

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

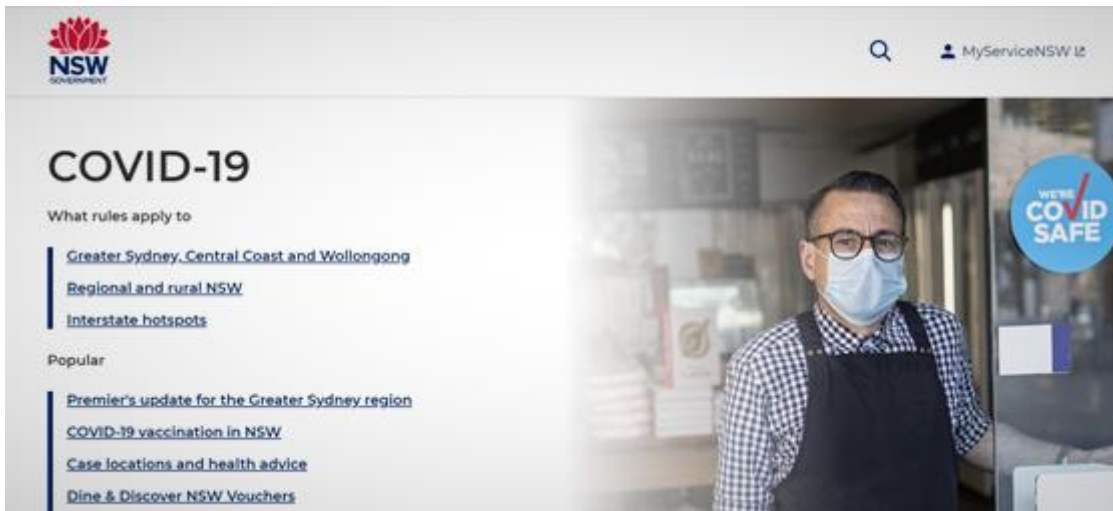
No. 34 Consular work during COVID-19

18 February 2021

What sort of measures have you been taking against COVID-19 in your daily life and at your place of work? Australian measures against the virus have had great results, and restrictions are gradually being eased. It is still very difficult to travel across international and state borders, but there are few worries when walking around cities in Australia, and compared to other countries, it is possible to go about one's daily life quite safely.

At the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, since COVID-19 emerged as a major challenge last year, we have been redoubling efforts to ensure the health and safety of Japanese nationals and disseminating information on various regulations in NSW, NT and New Caledonia, thus also contributing to the communities as a whole.

In this issue of my newsletter, I would like to explain the overall picture as to what measures this consulate has been taking in response to the spread of COVID-19, including sending consular emails, implementing measures at the consular service counter, supporting travel to Australia by representatives of Japanese companies, assisting Japanese nationals, and taking measures regarding crime and safety. To further improve our consular business, I welcome your suggestions.



NSW Government website regarding COVID-19 measures
(As at 17 February 2021)

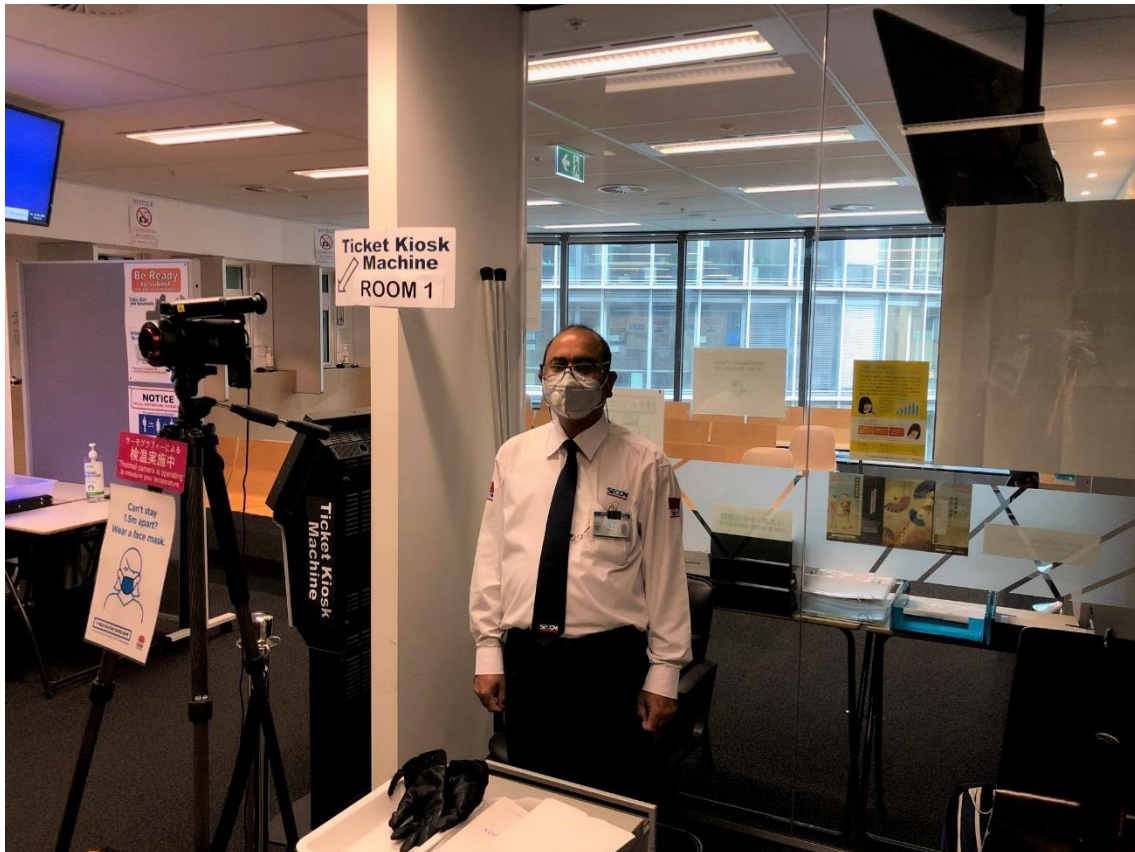
- **Sending consular emails**

Under COVID-19, one of the most important activities of this consulate is “sending consular emails”. This involves sending emails quickly to Japanese nationals, if possible on the same or following day as announcements are made, in accurate, brief and easy-to-understand Japanese. These emails include the latest information about the various regulations issued by the Australian federal and state governments and the New Caledonian autonomous government, the status of active and suspended direct flights between Japan and Australia, and so on.

After the consular email is sent, it is also uploaded to our website and shared on our consulate Facebook and my Twitter account. There have been many announcements that greatly affect everyone’s health, safety and daily life, so we have been actively sending consular emails whenever necessary, be it late at night, on the weekend or over the end-of-year holidays. From March last year through to now in February, we have sent 187 consular emails. On average, that works out to be one every two days.

As federal and state government regulations work in both directions, the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney has been in close communication with the Embassy of Japan in Canberra and the Consulates-General in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, and the Consular Office in Cairns. This has enabled us to work efficiently. Moreover, not only the consular section at this consulate has been working on this - all sections have been involved, including the political and economic sections.

In addition, responding to the needs of Japanese nationals, we have compiled and shared lists of GPs who can give consultations in Japanese or online, lists of medical facilities which can issue certified negative PCR test results required for travel to Japan, and lists of travel companies that can deal with customers in Japanese. I hope that these lists have been of assistance.



Entrance to the consular service counter
at the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney
(12 February 2021)

● **Implementing COVID-19 measures at the consular service counter**

This consulate is located in central Sydney, close to Circular Quay. Our consular service counter handles passport issuance, family register notifications and issuance of various certificates for Japanese people, as well as issuance of visas for non-Japanese. When the strict COVID-19 restrictions came into force in March last year, in order to minimise the risk of transmission while still delivering services at the consular service counter, the counter business hours were changed to morning only (9:30-12:00). Telephone assistance continued to be offered as before, including in the afternoon.

Additionally, in June last year, an online appointment booking system was introduced. This has reduced the inconvenience of not being able to enter the waiting room when capacity is exceeded and it has also reduced waiting times. In addition, we are being thorough by measuring visitors' temperatures and cleaning carefully. Please have confidence when you visit our office.

From March until December 2020, the consular affairs section was divided into two teams which commuted alternately, in order that consular services could continue even if there were a COVID-19 infection or an instance of a close contact. Now that all consulate staff are working in the office, the consular affairs section is divided into two teams, working in separate rooms as a precaution.

応援します！ 日本企業の海外展開



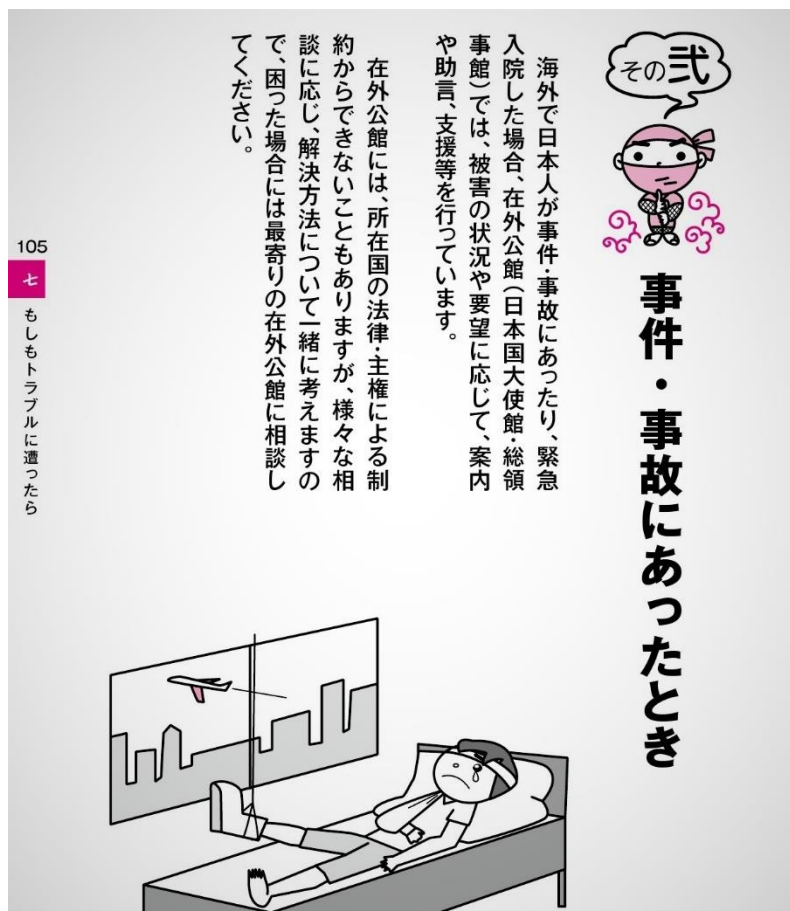
Cover of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs's pamphlet about supporting the development of Japanese businesses overseas
(March 2019, revised edition)

● Supporting travel to Australia by representatives of Japanese companies

Since the COVID-19 restrictions began last year, foreigners including Japanese are, in principle, not allowed to enter Australia. However, there are cases in which the head of the Australian Border Force can grant exemption to individuals wishing to enter Australia in exceptional or essential circumstances.

Due to the mutual benefit that business between Japan and Australia brings to both countries, this consulate provides indirect support when Japanese business people approach with enquiries about exemptions to entry restrictions, by providing them with examples (excluding any personal details) of requests to enter Australia that were permitted and requests that were not and with guidance regarding Australian Government application forms.

Entry into Australia is always at the discretion of the Australian Border Force. However, this consulate is striving to provide information that is as useful as possible to individual circumstances, such as arriving in Australia to take up a position due to personnel transfers and returning to Japan temporarily and then re-entering Australia due to family matters.



A page about responding to incidents and accidents from the 2021 overseas-safety handy-hint publication by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- **Assisting Japanese nationals in emergencies**

In the case that a Japanese national becomes sick or involved in an incident or accident, family members face significant restrictions when travelling to Australia and after arriving their movements are similarly restricted. Accordingly, this consulate works alongside them, communicating back and forward with the Australian federal and state governments to assist the family members.

For example, in principle, family members arriving in Australia must spend 14 days in hotel quarantine. However, there are exemptions allowed in the case of major medical, health or humanitarian reasons, and this consulate provides the family with information about what would qualify as an exemption and how to apply to receive such an exemption. There are limits to what the consulate is able to do, but we strive to support them as much as possible.



**Protestors gathering during an Australia Day demonstration in Sydney
(26 January 2021)**

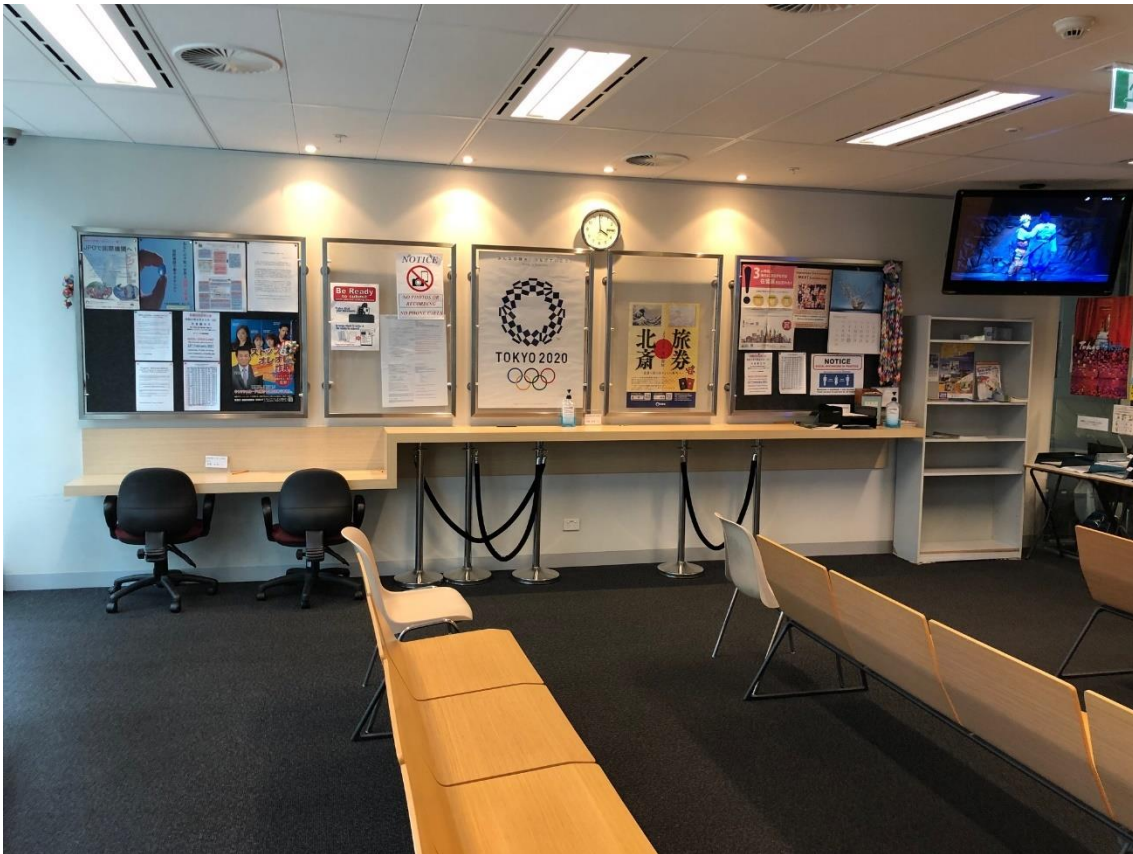
- **Crime and safety measures**

Even in this time of COVID-19, gatherings of demonstrators occur, such as the Black Lives Matter and Australia Day protestors. There have been many circumstances where COVID-19 restrictions have been broken, resulting in arrests. This consulate gathers information about demonstrations such as these, ahead of the event, and sends consular emails to warn Japanese nationals to be careful.

With the spread of COVID-19, more time is spent at home, and with the greater use of the internet, online crime has increased. In addition, there have been instances of fraud that take advantage of the COVID-19 situation, such as medicine (remedies) and vaccination scams, and benefit and investment scams. This consulate urges people to take care not to become caught up in such crimes, by making information available via our consular emails, consulate e-bulletin and website etc.

The “Japanese Safety Measures Liaison Committee”, which is organised by this consulate, brings together representatives of approximately 20 groups including Japanese organisations, travel companies, companies supporting exchange students, and local Japanese-language media among others. This meeting was moved online due to the COVID-19 situation. At the meeting in August, overall measures against COVID-19 were discussed, and in November, a local Japanese lawyer was invited to give a talk regarding troubles that arise in share houses. Later this month, an instructor from the police department has been invited to the next meeting. Materials and written summaries from these “Japanese Safety Measures Liaison Committee” meetings are shared widely, on our website or via our consulate e-magazine.

In addition, the “Sydney Safety Handbook” created by this consulate, is available on our website. It was recently revised, so please take a look.



The waiting room of the consular service counter
at the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney
(12 February 2021)

● **Out of necessity comes opportunity – towards further improvement**

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all Government of Japan ministries are reviewing regulations regarding the necessity of documentation, verification (using Japanese *inkan* seals) and in-person consultation for all administrative procedures, and procedures are moving online in sequence. From the end of December last year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made signatures unnecessary for some steps in passport, notice of residence, and certain proof of identification applications. New versions of the forms, which now omit spaces for signatures, were quickly introduced.

Moreover, to simplify the process to apply for passport renewal and visas for Japanese nationals living in places such as Darwin and New Caledonia, preparations are now being made to enable travel companies to act as agents for certain procedures.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, various aspects of consular affairs work that had previously been easily performed confronted difficulties. For this very reason, now is a good opportunity to realise fundamental reform, including digitalisation. This consulate is the front line for consular services for approximately 36,000 Japanese nationals. We would like to hear the voices of Japanese nationals, and while consulting closely with stakeholders, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resolve each issue one by one. Doing this will lead to significant reform in the medium to long term.

Regarding consular services during this time of COVID-19, please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any suggestions about points that should be further improved. The entire team at the consulate is working positively to this end.

< Feedback and enquiries >

Consular matters

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Supporting Japanese business

cgeco@sy.mofa.go.jp

Other general matters

japaneseconsulate@sy.mofa.go.jp

Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney website and Facebook, and my official Twitter account

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop_ja/index.html

<https://www.facebook.com/CGJSYD>

<https://twitter.com/CGJapanSydney>

Registration for consular emails and the consulate e-magazine (Japanese)

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/11_000001_00009.html

Online booking system for consular service counter

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/visa.html

Online appointment booking page for consular service counter

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/online_appointment_booking.html

“Supporting you! Japanese business developing overseas”- a pamphlet about supporting the development of Japanese businesses overseas
(Japanese)

https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/p_pd/dpr/page1w_000069.html

Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney's webpage regarding support for Japanese companies (Japanese)

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/japanese_company.html

2021 version of overseas safety handy-hints publication – a manual to avoid trouble when travelling overseas (Japanese)

<https://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/pamph/pdf/toranomaki.pdf>

Measures against various COVID-19 related crimes, materials from Japanese Safety Measures Liaison Committee meetings (Japanese)

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/life_and_safety_hanzaijousei.html

Sydney Safety Handbook (February 2021) (Japanese)

https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/document/japanese/life_and_safety/safety_information/sydneysafetyguide2021.pdf

Information regarding the review of documentation, verification (seals) and consultation regulations for administrative procedures (Japanese)

https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ms/m_c/page22_003512.html

(End)