

## **Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, Japan**

In commemoration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sister-State relationship between Western Australia and Hyogo Prefecture, a delegation consisting of the Speaker and five Members of the Hyogo Prefecture Assembly joined a few Legislative Council Members, the Clerk and myself for afternoon tea and a friendly discussion in early August 2011.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> August, I was pleased to witness the formal statement signed by the Premier of Western Australia, Hon Colin Barnett and Governor Ido during a ceremony at the Old Swan Brewery to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Since June 1981, relations between Western Australia and Hyogo Prefecture has been enhanced through a variety of joint activities and programs, including the reciprocal dispatch of delegations; the establishment of government offices in each other's regions; presentation of koalas from Western Australia to Hyogo Prefecture; development of the Japanese Garden in Western Australia by the Hyogo Prefecture; academic exchanges between the University of Hyogo and Curtin University, and the economic exchange through the trade of resources such as iron ore and LNG.

Our meeting was also a great opportunity to exchange views on future development. Based on previous achievements and on a shared concept of being partners in the Asia-Pacific region, both regions aim to advance their mutual development.

I believe that international exchange starts from grassroots interaction on a person-to-person level. From speaking with the Hon Toshizo Ido and other visitors from Japan, we have identified and agreed to further promote the mutual exchange in a variety of areas, including the enhancement of the mutual exchange between people, goods, education, culture, economy and the arts, economic exchange through the promotion of the trade of resources and mutual development of local industries, encouraging the introduction of direct flights between Kansai International Airport and Perth International Airport and mutual cooperation in resolving worldwide issues, such as global environmental problems, infections and large-scale disasters.

I was fortunate to experience an exchange promoting these ideas in May 1984, before I became a Parliamentarian. I was a member of a Western Australian Rotary Group Study Exchange Team to visit Hyogo Prefecture for five weeks. We enjoyed the excellent hospitality of Japanese families, often staying in their homes and exposure to business, commercial, cultural and social aspects of Japan. It was a fascinating and educational experience which helped equip me for the life of a Member of Parliament a few years later. I visited Japan again, with my wife and two young children, for a week in January 1986 to renew friendships with people I had met earlier in 1984.



Picture: Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, Deputy President of the Legislative Council, Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, Hon Toshizo Ido, 114<sup>th</sup> Speaker of the Hyogo Prefectural Assembly, Hon Shinobu Kamo, and the President of the Legislative Council, Hon Barry House.