



President's Report 2018/19

1. Overview

After a process of renewal during the previous year, I'm happy to say that the Society is now reaping the benefits. The new online systems for managing our membership and events have now been fully implemented. Our new website is steadily acquiring content and we now have very active Facebook and Twitter accounts. The new Committee has brought new energy and new ideas, and we have been able to organise a wide and diverse variety of events throughout the year.

We have also sought to increase the value of AJS-TAS membership. As well as offering discounted rates for members at our events, we have negotiated a suite of member benefits. Our members now receive discounts or other benefits at Bar Wa Izakaya, Osaka Izakaya and RIN. This scheme also allows us to support local businesses, and we will continue to expand it during the year ahead.

As a result of all these efforts, we have succeeded in reversing the decline in our membership. Our numbers are now increasing again, as is evident from the many new faces at our events.

We have continued to strengthen and deepen our relationship with the new Consul-General of Japan, Mr Kazuyoshi Matsunaga. The Consul-General is a passionate advocate for the relationship between Tasmania and Japan, and he has become a regular visitor to our State. We appreciate the strong support that we have received both from him and from the Consulate-General. A new Japanese Ambassador, Mr Reiichiro Takahashi, also arrived in Australia recently, and we look forward to meeting him in Tasmania during the coming year.

We were also successful this year in bringing representatives of the State and Federal Governments onto the Committee; along with representatives from the City of Hobart, this has meant that all levels of government have been represented on the Committee. This has increased the visibility of the Society, and will allow us to play a role in driving the Tasmania-Japan relationship in future.

At this year's AGM, we will be losing two faces from the Committee. Harriet Baillie is coming to the end of her term as Co-Director of the Tasmanian office of DFAT, and will be heading to Canberra to embark on new adventures. Luke O'Brien, one of our former Presidents, will also be rotating off the Committee. We wish them both well and look forward to welcoming some new faces onto the Committee at the AGM.

2. Activities

The new Committee has been careful to listen to what our members want. Cooking classes and Japanese language classes came top of the member survey that we ran in 2017. We delivered on both of these this year. In November, we ran a highly entertaining Okonomiyaki Cooking Workshop at Taroona High School. Then, in May, we ran a workshop on "Introduction to Japanese Language and Customs" at the University of Tasmania. Both events rapidly booked out, and we intend to run similar events again in future.

Consistent with our desire to support Japanese businesses in Tasmania, we organised social events at a variety of Japanese restaurants. These included a sake tasting at Osaka Izakaya, a bōnenkai at RIN and a social dinner at Panko Chan. However, the highlight was undoubtedly a special dinner

event that we held at Bar Wa Izakaya in October, to welcome Kim Clifford as our new Vice Patron and to welcome Phil Cooper and Peter Shelley as our two new Life Members.

Once again, the largest events that we held this year revolved around the annual visit of the Umitaka Maru to Hobart. As well as the tour of the vessel, the barbecue at Waterworks Reserve and a reception at Government House, we also held an “Antarctica in the Pub” event at the Hobart Brewing Company. There were large turnouts at each event, indicating strong interest in our Antarctic relationship with Japan. And, as always, it was a pleasure to view the immaculate state of the Umitaka Maru and to share the best that Tasmania has to offer with the crew and cadets.

With the support of the Japan Foundation, we brought the Japanese Film Festival to Hobart again this year. Three films were screened during August: *The Long Goodbye*, *In This Corner of the World* and *Gintama*. Other events during the course of the year including a hilarious bilingual quiz evening at the University of Tasmania, and a combined ramen tasting/language exchange event at Bar Wa Izakaya. And this month, our very own Katsuhiko Suganuma will deliver a public lecture on the topic “Same-Sex Marriage in Japan: If Taiwan can, so can we!?”, while our members will also enjoy a private tour of the Tasmanian Parliament.

In addition to our own events, we were able to support other Japan-related events in Tasmania. In particular, we support the Hobart-Yaizu sister city relationship through the Hobart-Yaizu Sister City Committee. Public events organised during the course of the year included two performances by the Yurikamome Children’s Choir in August, and the inaugural Kodomo No Hi (Children’s Day) festival in May. The latter was conducted on a trial, invitation-only basis this year, but was highly successful and seems set to become a regular event in future.

3. The year ahead

The coming year will be an exciting one for the Australia-Japan relationship. With the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place in Tokyo, the world’s eyes will be turning towards Japan. We are well placed to take advantage of this, with a growing membership and an increasingly frequent and diverse offering of events; indeed, we are now one of the most active Australia-Japan Societies in Australia. However, we should ensure that this growth is sustainable. One idea that we have for the year ahead is to form sub-committees to carry out particular activities (such as organising social events). This should be a great way to involve a greater range of our members in organising events, as well as allowing us to offer even more events in future.

One area where we have been less successful during the past year is in organising events outside of Hobart. However, we are acquiring members in other regions of Tasmania. This will help us to organise events in other parts of the State during the year ahead. As well as our support of the Hobart-Yaizu relationship, we should also re-double our efforts to support the other sister city relationships in Tasmania: Clarence-Akkeshi, Launceston-Ikeda and Devonport-Minamata.

During the next year, we can look forward to learning more about the story of the Cyprus mutiny in 1829. Exhibitions are being planned in Hobart and Sydney, and a documentary “Through Samurai Eyes” was recently recorded by ABC. This will be broadcast on Radio National later this year, and we will be sure to let our members know when this happens.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our members for their continuing support and our Committee for all their hard work over the last year. May the Society continue to thrive during the year ahead!

Steven Phipps
President
6 July 2019