

Australian-Japan Young Political Leaders Exchange Program Report of the Twentieth Delegation to Japan



Delegation Members

Ms Amanda Rishworth MP, Delegation Leader
Federal Member for Kingston

Mr Stuart Robert MP
Shadow Minister for Defence, Science, Technology and Personnel
Federal Member for Fadden

Mr Stephen Jones MP
Federal Member for Throsby

Senator Michaelia Cash
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women and Immigration
Senator for Western Australia

Ms Natalie Hutchins MLA
Member for Keilor, Parliament of Victoria

Accompanied by Ms Deb Lewis, Director, Australian Political Exchange Council

Introduction

The Twentieth delegation to Japan, hosted by Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), travelled from the 5th to the 10th of March. The program organised by JCIE gave the delegation the opportunity to meet with a wide variety of politicians, senior bureaucrats, academics and businessmen including senior members from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Democratic Party of Japan

(DPJ), and the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs. In addition to the meetings held in Tokyo, the Australian Delegation travelled to the Hyogo Prefecture and was warmly welcomed by the Governor. The Delegation was humbled by the presentation of the “Key to the Hyogo Prefecture” by Governor of the Hyogo Prefecture. As the majority of the Australian Delegation had not previously visited Japan, the many and varied meetings allowed members to gain a significant understanding of the domestic issues facing Japan, as well as providing a deeper insight into Japan’s foreign policy. Of particular focus was the close relationship between Australia and Japan and the direction for this relationship in the future. In addition the Australian Delegation gained a greater historic and cultural understanding of Japan with visits to a museum, the Diet, and a number of religions temples, as well as partaking in some karaoke.

The Australian Delegation was warmly welcomed to Japan by Mr Yamamoto, Chair of JCIE and was accompanied to all our meetings by JCIE staff. In particular Mr Meju and Ms Fujita from JCIE were of great assistance to the Australian Delegation, providing background information and logistical assistance. It must be noted that the Australian Delegation was in Japan at the time of the horrendous Earthquake and Tsunami that hit the North-east coast of Japan on March 11. The Delegation was deeply shocked and sadden to hear of the significant devastation and loss of life as a result of this terrible natural disaster and offered it’s condolences to Japan and its people. In addition Australian Delegation was greatly indebted to the team at JCIE, staff at the Australian Embassy and the staff at the Australian Political Exchange Council for their assistance immediately after the earthquake.

Overall the program put together by JCIE was extremely interesting, informative and enjoyable. The program was run in a very professional way. The Australian Delegation would like to thank all of those who gave up their time to brief and meet with the Twentieth Australian Delegation to Japan. The visit to Japan reinforced to the Australian Delegates the strong relationship between Japan and Australia, a relationship not just built on a strong trading relationship but a bond based on shared democratic values, trust and mutual respect.

Summary of Meetings and Discussions

Experience Tokyo - Sunday March 6th 2011

On the first day of our visit to Japan the Australian delegation visited a number of iconic sites around Tokyo. The Australian Delegation visit to the Fukagawa Edo Museum provided a historic perspective of Japan during the Edo period.



The Australian Delegation then visited the Asakusa area and gathered with local residents who were worshipping at the Sensoji Temple. In addition the Australian Delegation visited the Meiji Jingu Shrine which was dedicated to Emperor and Empress Meiji, Japan's first sovereign following the demise of the samurai class. The Delegation was also able to visit the Harajuku area, a more modern part of Tokyo catering to young Japanese people. These visits provided the Australian Delegation with a snapshot of the different parts of Tokyo and a historic and cultural overview of Japan.



Future Challenges for Japan - Monday March 7th 2011



Program Briefing by Mr Yamamoto - Founder and President of JCIE

Mr Yamamoto provided the Australian Delegation an overview of the activities of JCIE. JCIE has focused on fostering international relationships between Japan and the US, as well as other countries such as Australia for 41 years. Mr Yamamoto stressed the importance that non-government organisation play in providing a unique perspective distinct from politicians and Government bureaucracy. Mr Yamamoto indicated that independent think-tanks are particularly important in an era where the media is more focused on commercial pressures rather than deep discussion and deliberation on important national and international issues.

Prospects for Japanese Foreign Policy in the Asia pacific Region Briefing by Hitoshi Tanaka – Senior Fellow JCIE

Mr Tanaka's briefing provided the Australian Delegation with an overview of Japan's current foreign policy and the challenges facing Japan's foreign policy into the future. The discussion provided Delegates with an update on the resignation of the

Foreign Minister which had occurred that morning. Mr Tanaka provided the Australian Delegation with a useful insight into the role that both the politicians and bureaucracy play in shaping Japan's foreign policy and how this relationship has changed since the election of the DPJ Government. Mr Tanaka discussed with the Delegation the East Asian Summit and stressed the importance of a multi-layered regional architecture in the Asia Pacific, including the existence of tri-lateral and bi-lateral relationships.

Changes in the Social Status and Roles of Women

Briefing by Hideko Katsumata – Managing Director and Executive Secretary, JCIE

Ms Katsumata briefed the delegation on the role of women in Japan's workforce. The Australian Delegation was informed that retaining more women in the workforce will be extremely important in light of Japan's aging population. Encouraging more women to stay in the workforce will be a challenge for Japan as 60% of women currently leave the workforce after marriage or after having a child. Maternity leave is an option in Japan if a woman is paying national insurance however that has not been enough to encourage women to return to the workforce. Ms Katsumata suggested that one of the reasons women did not return to work was the lack of availability of child care services or nursery schools. In subsequent meetings Mr Mimura also raised with the delegation the importance of policy that will encourage women to re enter the workforce.

Ms Katsumata also presented some interesting information on Women in leadership in Japan. The Delegation learnt that while the Japanese Government had set a target of 30% of women in leadership positions by 2020, the only area that this target was being met was in appointments to the national advisory councils and in the recruits at university graduate level to the national public service. In terms of women politicians, 11% of women had been elected to the House of Representatives at the last election and 18% of women had been elected to the House of Councillors.

Japan-Australia Relationship - Full of Potential Based on a Solid Foundation

Briefing with Koji Tomita – Deputy Director-General Asian and Oceania Affairs

Mr Tomita briefed the delegation on his perspective of the relationship between Australia and Japan. Mr Tomita indicated he thought the relationship was very strong and that the relationship could be deepened and widened. Mr Tomita indicated he saw the deepening of the relationship through the successful negotiation of a free trade agreement between Australia and Japan. In terms of widening, Mr Tomita noted that there are many things that Australian and Japan can cooperate on in the region. There was general discussion on a range of issues including the opportunity for more education exchange between the two countries, the challenge of reducing CO2 emissions in light of the lack of agreement at Copenhagen, the rise of China and East Asian summit.

Welcome Reception

Hosted by Ambassador Murray McLean OAM, Australian Embassy

The Australian Delegation was warmly welcomed by the staff at the Australian Embassy. As the Diet was currently in session the Australian Delegation was joined by approximately 30 Members of Parliament including the Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Banri Kaieda, as well individuals from business and the university sector. To celebrate International Women's day the group was welcomed by Ambassador Murray McLean but also Makiko Kikuta, Parliamentary Vice-minister for Foreign Affairs. The Welcome Reception provided the delegates an opportunity to connect with members of the Diet from a range of political parties and compare being a member of parliament in Japan and Australia. It also gave those gathered an opportunity to discuss a range of topics including defence capabilities of the two countries, campaigning and campaign finance, women in politics, role of political parties and our respective electorates.

Current State of Politics in Japan - Tuesday 8th of March



Breakfast Meeting with Yasuhisa Shiozaki Member of the House of Representatives (LDP)

Mr Shiozaki was elected to the Diet in 1993 and recently resigned from a House of Councillors position to be elected into the House of Representatives. Mr Shiozaki provided the Australian delegation with an overview of current state of play of politics in Japan. As a member of the LDP since 1993 his party has been both in government and opposition since that time. Mr Shiozaki provided an overview of the two major political parties in Japan, the LDP and DPJ. Although he indicated that the two parties were not based on any substantial differing ideology, in the public's perception there were some differences between the two parties. Mr Shiozaki suggested that in the public's perception the LDP was considered "old" while the DPJ was considered "new". Another distinction in the public's perception was that DPJ was fighting against the Government bureaucracy while the LDP was too close to the bureaucracy. The Australian Delegation discussed with Mr Shiozaki the economic challenges confronting Japan including the need to stimulate growth and the large

public debt. He indicated that both parties agreed that part of the answer to stimulating the economy was to “open up Japan” but the Australian delegation noted that the meaning of this was difficult to define.

The Socio-Economic Challenges in Japan

Briefing by Mr Glen S. Fukushima, Chairman and Director of Airbus Japan

Mr Fukushima’s briefing providing a unique perspective to the Australian Delegation, as he had studied and worked in both Japan and the US. Mr Fukushima provided an overview of the economic challenges facing Japan and expressed his desire for Japan to open itself to the world. Mr Fukushima suggested that “opening up” Japan could address a number of challenges facing the country. Firstly Mr Fukushima suggested that the challenge of the aging population and labour shortages could be addressed by a significant increase in immigration. Secondly he believed that Japan needed to attract more foreign direct investment. Mr Fukushima saw that language was a significant barrier for Japan to participate in the globalise business world where English was the dominant language. The impact that inflexible labour laws was having on youth unemployment was discussed, as well as lack of encouragement for Japanese students to travel overseas to study. When it came to international experience Mr Fukushima suggested that while other countries viewed this as a valuable attribute when employing young people, this was not the case in Japan.

Reference: The Japan Times, 8th of April “Reverse Japan’s Insularity” written by Glen S Fukushima

Japanese Politics and the Role of Media

Meeting with Kenichi Miyata, Member of The Institute of Journalism and Senior Writer for The Asahi Shimbun.

Mr Miyata briefed the Australian Delegation on the role of media in Japanese society and the role that the media plays in Japanese politics. Mr Miyata outlined the ownership and editorial arrangements that existed at the newspaper he worked for, The Asahi Shimbun. Mr Miyata discussed the challenges for newspapers in a digital age and 24 hour news cycle, and outlined some of the ways that The Asahi Shimbun was adapting to meet those challenges. In terms of politics, Mr Miyata believed that the media in Japan often assumes the role of the opposition parties especially when the opposition parties believed to be ineffectual. The Australian delegation discussed with Mr Miyata some of the challenges facing Japan including the large amount of public debt and growing welfare burden, the aging population, immigration and trade liberalisation.

A Japanese Business Perspective

Round table hosted by Nippon Keidanren and representatives from All Nippon Airways, Toyota, IBM and Hatachi

Nippon Keidanren is the peak business association representing many of the major manufacturing and other large businesses in Japan. During a roundtable discussion with the Australian delegates, representatives from both Nippon Keidanren and

representatives from their member organisations provided an overview of Japan's business interests. During the meeting it was identified that international competitiveness was the number one priority for the businesses that Nippon Keidanren represented. Nippon Keidanren's members did not support protectionist policies. The representative all indicated support for the completion of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement. Nippon Keidanren was also supportive of an increase in immigration in order to meet the need for skilled labour. Action on climate change was also discussed where businesses present indicated their opposition to any compulsory emissions trading scheme. Nippon Keidanren indicated they were opposed because business in Japan had already done significant work in reducing their emissions. The Nippon Keidanren brought to the Australian Delegation's attention to the Keidanren Voluntary Action Plan on the Environment. Potential emerging markets for Japanese companies were also discussed including Russia, China and Korea. Despite the political tension between Russian and Japan in respect to the northern territories, Nippon Keidanren indicated that Japanese companies continued to have a good business relationship with their counterparts in Russia.

The Political Relationship Between Australia and Japan Reunion with the Diet Members of the 2006 Japanese Delegation to Australia

The Australian Delegation met with a bi-partisan group of members of the Diet who had travelled to Australia in 2006. The Japanese Delegation members expressed fond memories of their travels to Australia and informed the Australian Delegation on how they used their knowledge when they returned to Japan. The Australian Delegation discussed a range of issues with the Diet members including the rise of China, the potential of an Australia- Japan bilateral free trade agreement as well as the likelihood of a Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement. It became clear that reducing Japanese trade protection on agriculture was a difficult issue for individual Members of Parliament if they represented large agricultural areas. The Australian Delegation noted that opposition did not seem to be dependant on party affiliation.

Dinner Meeting with Diet members of the DPJ's Japan –Australia Parliamentarian Friendship League.

Meeting with the Japan Australia Parliamentarian Friendship league provided the Australian Delegation with the opportunity to discuss a range of issues with Government members of the Diet. Discussions included the political challenges that the DPJ government was facing at the current time including the blocking of the Budget by the opposition. The Australian Delegation learnt that while the DPJ had won government in 2009, they subsequently lost control of the House of Councillors at the next elections. The impact of not having a majority in both Houses of Parliament was discussed from both the Japanese perspective and Australian perspective. During the meeting there was free flowing conversation on the similarities and difference between the two countries on the role of a member of parliament and challenges facing both of our countries.

Enhancing the Political Relationship between Australia and Japan - Wednesday March 9th 2011

Breakfast meeting with the Diet Members of the LDP Chaired by Ichiro Aisawa, Chairman of the Diet Affairs Committee

During this meeting the members of the LDP discussed with the Australian Delegation some of the challenges that their party has faced moving from the party of government to becoming an opposition party. While in 2009 the LDP lost the majority of seats in the House of Representatives, the more recent election result for the House of Councillors has given the combined opposition parties the majority of seats in the upper house. Mr Aisawa informed the Australian Delegation about the different strategies that the LDP was considering to use as an opposition party including blocking the budget in the House of Councillors. There was also general discussion at the meeting on the need for opposition political parties to redefine themselves and the challenge faced by opposition parties in getting their message across to the electors. The LDP members present saw it as priority to find good candidates to run at the next election and had started an application process. LDP members present at the meeting believed that the two most important issues facing Japan was the aging population and the country's public debt.

Enhancing the Business Relationship Between Australia and Japan Meeting with Akio Mimura- Representative Director and Chairman Nippon Steel Corporation chairman, Chairman of the Australia – Japan business co-operation committee.

Mr Mimura provided the Australian delegation with an overview of the issues facing a modern Japan from his perspective. Mr Mimura was concerned with the environmental regulation that was being imposed onto business. Japan's Prime Minister has set a target to reduce the country's Co2 emission by 25% of 1990 levels by 2020. Mr Mimura believed that this target was unrealistic and did not recognise the steps that business had already taken to reduce their emissions. This was consistent with the views expressed by Nippon Keidanren. In addition Mr Mimura expressed concern about the economic settings in Japan. Mr Mimura indicated that corporate tax was set at 40 % which he believed was detrimental not only for Japanese business but also made it more difficult to attract direct foreign investment. Mr Mimura indicated that the combination of the environmental regulation and the difficult economic settings would drive Japanese business off shore. Mr Mimura also discussed with the Delegation the lack of young Japanese students choosing to study abroad. Although 20 % of employees recruited by Nippon Steel have had international experience this is not the norm for other companies. Mr Mimura identified one deterrent for Japanese students to study overseas was that many companies recruit employees from 2nd and 3rd university student. Therefore there is no incentive for young people to go overseas.

Energy Security in Japan

Meeting with Keiji Tachibana, Sustainability Advisor for Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)

The Australian Delegation discussed with Mr Tachibana the energy sector's perspective on reducing Japan's CO2 emissions. Mr Tachibana highlighted as other business had that Japan was already extremely energy efficiency compared with other nations. The Australian Delegation was informed that TEPCO was committed to a low carbon future and had devised a strategic plan to maximise the introduction of the best available low carbon technologies. Mr Tachibana also saw an opportunity for Japan to be at the cutting edge of the development of new low carbon technologies and an opportunity for Japanese companies to commercialise these technologies. While Tachibana indicated that TEPCO did not disagree with the target set by the Japanese Government of cutting 25% of CO2 emissions, the company disagreed with the timeframe for implementation. Mr Tachibana indicated that he thought would be more appropriate reach the target by 2030 rather than 2020. General discussion occurred around Japan's nuclear power industry. The Australian Delegation was informed that there are currently 54 plants in operation and 3 under construction. The Delegation also discussed with Mr Tachibana the general corporate structure of Japanese electricity companies.

Visit to the Diet



The Australian delegation was given an opportunity to visit the Diet building. This visit allowed the Australian Delegation to gain a better understanding of the practical workings of the Diet. In particular the Australian Delegation noted the public role that Secretary General has. The Australian delegation also gained a clearer understanding of the role that the Emperor has in the formalities of Parliament including the opening of the Diet. In addition we discussed the role and operation of the Parliamentary committees.



Meeting with Mr Yutaka Banno, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

The Australian delegation felt very privileged to meet with the Secretary of State for Foreign of Affairs. During the meeting Mr Banno reinforced close relationship between Australia and Japan and indicated a desire for this relationship to continue to grow.

The Future of the Asia Pacific Region

Dinner Meeting hosted by Shinchi Iida, Director of the Oceania Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Australian Delegation met with a range of senior bureaucrats from the Japanese Department of Foreign Affairs. The attendees at dinner were involved in the Asia Pacific region. The discussion at the dinner meeting covered a number of issues including the challenges and opportunities that exist in the Asia Pacific Region in the areas of trade, defence and regional security.

Beyond Tokyo, the Hyogo Prefecture - Thursday March 10th

The Australian Delegation departed from Tokyo on a Shinkansen for Kobe in the Hyogo Prefecture. There is a close connection between Australia and the Hyogo Prefecture as Hyogo is a sister state with Western Australia and Kobe is sister city to Brisbane.



Welcome by the Governor Toshizo Ido of the Hyogo Prefecture

The Australian delegation was warmly welcomed by Governor Ido. Governor Ido provided a brief overview of the Hyogo Prefecture, highlighting the impact that the earthquake had on the city Kobe 16 years ago. Governor Ido emphasised the effort that had gone into rebuilding the city. Governor Ido offered his condolences to Australians who had been affected by the floods in Queensland and Victoria earlier in the year. Governor Ido also outlined the strong trade relationship between the Hyogo prefecture and Western Australia which is celebrating its 30th anniversary of the sister relationship this year.

The Australian Delegation was humbled to be welcome to the Hyogo Prefecture with the presentation of a beautiful book and “key” to the Hyogo prefecture.

The Aging population – A Local Perspective for the Hyogo Prefecture Meeting with Mr Yoshinori Masugi, Advisor to the Director of Policy and Planning Coordination, Health and Welfare department.

The Australian Delegation met with Mr Masugi to discuss a number of initiatives that the Hyogo prefecture has put in place to meet the needs of the Prefecture’s aging population. This includes programs designed to enhance health and improve the lifestyles of older residents. Programs include health checkups, meal delivery services and physical exercise programs. In addition Mr Masugi indicated that it has been the trend for Japanese people to care for the elderly within families however this is becoming more unrealistic as the elderly have a greater life expectancy. As a result the Hyogo prefecture has established a long term care insurance system to provide nursing care through the social insurance system. The services offers a range of services from home visits to assisted living facility services. Mr Masugi also indicated that the Hyogo Prefecture was committed to increasing its birth rate and one strategy that has been implemented is to identify and introduce single men and

women at social events in the hope that they marry and have children at an earlier age.

Reconstructing after Destruction

Visit to the Disaster Reduction Renovation Institution

The Australian Delegation visited the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution in Kobe. This building was jointly funded by the Japanese Government and the Hyogo Prefecture in response to the Kobe Earthquake. The building has a number of purposes including serving as a memorial, a museum, a place for training in disaster management, conducting research on disaster reduction and is the headquarters for disaster response. During the visit Australian Delegation gained insight into the scale of the Kobe earthquake and the destruction that occurred as a result. The Australian Delegation was able to see some of the important innovation that has emerged.

Education for the Future

Meeting at the Hyogo Prefectural International High with Principal Takaki Toru and staff

The Australian Delegation was pleased to visit the Hyogo Prefectural International High School and held a wide ranging discussion with the Principal Mr Toru and other school officials. Topics included the benefit of exchange programs between Australian and Japanese schools to both the students and school. There was also a round table discussion on the importance of languages and status and role of teachers in Japan.

Kyoto - A Historical Perspective of Japan - Friday March 11th

The Australian Delegation received a comprehensive briefing on how both the Shinto religion and the Buddhist religion had influenced Japan. The Australian Delegation toured two important temples in Kyoto, the Kinkaku-ji temple and the Taizo- in temple.



The Impact of Earthquake and Tsunami on the 11th of March

During our return on the Shinkansen to Tokyo from Kyoto a massive earthquake hit in the north-east coast of Japan. The Delegation first became aware of the earthquake when they felt the Shinkansen shake and stop. A subsequent announcement was made but the utter devastation in the north of the country was not understood fully until the Australian Delegation started to receive news via the internet. During the Australian Delegation's final 24 hours in Japan, it became clear the horrific human toll of this natural disaster. This event was devastating for the country of Japan and the Australian Delegation has offered its deepest sympathies to all those who were and are affected.

Conclusion

The 20th Delegation to Japan as part of the Young Political Exchange Program provided participants with a deeper understanding of the issues facing Japan and the current political landscape. It also highlighted to opportunities for Japan for the future. The visit reinforced the strong relationship between Australia and Japan and the importance of this relationship was universally accepted with all those we met. The earthquake and tsunami that hit the coast on the 11th of March will no doubt change the country forever. The Australian Delegation offers its sincere condolences to the Japanese people. The Australian Delegation observed while in Japan that the Japanese people are strong and resilient and while the path to recovery may be long, the Australian Delegation is in no doubt that Japan will recover but will not forget the sadness caused by this natural disaster.