ambassador Okawara Yoshio during his visit to Cowra in the late 1970s.

He was raised in Cowra and his father, Mr John Baillie, was one of the founders of the Japanese Garden.

I have long wanted to introduce Mark and Robyn to my Cowra friends.

I have also brought two of my staff with me today; Mr Furuki from our Embassy's Cultural and Information team and my chef, Mr Ogata.

Some of you may recognise Mr Furuki by name from his email communications but he has only visited Cowra once briefly before.

And I brought along Chef Ogata as he absolutely loves Cowra Lamb!

He has tasted lamb from around Australia, yet he swears by Cowra Lamb.

Chef Ogata is a trained French chef and is very keen on trying locally sourced produce to incorporate into his cooking.

He has already made roast lamb using the iconic Aussie food, Vegemite together with Japanese rice malt to marinate the lamb.

He also used the leaves of the native Mountain Pepper plant in his sauce.

Doesn't it sound scrumptious?

I must invite you all to my residence one day to try this wonderful creation by Chef Ogata!

I am truly delighted to be here again for the second Koyo Matsuri and I look forward to enjoying this wonderful event with my Cowra friends.

I wish all the success for this year's Koyo Matsuri!

Thank you.

END