

Good evening everyone.

I am delighted to come back to Whitehorse tonight to say a few words at the annual celebration of Matsudo Week. Last year I came here shortly after my two week quarantine followed by a lockdown. I am grateful that there is no more lockdowns in Victoria.

The sister-city relationship between Whitehorse and Matsudo is the longest running in Victoria and one of the longest in Australia. While it was difficult to mark the 50th anniversary in person last year, both cities got together for a virtual celebration and produced a beautiful book of friendship. I am looking forward to seeing more people to people exchanges between the two cities once the borders are fully open.

I am very much looking forward to seeing this year's concert, 'Kaze no Mai', designed by Brandon Lee. I have had the pleasure of hearing Brandon and his ensemble perform many times ever since I was mesmerized by their beautiful sounds, artistic tunes and perfect acoustic effects for the first time at the last year's concert here. That was the first time I saw the Koto ensemble.

I am delighted that talented musicians or artists, such as the ones we will see this evening, are helping to promote the Japanese beautiful traditions through *koto* in Australia.

I am sure you will all enjoy this evening's concert. Please listen not only with your ears but also with your heart. I hope it will inspire you to visit the City of Matsudo on your next trip to Japan.

Thank you.