

Visit by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard

"I felt an indomitable spirit"



▲ Then Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard touring the destroyed town under the guidance of Town Mayor Sato Jin.

Photo courtesy of Australian Embassy

On the morning of April 23, 2011, then Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard visited Minamisanriku. Guided by Mayor Sato Jin and others, she made an inspection tour of the tsunami-devastated urban area. Visiting the municipal gymnasium that was used as an evacuation center, she took off her shoes, approached the affected residents, and offered them words of encouragement. She also offered the children gifts of stuffed toy koalas and kangaroos, along with sweets.

Immediately after the earthquake, between March 16 and 19, Australia dispatched 76 rescue workers and two rescue dogs to Minamisanriku to carry out relief activities.

Prime Minister Gillard commented, "It is miraculous that so many people survived such a terrible situation. Meeting with residents at an evacuation center, I felt the indomitable spirit and courage of the Japanese people" (excerpt from Kahoku Shimpō April 24 morning edition).

Koala House, which was used as a library, was also supported by the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited.