

Japanese Organisations in Metropolitan Australia with a Major Focus upon Melbourne

The expansion of Japan's business into the globalised economy has seen growing numbers of Japanese families going to live in foreign business centres. To put it another way, the post-Second World War development of multi-national firms has produced increasing numbers of corporate expatriates. These sojourners develop a lifestyle which differs significantly from the patterns adopted by permanent settlers. These sojourners have until now been the major group in Japanese migration to Australia. In fact, they have consistently taken the initiative in forming the major Japanese organisations such as Japanese clubs, chambers and commerce, and schools. In this paper, an attempt is made to clarify the current trends by which major Japanese organisations contribute to Japanese community life in Australia.

Japanese clubs, chambers of commerce were generally the driving force for the founding of Australia's Japanese schools. The roles of Japanese clubs can be classified in terms of two basic functions: one is the dissemination of information at a formal level, while the other is the provision of social gatherings to allow for the formation of formal, semi-formal and informal sub-groups. Although the sojourners have consistently become members of (full-time) Japanese school boards, these schools in Australia have begun to experience a serious decline in numbers. Indeed, transitions within Japanese communities, both in Australia and home in Japan, sees a change in parental attitudes towards children's schooling overseas, especially in English-speaking countries. But, despite the temporary nature of any one person's stay, Japanese sojourner communities have sustained themselves as visible urban ethnic groupings with their own organisational networks. When some members, not excluding the presidents of Japanese clubs or chambers of commerce, return home after completing their overseas assignment, new members come from Japan to take their places. However, in the ongoing globalisation process, the situation has become more and more complex as the increase number of permanent settlers from Japan influences the nature of those major organisations, and brings a variation in individual sojourners' attitudes towards the Japanese community. This in different ways changes participation in the host society.