

THE 57TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the AUSTRALIA-JAPAN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc

- Monday 12TH April 2021 -

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Firstly, to the Members of AJSV and those present for the Annual General Meeting, I hope that you and your families have managed well through the challenges presented by the COVID19 situation, and that prospects are better for 2021.

Despite the extraordinary circumstances presented by the pandemic, we have witnessed over the past year a purposeful strengthening of the bi-lateral relationship between Australia and Japan, emphasised through progress in collaboration on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the "Quad"), the Australia-Japan Defence pact, the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) in Space, the Hydrogen development project in Victoria, and numerous other co-investment and trade initiatives.

At the grass-roots level of AJSV programs in the Victorian community, we normally thrive on bringing people together – the very thing we could not do in combatting the pandemic! It was great to see how the small band of volunteers at AJSV rose to the occasion, adapting programs to online and virtual events for the benefit of our membership.

A speaker at one of the AJSV online business seminars commented that while COVID19 has temporarily hampered the flow of people, it has not hampered the flow of information – thanks to accelerated adoption of communication technology. That was certainly the case for AJSV programs such as the Business webinars, *Konshinkai* networking events, and the Mentoring program.

The AJSV has been through perhaps its most intense period of organisational transformation since its inception in 1963! The members of the Committee of Management have worked well as a team, and brought fresh ideas and vitality to help boost AJSV offerings to members despite the COVID19 constraints. During a year when COVID19 made the 'day job' and family life even busier, AJSV volunteers continued to make time to contribute to the AJSV cause. My sincere thanks to all of you.

AJSV – Friends and Stakeholders

On behalf of the members of AJSV, our thanks to the Governor of Victoria and the Consul General of Japan to Melbourne for their continuing patronage of our Society, and active collaboration with AJSV. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to again thank the recently-departed Consul General, Mr Kazuyoshi Matsunaga, for his enthusiastic and energetic support of AJSV during his term; and to extend a warm welcome to his successor, Mr Junji Shimada.

In this context 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 co-operation.

...And most importantly – to the Members of AJSV: sincere thanks for your continued support particularly during this challenging year. It takes effort and commitment from so many people on many levels to maintain and foster the Australia-Japan relationship. The AJSV is honoured to play its part in this effort through staging special events and grass roots programs that engage Australian and Japanese individuals and organisations throughout Victoria. We couldn't do it without your support!

Highlights of the Past Year

The AJSV Business Briefing webinars this year included subjects such as Collaboration in Space, Women in Leadership in Australia-Japan Business, and the Challenges of Effective Online Communication. Each featured Australian and Japanese enterprises collaborating and learning from each other, as well as providing insights for opportunities in investment and trade. One advantage of the online format was in facilitating participation by guest speakers and attendance from Japan and around Australia. The business briefing sessions included collaboration with Australian Universities and Asialink, and the program continues to provide opportunities for AJSV member organisations to improve connections with potential partners.

Special thanks to Celeste Koravos for leading this program, and continuing to bring fresh ideas and real focus to seminar topics. Her leadership, contribution, and untiring commitment to the AJSV cause have been outstanding.

The AJSV Mentoring Program is designed to provide opportunities for young executives to develop their candidacy for engagement in the relationship between Australia and Japan. It addresses the need for professional development: to better understand the opportunities, as well as the skills required to meet them. The program thrived through one-on-one online sessions necessitated by the COVID19 restrictions.

We are very grateful to the senior executives of AJSV member organisations who have generously provided their time and expertise to mentor graduates and young professionals seeking to build a career within the Australia-Japan relationship.

Congratulations to Jessica Stevens who has led the development and implementation of the program, which promises to remain a key focus for AJSV and its membership in the future.

“Konshinkai” networking events provide a relaxed, informal environment to bring together Australian and Japanese business executives, government officials, and people from education and cultural organisations. *Konshinkai* attracted impressive attendance numbers in 2020 through online formats, and attendance has remained high for the recent return to in-person functions. Highlights included a very successful “Sake Appreciation” evening conducted online (and they said it couldn’t be done!!), and an online evening with international basketball champion Yudai Baba who has recently joined Melbourne United. Participants logged in from Japan as well as Australia for each of the online *Konshinkai* events.

Konshinkai helps people reconnect with past friends and make new contacts, and helps pave the way for future AJSV initiatives. The events celebrate the benefits of interaction between both cultures, and the depth of understanding that comes through such exchange.

Many thanks to Mitsuru Katada for his enthusiastic and engaging leadership of the program during such a challenging year!

The AJSV Student Exchange Programs form an important part of AJSV “grass roots” activities, providing financial support through scholarships to students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to participate in educational exchange and home-stays. The programs were suspended in 2020 due to the COVID19 restrictions. We hope that 2021 brings opportunity for each of the programs to be reactivated.

Cultural and Entertainment in-person events such as the Annual Spring Gala Dinner, Japan Festivals and Sakura Picnic Day were also suspended in 2020 due to the COVID restrictions. These will also be reinstated as soon as the circumstances allow.

The AJSV E-Newsletter continued to provide members access to online cultural events, and many related special offers. The AJSV website and social media platforms were significantly upgraded during the year, providing members with improved access to AJSV and the programs on offer.

Many thanks to Owen Bushell for his contribution and marketing insights in driving the upgrades, and to Robyn Heraud and Hiraku Davies for their work in running the AJSV “virtual office”.

The AJSV Committee of Management (COM)

I would like 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. I am also very grateful for the dedicated support of the Committee of Management (COM) and the AJSV Office team. Thank you all for your continued efforts and contribution during this somewhat ‘troubling’ year.

As a volunteer not-for-profit organisation, the AJSV manages its programs, events and office operations within a very tight budget. COVID19 effectively stopped some of AJSV’s key fund-raising events and activities, but we managed to end the year in quite a stable financial position. A special thanks this year to AJSV Treasurer Jack Stanesby for his efforts in helping to secure government funding support, which allowed AJSV to maintain office staff and continue the online services to members.

The Treasurers Report on the 2020 Financial Statements is included in the papers for the AGM.

At this AGM, we bid farewell to Mr Murray McLean AO, who is retiring as Co-Chairman after eight years in the role. Murray is the longest serving Australian Ambassador to Japan. Since his return to Australia he has maintained his commitment to the Australia-Japan relationship through active involvement in many organisations, and we have been indeed privileged to have had Murray on board at AJSV. He has been a strong supporter of the AJSV cause, and once again my personal thanks to Murray for his friendship and guidance during my term as President.

AJSV Secretary Ms Deborah Vega is also retiring this year. Deb has made a tremendous contribution to AJSV over the past eight years, leading the Konshinkai program, helping to stage major events such as the Spring Gala Dinner, and most recently as Secretary. We wish her all the best for a rewarding future in her new career.

This has also been my last year as President of AJSV, and I am retiring from the position at this AGM. It has been a real privilege to be part of the AJSV story over the past six years. Through the people engaged with the Society and the tireless efforts of the volunteers, I am frequently reminded of the importance of the Australia-Japan relationship, the need to actively foster this relationship, and the enormous rewards and sheer fun that it brings to all of us!

I am very pleased that Ms Celeste Koravos is taking on the role of President. Celeste is well credentialed for the role, with an impressive record of connection with Japan, both professionally and through her education, and has a broad network of contacts in the Australia-Japan relationship. She has been an active member of the AJSV Committee of Management (COM) for over eight years, most recently as Vice-President, during which time she has made an outstanding contribution. She has a real affinity with the AJSV, its purpose and focus, and the challenges that lie ahead.

On behalf of the COM, I would also like to congratulate Mr Mitsuru Katada on his appointment as Vice President, and a warm welcome to Ms Jemaya King as Secretary.

To continue to inspire interest and engagement in the Australia-Japan relationship, the AJSV offers ideas and programs that meet the changing requirements of its membership and broader community. To the AJSV Committee of Management and 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 involvement the AJSV will continue to thrive.

Ross Ciaravolo
President

AJSV Committee of Management 2021

At the Annual General Meeting of the Australia Japan Society of Victoria Ltd (AJSV) held on Monday 12 April 2021, the following Office Bearers and Members were appointed to the AJSV Committee of Management:

Joint Chairmen:

Mr Yoshito Sagawa

Mr Ross Ciaravolo

Office Bearers:

President

Ms Celeste Koravos

Vice President

Mr Mitsuru Katada

Secretary

Ms Jemaya King

Treasurer

Mr Jack Stanesby

Committee Members:

Mr Owen Boushel

Mr David Buchanan

Mr D'Arcy Butler

Mr Shunsuke Saito

Ms Jessica Stevens

Ms Hiroko Yasunori

Office Management:

Ms Robyn Heraud

Ms Hikaru Davies