

THE 53RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the AUSTRALIA JAPAN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc

- Friday 28th April 2017 -

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past year has been a period of transformation of AJSV on so many levels. The journey continues this year, as we strive to further the Society's role in fostering the strong relationship between Australia and Japan.

It is a real privilege to serve as President of the AJSV, and I am very grateful for the dedication of the Committee of Management and Volunteer Groups, and the AJSV Administration team for the exemplary way in which you have all contributed and promoted the cause of our Society. Thank you all for your efforts and commitment.

I would also like to acknowledge the strong association the AJSV enjoys with the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Melbourne (JCCI), and the Japanese Society of Melbourne (JSM). The three organisations have flourished in partnership over such a long time, and the AJSV is indeed fortunate to share this spirit of mutual assistance and co-operation.

On behalf of the AJSV members, our sincere thanks to the Consul General of Japan in Melbourne, Ms Keiko Haneda (who has recently left Melbourne for another posting), and the Governor of Victoria, The Honourable Ms Linda Dessau, for their continuing patronage of our Society, and active collaboration with AJSV.

Before highlighting AJSV activities over the course of the past year, I would like to touch on a few broader developments that demonstrate the maturing relationship between Australia and Japan.

The co-operation between Australia and Japan on significant regional policy matters over the past year has left no doubt about the mutual commitment to the alliance and the values we share. The Prime Ministers of both countries have reinforced the importance of the relationship on many occasions.

Trade and investment activity remains strong, with promising signs of renewed growth in key sectors. The buzz about the forthcoming Tokyo Summer Olympics in 2020 is building, and the boom in Australian tourism to Japan continues. At the same time, educational exchange programs are expanding, as is the popularity in Australia of Japanese modern culture.

These developments – that cover a wide spectrum from diplomatic ties, economic growth, education, as well as enthusiasm for social and cultural exchange – speak to the purpose of AJSV and our programs and activities. We aim to help Japanese and Australian people understand and appreciate each other's cultures across a wide range of activities. The importance of the Australia-Japan relationship, and the benefits and sheer enjoyment that come from this relationship, are what drives the activities of AJSV and the commitment of our members throughout Victoria.

The AJSV is run by a community of tireless volunteers drawn from our membership: a dedicated group of engaging and talented people. Each has their own story to tell about why they love Japan and Australia, and why they enjoy their involvement in AJSV. Both individually and as a group their enthusiasm for the AJSV cause is contagious, and they personify the real value of the qualities and understanding promoted by AJSV.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS of the PAST YEAR

While you may all have been following, and indeed participated in AJSV activities over the course of the past year, I would like to reflect on how the AJSV is evolving in step with the maturing relationship between Australia and Japan. For example, the focus of Business Briefing sessions is increasingly about Australian and Japanese enterprises learning from each other and collaborating, as well as more conventional discussion about business opportunities and risk. The focus of Educational programs is more about exchange between the cultures, as well as learning language. Social events and programs celebrate the benefits of interaction between both cultures, and the depth of understanding that comes through such exchange.

The Annual Spring Gala Dinner was once again a resounding success, and it remains a prestigious highlight of the Australia-Japan calendar of events in Victoria. The event was held at the Crown Towers River Room in September 2016, hosted jointly with the JCCI and JSM, and attracted some 250 guests, including key senior figures involved in the Australia-Japan relationship. Special guests included the Ambassador of Japan to Australia, His Excellency Mr Sumio Kusaka, the Consul General of Japan in Melbourne Ms Keiko Haneda, and as guest speaker the Hon Andrew Robb AO, who provided many interesting ‘behind the scenes’ anecdotes and insights in the world of trade negotiations. The Spotlight Performance by the *Ichimadin* troupe provided some lively folk music and entertainment from Okinawa. It was a great occasion for corporate and individual members of AJSV, JCCI and JSM to mingle and celebrate.

I would like to congratulate Vice President Robyn Heraud and everyone at AJSV involved in staging the event. They should be suitably proud of the results of their efforts and contribution. It was planned and delivered as a professional, high calibre, and grand occasion.

I would also like to thank our major Sponsors – Devondale Murray Goulburn, Ernst & Young, Marubeni, Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Swisse Wellness, and Toyota. Their generous support and collaboration with the AJSV team make events such as the Gala Dinner possible, and add considerable weight to our efforts to promote active engagement in the Australia-Japan relationship.

The AJSV Corporate Events and Business Briefings were well attended by our members and guests from the business community and government over the past year. The year included the Annual Conference of the Australia-Japan Business Co-operation Committee (AJBCC) which was held in Melbourne in October 2016. The high attendance numbers at the AJBCC Conference, and at the many Australia-Japan themed Business Briefings staged by the AJSV and other organisations are testament to the resurging interest in bilateral trade and investment.

One AJSV highlight was the session held in March 2017 on “Women in Australia-Japan Business: Success Stories and Practical Tips”, which the AJSV co-hosted with Corrs Chambers Westgarth. The event was attended by Australian and Japanese women and men, all senior representatives drawn from business, government and academia. The discussion covered important themes for women in relation to the evolving business relationship between Australia and Japan, and provided insights garnered from the experience of participants. Topics included Stereotypes versus the Emerging Reality, Limitations on Career Advancement (the “Bamboo Ceiling”), and Work/Life Balance for Women in Japan. For Australian women pursuing career opportunities involving Japan, many helpful Practical Tips emerged from the discussion. A note of thanks to Celeste Koravos for her significant contribution and the rest of the team involved in organising and staging such a successful event.

There are more “*Business Conversations*” planned for the year ahead, and other AJSV initiatives in the pipeline to be held in association with member companies, government agencies, and affiliated organisations.

The Golf Day held last September attracted a large contingent of executives and budding champions to the splendid surrounds of the Yarra Yarra Golf Club. It was a marvellous day for golf enthusiasts among the AJSV and JCCI membership, ranging from eager beginners to semi-professionals, to mingle and enjoy the company and the great facilities of YYGC. Our thanks again to YYGC for their generous support of this annual event, and to Mizuno for their sponsorship and impressive prizes for the winners. We look forward to continuing this fine tradition in September 2017.

There was a great turn-out for *Konshinkai* informal networking sessions throughout the year. They provided a relaxed atmosphere for Japanese and Australians to network, discuss topics of mutual interest, and improve understanding of current events, business prospects, and enjoy the fun, food and drink. Highlights included the popular sake appreciation evenings, Izakaya nights, and the special out-door Barefoot Bounenkai to celebrate the end of 2016. The *Shaberoukai* sessions continued to provide an informal venue for Japanese and Australians from all walks of life to improve their language skills. A special note of thanks to Deb Vega and all the Volunteers that help make both programs regular “go-to” events month after month.

The AJSV Student Exchange Scholarship Program drew many applicants in 2016. The program led by Ms Hiroko Yasunori provides financial support through scholarships to young Australian students who would otherwise not be able to participate in exchange programs with Japanese schools. In 2016 the Scholarships were awarded to students from Shelford Girls’ Grammar School and Copperfield College. Our thanks again to Ernst & Young and Mitsubishi for their continuing sponsorship of this program.

The strong association between AJSV and the Asia-Pacific Children’s Convention (APCC) continues. The Convention is held in Fukuoka each year, with children from across the Pacific region – Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Asia, China, and the Americas – to promote peace and understanding across cultures. This year marked the 28th anniversary of the APCC, and six Junior Ambassadors from six Primary Schools across Victoria attended the Convention in Fukuoka.

The Convention starts with an orientation camp bringing together 240 participants from around the Region, followed by home-stays with Japanese families, school visits, and excursions to take in the many sights of Fukuoka. The Cultural Event, where children perform an item celebrating their individual culture, was live-streamed to parents and friends around the globe.

The APCC program cultivates long-lasting impressions among Australian and Japanese from an early age, and inspires genuine interest in seeking further understanding and engagement. This is reflected in growing participation in the Peace Ambassador and Bridge Club Australia activities, led by the ‘alumni’ of past APCC programs, some of whom are now well into their 20’s and 30’s. Once again our thanks go to Ms Heather Derbyshire for her outstanding leadership and commitment to the APCC program.

Cultural and Entertainment Events were a regular feature of 2015, including many special offers made available to members through the AJSV website, our E-Newsletter, and social media. Cinema Nova in particular has provided members some wonderful preview screenings of the latest releases from Japan.

The mini boom in Japanese Anime and related pop phenomena continues in Australia. In addition to film festivals and product launches featured last year, there were two large-scale Anime Festivals held in Melbourne in August/September 2016, attracting thousands of devoted fans (and new converts) from around Australia and Japan.

No discussion of cultural exchange in Melbourne would be complete without reference to sport! Last October we were treated to a genuine block-buster: the FIFA World Cup qualifier football match between Australia and Japan, which ended in a 1-1 draw. AJSV members and guests enjoyed the game together as part of a crowd of almost 50,000 at Docklands Stadium.

AJSV also participated in events hosted by other Japan organisations in Melbourne. Both the Japan Summer Festival and the Box Hill Japan Festival really brought a little bit of Japan to Melbourne; and there was something for everyone. Impressive crowds – young and old, across a range of cultures and backgrounds - enjoyed outstanding displays of Japanese performing arts and culture, and especially the rows of stalls cooking up an array of Japanese “street food” true to the atmosphere and tastes on offer in busy laneways throughout Japan. For AJSV, it was a wonderful opportunity to participate in the festivities, and to engage with a range of people with mutual interest in strengthening the bonds and understanding between Australia and Japan.

Tragedy struck Japan again last year through the earthquake in Kumamoto, on the island of Kyushu. The AJSV helped raise relief funds for the victims, and our thanks go to sponsors Peninsula Hot Springs for their generous support, and the *Showko Shofukutei* group for staging the *Rakugo* (Comedy Show) at the fund-raising event at Melbourne University.

The AJSV Committee of Management (COM)

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the AJSV Co-Chairmen, Mr Murray McLean AO and Mr Yoshi Sagawa for their enduring commitment to the AJSV cause, and the learned and helpful guidance they have kindly extended to me during the year; and to the members of the COM who do a fantastic job leading the activities of the AJSV. I am very grateful for their on-going commitment and support.

As a volunteer not-for-profit organisation, the AJSV manages its programs and events within a very tight budget. The AJSV Treasurer’s Report for 2016 attests to a well-managed operation, and careful attention to striking the right balance between what we can offer our members and the limits of our funding and resources. Our thanks to Ernst & Young – and particularly Jack Stanesby as AJSV Treasurer – for their continued support and helping us keep a steady hand on our financial responsibilities.

The year brought a few changes to AJSV operations and the COM. A lot of work went into the transition from the monthly bulletin to regular updates through the AJSV E-Newsletter and Website, and through other social media. The upgrade of the AJSV website is in progress, and these developments will provide a platform for further improvements to member communication in the very near future.

Today we bid farewell to Murray Sayers from his role on the COM, who as past AJSV President and Committee member has made an outstanding contribution to AJSV. We are pleased Murray is staying on as an AJSV member, and look forward to seeing him at many of the AJSV’s special events. We formally welcome Lynden Mullen to the COM, with her special focus on Membership and communication with Corporate Members. The list of Office Bearers and Committee Members for 2017 is attached to this report.



Australia Japan
Society Victoria

In closing, let me briefly look to the year ahead. The evolution of AJSV certainly brings some challenges!

To continue to inspire interest in the Australia-Japan relationship we must continue offering ideas and programs that meet the changing requirements of our membership. Like any volunteer organisation, we must also attract and retain membership and sponsors to help fund our programs and to continue to evolve. To the members of the Committee of Management and the AJSV community of Volunteers, our Society is fortunate to have the generous commitment of your time and talent, and I am confident that through your leadership and active engagement the AJSV will continue to thrive.

My sincere thanks to you all.

Ross Ciaravolo
President
APRIL 2017



AJSV Committee of Management 2017

At the Annual General Meeting of the Australia Japan Society of Victoria Ltd (AJSV) held on Friday 28 April 2017, the following Office Bearers and Members were appointed to the AJSV Committee of Management:

Joint Chairmen:

Mr Murray McLean

Mr Yoshito Sagawa

Office Bearers:

President Mr Ross Ciaravolo

Vice President Ms Robyn Heraud

Secretary Mr Sean Brown

Treasurer Mr Jack Stanesby

Committee Members:

Ms Celeste Koravos

Ms Lynden Mullen

Ms Deborah Vega

Ms Hiroko Yasunori

Executive Administration:

Ms Kaori Chiba

Ms Hikaru Davies