

## A message from Consul-General Masato Takaoka

## Consulate-General Activities

### National Day Reception on the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday

*Dear Readers,*

*I hope you have had a good start to 2016 and I wish you well for the rest of the year.*

*It is always enjoyable to spend another summer in Sydney. Even though the weather has been a little unpredictable, it doesn't seem to have stopped Sydneysiders getting outdoors and enjoying the wonderful harbour. January is also Sydney Festival time and I took the opportunity to attend several of the events.*

*Since the last issue, I have had the pleasure of attending both the graduation and opening ceremonies for the Sydney Japanese International School in Terrey Hills. The school is a wonderful asset to have in Sydney. The school provides a unique opportunity for students who benefit from the bicultural learning environment. At the graduation ceremony I expressed my hope that the students would go on to be links between our two countries, adding further strength to the ties of friendship our two countries share.*

*Indeed in the run-up to the new year, there were many events which made me reflect on the close ties we share. At the very top level, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP made his first official visit to Japan since becoming Prime Minister and both he and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reconfirmed our 'special relationship' (see p.3).*

*In December I attended the ceremony to welcome ANA's inaugural flight between Tokyo Haneda and Sydney. With another airline now flying between Japan and Australia, I hope more and more people will travel between each country, taking advantage of all that each has to offer.*

*Masato Takaoka*



On 1 December 2015, at his official residence, Consul-General Masato Takaoka hosted a reception to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's birthday. Some 270 guests from various fields attended the reception. This year, the national anthems of both countries, *Kimigayo* and *Advance Australia Fair*, were performed by members of the Royal Australian Navy. Consul-General Takaoka and the Hon. John Ajaka, Minister for Multiculturalism of NSW, both gave speeches on the night. The Consul-General was joined by thirteen guests to perform *kagami-biraki*—a Japanese custom in which the wooden top of a sake barrel is opened with wooden mallets to wish for good fortune and harmony. The Hon. Tom Bathurst, Chief-Justice of NSW and Mr Takaoka then delivered the toast.

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In his speech, the Consul-General touched on the common values Japan and Australia share. Looking back on the past twelve months, he explained the advancement of cooperation in the field of security, the coming into force of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) along with the broader exchanges and



The Hon. John Ajaka MP  
Minister for Multiculturalism

cooperation in the areas of culture and sport. The Hon. John Ajaka spoke of the special relationship between Australia and Japan, which is built on common values, complementary bilateral trade relations and the Japanese community's contribution to NSW's multiculturalism.

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His Majesty the Emperor's actual birthday is 23 December, a national holiday in Japan. On 23 December 2015, His Majesty turned eighty-two.

### Japanese Culture in Sydney—film and festival

The third of November is a public holiday in Japan known as Culture Day and many cultural events are held throughout the month. November 2015 was also quite a month for Japanese culture here in Sydney. On the first, the Consul-General attended **Nagoya Day** in Hyde Park to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Nagoya-Sydney sister-city relationship, on 5 November it was the opening of the **19th Japanese Film Festival**, and on 7 November **Matsuri in Sydney** was successfully held at Darling Harbour.



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