

## News From Under the Southern Cross (Edition 91):

### Spring is in Full Swing

29 September 2022

After a long, cold and wet winter, spring is in full swing in Canberra. To celebrate the arrival of the long-awaited spring season, I hosted a large reception at my official residence, which was a great success. This is my report of the event.



Spring Reception at my official residence

#### 1. Spring Reception

Japanese diplomatic missions around the world always hold a reception on the occasion of the birthday of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Japan. Many of them also hold receptions or dinners on Self-Defense Forces Day.

In addition to these regular events, the Embassy of Japan in Australia held a reception last year that brought together Australians with close ties to Japan. That event was very well received. So this year, I thought it would be a great idea to make use of both the magnificent Japanese garden at my official residence in

Canberra and the blooming cherry blossoms by organising a garden party called the 'Spring Reception' and inviting a wide range of people involved in Japan-Australia relations.

## 2. The foundation is people-to-people links

Having spent nearly 40 years on the frontline of diplomacy, I have come to realise that it is a simple axiom that relations between countries are ultimately built on the connections between people.

The Japan-Australia relationship is no different. We must value these friends of Japan. As such, I called upon a wide range of Aussies with close ties to Japan to deepen this friendship at an event on a spring evening. These included Australian Government officials who have worked at the Australian Embassy in Mita, Tokyo, former Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants, MEXT Scholarship scholars, former Ship for World Youth participants, scholars of the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan, and Japanese language teachers from the Australian National University and schools across the ACT.



Guest speakers: Mr Alf Moufarrige AO OAM (L) and Ms Anna Parker (R)



Video message from Sakura Queen, Ms YUHARA Sakura

The event was a great success, with a total attendance of more than 200 guests. The party grew livelier as the night went on, and for more than five hours we mingled while admiring the cherry blossoms.



### 3. Guest appearance by an Iron Chef!

Two special guests who are acquaintances of mine, kindly attended this reception all the way from Japan. One of them was Mr FUKUDA Nobuhiko, Managing Executive Officer and Executive Chef of Tokyu Hotels. He is a master of French cuisine in Japan and a mentor to Chef OGATA, my residence chef.



Chef OGATA Sadayuki (L) from my residence and Executive Chef FUKUDA Nobuhiko (R)



He generously made time in his busy schedule to come from the Cerulean Tower Tokyu Hotel in Shibuya to Canberra for this event. Wearing his chef's whites and Disciples Escoffier scarf, he had the radiating aura of a heroic figure. Guests excitedly formed long queues when he began serving beef steak from Yanchep Farm near Perth, Western Australia. In the blink of an eye, the steaks went like hot cakes.



Beef steaks from Yanchep Farm



Bacon and potato quiche



Freshly fried chicken karaage



Freshly cooked gyoza



Rice flour crepes



Matcha-flavoured vanilla slice

As host, of course, I only enjoyed the aroma of the beef steaks sizzling on the grill. I will have my chance next time.

#### 4. Guest appearance by a world-class magician!

Another special guest was magician, Mr MAEDA Tomohiro. He is a nobleman of the magic world who has taken the Japanese TV world by storm for many years, and is very popular amongst Japanese people. He kindly came from Japan to Canberra.



Magic show by Mr MAEDA Tomohiro

A number of magic tricks unfolded from his beautiful fingertips. One after the other, the master magician drew cheers from the audience as he performed his magic, like when he re-connected four torn playing cards in the hand of an audience member, and when he pulled a ring off the finger of another audience member only for it to reappear on a key case in his back pocket. Everyone in the audience was ecstatic.

Seizing the opportunity of this world-famous magician's visit, we travelled to Cowra the following day where the canola flowers were in full bloom. Mr MAEDA performed at the Sakura Matsuri held in the famous Cowra Japanese Garden. He performed his magic on the grass under a blue sky in front of Aussie men and women of all ages. It made a vivid impression on the audience.

[Read my speech in Cowra [here](#)]





MAEDA Tomohiro's magic show at the Sakura Matsuri held in the Cowra Japanese Garden

##### 5. A wave of entertainment

The entertainment at my official residence in Canberra didn't end there with the aforementioned performances.

There was also the WABORI performance, a collaboration of the Japanese kimono with Indigenous Australian design, which captivated audiences at Japanaroo in Sydney; a shamisen demonstration and workshop by Ms TADANO Noriko; a tea ceremony experience by Urasenke; and music performance by Japanese-Australian singer, Ms Kay Hughson who performed both Japanese and Australian national anthems and a number of hits by Olivia Newton-John, TAKEUCHI Mariya, and other golden oldies. The entertainment continued on like one wave after the next.



WABORI performance



Ms TADANO Noriko's shamisen demonstration and workshop



Tea ceremony experience by Urasenke



Performance by singer, Kay Hughson

As a gathering of Aussies who know Japan well, I hope they were able to look back fondly on their experiences of living in Japan and once again enjoy the soft power Japan prides itself on.

#### 6. Opening the door to Japan

The timing of the reception was spot on. Just the day before, Prime Minister KISHIDA announced travel restrictions to Japan would be lifted.

When I mentioned this in my speech, there was a huge cheer from everyone. [You can read my speech [here](#)].

The border will open in time for Japan's autumn season and winter ski season. Before COVID-19, the number of tourists from Australia had risen sharply to about 610,000 a year. Aussies were the highest spending tourists to Japan, dropping a whopping \$2,400 per person with each visit!



Kyoto's Kiyomizu-dera in autumn



The snowfields of Hakuba

We eagerly await the day when Aussies return to not only Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, but also Nakasendo, Niseko, Hakuba, Nozawa Onsen, Shiga Kogen, and many other places. I am sure they will be exclaiming ‘wow!’ a lot when they come in contact with all things Japanese.

7. ‘Falling cherry blossoms, those remaining are destined to fall as well’

A year has passed since the last cherry blossom season. This famous haiku by Buddhist monk, RYOKAN always comes to mind at this time of year when the cherry blossoms come around again.

Life will eventually come to an end. How can we make the most of the life we have been given and make it fulfilling?



Cherry blossoms in the garden of my official residence

As I admired the cherry blossom petals dancing in the wind as they fell into the pond at my official residence, I vowed to do my part in taking the Japan-Australia relationship to a higher level in my role here in Australia.



YAMAGAMI Shingo