

Remarks by HE Ambassador YAMAGAMI Shingo
on the occasion of the Cairns Japan Bon Dance Festival
Cairns, Queensland – Saturday 13 August 2022

Councillor Bob Manning, Mayor of Cairns
Mr Taku Sakaguchi, President of the Japanese Society of Cairns
Organisers of the Cairns Japan Bon Dance Festival
Ladies and gentlemen, and more importantly, boys and girls

Good afternoon

マニング市長、阪ロケアンズ日本人会会長をはじめ、盆踊り大会に
携わる関係者の皆様、ご来場の皆様、

こんにちは。

It is a pleasure and an honour to be the first Japanese ambassador
to attend this event.

And it is so wonderful to see the centuries-old Japanese festival of
Obon take root right here in Cairns.

This festival is held in Japan during the summer month of August, so
the timing is perfect to hold Obon right here in balmy, tropical Cairns.

You definitely could not hold this festival in cold, wintery Canberra!

There are only a few places in Australia that play an integral part in
promoting mutual understanding between our two countries, and
Cairns is definitely one of them.

Japanese people love a tourist destination with the freshest produce
and culinary culture, and a rich history and heritage.

World-class nature and stunning coastlines are also a huge drawcard.

So it's no wonder that this beautiful part of Australia has been a top tourist destination for Japanese for many years.

And I should know! This is my third visit to Cairns.

Before the pandemic, more than 110,000 tourists from Japan visited Cairns.

And more than 20% of Japanese tourists to Australia were choosing to stay in Cairns for their holidays.

Over the decades, the Japanese community has become a well-established part of the wider community here in Cairns.

Many have gone on to work in tourism, hospitality, retail, education and even running their own local business, like Taku Sakaguchi and his lovely wife who provide the local community with traditional Japanese massage therapy.

And as thousands of Japanese have chosen Cairns as their home, as of last year, the most widely spoken language at home other than English here in Cairns was Japanese.

The wider Cairns community has, in turn, embraced their Japanese neighbours, with the growing popularity of this festival reflecting the true talents and spirit of the Japanese community.

When the COVID-19 situation in Japan eases, it will be Japan's turn to warmly welcome you with open arms.

While it is great to see Aussies enjoy Japan's famous powder snow, we would love to see you visit during summer and show off your bon

dance skills!

In the meantime, enjoy the taste of Japan this festival has to offer, particularly with all the Japanese festival food available tonight.

Thank you for having me and I look forward to seeing you all do the bon dance.

それでは皆様心ゆくまで、お祭りをお楽しみください。