



Forging relations with Japan Customs

Hideyuki Morishima talks with *Manifest* about working in Australia as the Japanese Customs Attaché. Mr Morishima is on a three year posting to Australia from the Customs and Tariff Bureau, Japan (Japan Customs) and is based at the Japanese Consulate-General in Sydney.

What were your expectations of living in Australia?

“My Australian life started in June 2001. Since then, I have enjoyed it. Actually, this is my first posting overseas and I had not been to Australia privately or for business. My images of Australia before arriving, probably like images most Japanese have, were of a continent with great nature and a paradise of sports, such as golf, surfing and rugby. But everything is as true as my images. Japan Customs has several other postings for attachés all over the world, but I think there would be no posting better than Sydney.”

How long have you been working in Customs?

“If I go back to the beginning of my customs life, I joined Japan Customs 12 years ago. After that I was mainly working in the central office, the Customs and Tariff Bureau of the Ministry of Finance. So I have some experience in working at the front line. In the Customs and Tariff Bureau, I was responsible for the tariff policy, especially tariff rates revision and the GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) scheme.”

What is your role as Japanese Customs Attaché in Australia?

“One of my roles is to collect information on what Australian Customs does or will do. In Japanese, Customs is called ‘Ze-Kan’. This word describes two roles of Customs, that is, the

top: Hideyuki Morishima (far right) with (from left to right) Jenny Reimitz, Customs; John Law, Software Craft; Trevor Van Dam, and Gayle Brown, Customs, at a recent seminar for customs brokers and freight forwarders.

aspects of 'Ze'i' and 'Kan'. 'Ze'i' means customs duties, and 'Kan' means barriers. With regard to the reduction of tariff rates of many items, especially after the conclusion of the Uruguay Round in 1995, the aspect of 'Kan' is much more important than that of 'Ze'i' in Japan. In this regard, the role of Australian Customs gives good examples for Japan Customs. Sometimes I try to research by myself, other times I have to follow-up requests from the Customs and Tariff Bureau. Every time I ask for help from Australian Customs I receive kind assistance from many staff.

"Another main assignment for me is to provide Australian Customs staff with information on what Japan Customs does. Of course, the Australian Customs Attaché to Japan reports to Australian Customs more than I do. And Japanese staff visiting Australia explain about the Japan Customs situation more clearly. But I endeavour to talk directly with as many Australian Customs staff as I can to increase people's understanding of Japan Customs.

"Thanks to the border enforcement coordination unit in the Central Office, I was given the chance to attend two District Managers conferences, one held in Townsville and the other in Fremantle. It was a great honour for me to speak at each conference about Japan Customs in respect of drug and firearms seizures and I was also able to discuss the measures used to intercept smuggling at regional ports with District Managers."

What differences and similarities have you experienced between Japanese and Australian Customs?

"I have had many kinds of precious experiences so far, and I have felt the warmest solidarity of Australian Customs staff to Customs staff from other countries like me. I believe these feelings are held in common by each country's Customs people because all the Customs agencies have three common goals, I think. Firstly, promotion of international trade and industries; secondly, collection of customs duty, and lastly, extermination

of distribution of illegal goods, especially illicit drugs.

"Japan Customs puts stress on cooperation with foreign Customs agencies, and the relationship between Australian Customs and Japanese Customs has been particularly solid. In order to enhance the cordial relationships between us in the future, I will try to do the best for both Customs agencies as a bridge connecting two countries during my remaining days in Australia."