

Outlandish, outrageous fashion show hits town

New Zealanders encouraged to sample a taste of Japanese style at exhibition

by Lincoln Tan
ethnic affairs reporter

Nighttime Tokyo — and the city is transformed from one filled with suit-clad office workers to one where young people dressed as goths, nurses and fantasy characters walk the streets.

Japan's outlandish, and sometimes outrageous, fashion will go on show in Auckland this week — complete with models with hair dyed jet-black to bright neon pink — and Japan's consul general Hachiro Ishida wants New Zealanders to lap it up.

Mr Ishida said it would be good for Kiwis to take a renewed interest in all things Japanese, because New Zealand has become the talk of the town there since Japan won the hosting rights to the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

Japan beat bids from South Africa and Italy in July, and will be the first Asian nation to host the competition.

TASTE OF JAPAN

- **When:** Saturday, September 19 from 10am.
- **Where:** Logan Campbell Centre, ASB Showgrounds, Epsom. Free.
- **Highlights:** Japanese fashion show, kimono dressing, sake appreciation and sushi making.

"The All Blacks are considered legends and heroes in Japan, and winning the Rugby World Cup hosting rights have excited sports fans, and suddenly started everybody talking about New Zealand. I am confident that will soon translate to an increase in travel," said Mr Ishida.

International students and tourist numbers from Japan have taken a drastic fall in recent times, with arrivals from the country to Auckland dipping nearly 58 per cent last month from last year.

Mr Ishida said swine flu and the global economic crisis had hit Japan hard, but the effects would not last forever.

"To the Japanese, New Zealand is the rugby capital of the world, and always a popular tourist destination. Interest to visit New Zealand will only be going up as we recover from the economic crisis and as 2019 draws nearer."

His office will be sponsoring a Taste of Japan expo at the ASB Showgrounds this Sat-



ROLE PLAY: The Japanese expo show will feature cyberpunk, emo and other fashion styles.
PICTURE / DEAN PURCELL

urday, showcasing Japanese culture — including the fashion show, martial arts demonstration, kimono dressing, sushi making and sake appreciation.

"Japan was the most popular Asian culture when I was last posted here, and I really hope this expo will give Kiwis a chance to get to know the culture again," said Mr Ishida, who was the Japanese consul general in Wellington between 1987-90.

"Then it was the first and only time so far that the All Blacks have won the World Cup. I think my second posting here is a sign that they will win again," said Mr Ishida, who took

office last month. This is the ninth year that the expo has been held, but it is the first for the Japanese fashion show.

Fashion show organiser Bevan Chuang said: "The Japanese lead a very stressful life, and dressing up is a way they de-stress because it allows them to fantasise, and be someone else."

The show will feature Japanese fashion from kimonos and yukata, modern costume roleplay creations known as "cosplay", and "cyberpunk" styles inspired by the novels of William Gibson and Philip K Dick, and the aesthetics of films such as *Blade Runner*.

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