CHANGES IN JAPAN
VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

Christine Bryden
Alzheimer’s Australia (Qld) Ambassador
New journey of joy

• “Shows different, unknown way of living. Lofty challenge, even growth process in life where the power of protecting one’s life emerges from within, rather than given by others”

• “It’s strange and unknown, invokes fear and insecurity. If we’re truthfully engaged to our lives and in contact with our body senses, possible to avoid being absorbed by horror, and reduce fear while preserving life energy”

Noriko Ishibashi
Who will I become?

- Close-up Gendai and Seikatsu Hot Morning, Fukushi Network; Magome-san translated my words for audiences
- My neurologist: “dementia struggle measured as decrease in function”
- Yuji reflected: “person with dementia does not suddenly show symptoms of late-stage dementia, and can lead full and happy life”
- Ozawa-san wrote “with support, loss of intellectual self can be minimised even restored”
“Pushing ourselves to the limit”

• Yuji: “Our perspective and ways of looking were diseased ... looking through lens of the stereotype .. no one can live without meaning in life”

• Ozawa-san: “What is life without gaps as this enriches our lives? The bigger the gap, the bigger the struggle, but trying to suppress these efforts could lead to loss of will and make that person into living dead. How can we call this care?”

NHK team at our house
Life a woven tapestry of meaning

• ADI Kyoto 2004 huge step: first time in Japan person with dementia, Ochi-san, gave opening plenary and interpreters wept in powerful moment leading to changes to come

• Specialist reporters, such as Ikui-san, searching for in-depth analysis, with desire to achieve change, working with Alzheimer's movement

• Yuji: “May the dance with dementia spread all over Japan and throughout the world!”
Interwoven threads of beauty

• People with dementia, wonderful people like Yuko, Kumiko, Tomoko, Yamanaka, Kuwano and Dr. Endo, Ministries, educators and media, were working together to achieve change: amazing tapestry, giving wonderful vision of future

• Mizuki-san (a pseudonym) had started online dementia café to change the stigma in Japanese society, who gave me precious memento: very well-thumbed copies of both my books, flagged with many colourful tags

Kumiko (R) and Tomoko
Finding purpose in life

• In 2006 met working group of people with dementia who presented Communiqué to Ministries

• Visited Takeda-san day care centre: Seiji Goto, Yukata Kawakubo and their wives had formed band, with business cards

• In 2008, band visited, giving two performances for Alzheimer's Australia (Qld), as well as amazing nighttime one

• Their Australian trip became NHK documentary, with further positive impact on Japanese society
Including experts in lived experience

• Medical professionals, care-workers, media, Ministries and people with dementia have worked together in unique model of cooperation based on spiritual and philosophical insights

• Language has improved and Japan one of first countries to aim for dementia friendly communities

Communiqué

Privileged as outsider to see such extensive improvement, from remarkable and inspirational efforts throughout Japanese society to support and engage people with dementia