

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter
No. 58 Resumption of face-to-face activities

25 March 2022



Emperor's Birthday Reception (2 March 2022)

Autumn has already arrived in Sydney. How have you been spending your time as the days grow shorter? After I returned from my business trip to Darwin in mid-February, COVID restrictions continued to ease and various face-to-face activities resumed. While responding to the worsening situation in Ukraine and the damages caused by the major flooding, the range of my work has been gradually broadening.

In this issue of my newsletter, as I introduce face-to-face activities that the Consulate has been undertaking from February to March, I invite you to consider with me what can be done to strengthen the Japan-Australia relationship post-COVID.



The *kagami-biraki* sake barrel opening at the Emperor's Birthday Reception
(2 March 2022)

● Emperor's Birthday Reception

On 2 March, the Emperor's Birthday Reception was held at my official residence. As part of our COVID-19 measures, this year's reception was held on a much smaller scale than in previous years. Moreover, the day of the reception fell during the period of heavy rain and there was some doubt whether the reception could be held.

Yet, despite these circumstances, some 80 guests from various fields attended, including Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of NSW, the Honourable Tom Bathurst, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW, the Honourable Matthew Mason-Cox MLC, President of the NSW Legislative Council, the Honourable Mark Coure, Minister for Multiculturalism, other NSW ministers and shadow ministers, and members of parliament. I was pleased to welcome such dignitaries, whose presence demonstrated the importance they attached to the Japan-NSW relationship.

The event was an opportunity to conduct the Imperial Decoration Conferment Ceremony for the Honourable John Ajaka, previous President of the NSW Legislative Council, who contributed significantly to strengthening ties between Japan and NSW. The reception also showcased regional Japan through the sake served and the ingredients used in canapés. There was a performance of Japanese drumming by Taikoz, and guests also enjoyed the booths presented by Japanese companies.

You can see [pictures of the reception](#) and read the speeches ([the Governor's speech](#), [Mr Ajaka's speech](#) and [mine](#)) via these embedded links.



**Imperial Decoration Dinner in honour of Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos
(22 February 2022)**

- **Imperial Decoration Dinner in honour of Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos**

A week earlier, on 22 February, we held the Imperial Decoration Dinner in honour of Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos, Managing Director of Australian and Japanese Economic Intelligence. Twenty years ago, Manuel established the “Australia-Japan Roundtable” which has been held more than 160 times in various places in Australia,

in Tokyo and in Singapore. The Roundtables have made a significant contribution by creating networks between Japanese-Australian business people, and the Imperial Decoration acknowledges this contribution.

The conferment ceremony itself incorporated a dinner in the same style as an “Australia-Japan Roundtable”. At the beginning of the ceremony, [I read out a message from His Excellency the Ambassador of Japan to Australia Mr Yamagami Shingo](#) and presented the Order of the Rising Sun to Manuel. After the main course, the guests and I listened to [Manuel's speech](#). He revealed that the secret to a successful roundtable was to carefully consider the seating arrangements of each table so that guests could get to know one another easily and to ensure that there was frank interaction between the guest speaker and other participants.

On 17 March, I was able to meet Manuel again when I attended the Australia-Japan Roundtable featuring Mr Chris Kent, Assistant Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia. I look forward to Manuel's further success in the future.

Continues next page



NSW Premier's Harmony Dinner (1 March 2022)

● NSW Premier's Harmony Dinner

On 1 March, the NSW Premier's Harmony Dinner took place at Sydney's International Convention Centre (ICC). It is an annual event held by the NSW Government to promote multiculturalism. Approximately 1,000 people representing the state's diverse multicultural communities attend, and the contributions of multiple organisations to the welfare of their communities are recognised at the dinner. This year's dinner was hosted by NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet who gave the opening remarks.

Last year when I attended the dinner, I did not see any Japanese community presence. When I asked around afterwards, I learnt that the COVID-19 restrictions reduced the size of the event and seats could not be secured. This year, the presence of the Japanese community was clear to see, with tables secured by two groups – one by representatives of Japan Club of Sydney Japanese community language schools and the other by representatives of other Japanese community language schools.

At the start of the event, a group of children from various cultural backgrounds sang and it was wonderful to see a girl wearing a Japanese *yukata* among them. After the performance, I went to say hello to her and her father. I would like to support the development of Japanese children growing up with many friends in this country.



With Gary and Manu at the JNTO Media Event (8 March 2022)

● Japan tourism events

With the prospect of inbound tourism to Japan resuming this year, the Sydney office of Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO) organised a face-to-face event for travel industry companies and another event for the media. Both events were very successful.

On 25 February, the Japan Networking Event, held at Sake Restaurant, brought together around 40 travel industry representatives from Australian travel agencies planning various tours to Japan, local agencies of Japanese local governments, hotels, cruise lines and airlines companies. The participants exchanged views on how to cooperate to promote Japanese tourism post-COVID, as well as to deepen knowledge of travel to Japan.

Later, on 8 March, JNTO invited some 30 travel journalists to a media event at Sokyo Restaurant to promote the different attractions of travelling to Japan. In January this year, JNTO released a 30-second campaign video featuring celebrity chefs, Gary and Manu, who chatted with guests at the media event. It's an [amusing and engaging commercial](#) – please take a look.



Sydney Japanese International School graduation ceremony

- **Sydney Japanese International School graduation ceremony**

I was invited to attend the [Sydney Japanese International School \(SJIS\)](#) graduation ceremony which was held on 8 March, and I gave a speech on behalf of the guests. At SJIS, students are enrolled in one of two divisions – the Japanese Division which follows the Japanese curriculum and the International Division which follows the NSW curriculum. Students receive a bilingual education in an international environment using both Japanese and English language. The management policy of SJIS is rare even among other Japanese schools around the world.

The graduation ceremony in March was for the Japanese Division: nine students graduated from primary school and three students from junior high school (Australian years 7-9). The graduating students gave a recital speaking one after the other in relay format and reminisced about various events during their school life and conveyed messages to their friends. It was a heartfelt presentation.

My message to them was that they are very fortunate. I told them that the world, which faces many challenges, is waiting for them and what they can do. I expressed my hope that they would embrace whatever fate may befall them, decide for themselves what to do, and always do their very best so that they can “ride the wave of destiny”. To the SJIS graduating students: once again, congratulations!



**11th Anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake –
meeting to exchange views**

● **11th Anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake**

On 11 March, the 11th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, those in Australian organisations which had been involved in supporting the recovery efforts

in Japan and subsequent exchange were busy responding to heavy rain and flooding, so I invited people who had been involved in the Sydney-based [Rainbow Project](#) for 10 years supporting earthquake recovery efforts and who have been promoting Japanese culture since then to exchange views.

In Sydney immediately after the earthquake, various Japanese and Australians with connections to Japan were asking each other, “Isn’t there something we can do?” and one of the responses was coming together to fold cranes for fundraising. I learnt how efforts continued and developed in response to everyone’s thoughts over the years. I also felt that, even after the Rainbow Project ended in March 2021 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of earthquake disaster, the connections made between people involved in Japanese culture should continue to be cherished.

Fortunately, there are opportunities for these connections to be further developed at large scale Japanese cultural events such as the Japanaroo Festive Season Concert, Japan Expo and Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood in December last year. I intend to continue to support such efforts in the future.

Continues next page



**Ikebana International Sydney Chapter 63rd Anniversary Event
(17 March 2022)**

● **Toward further expansion of face-to-face activities for Japan-Australia exchange**

Last week on 17 March, I attended the 63rd Anniversary Event of [Ikebana International \(I.I.\) Sydney Chapter](#) and viewed arrangements by I.I. members and demonstrations by each school. In I.I. Sydney Chapter, Japanese and Australians of diverse cultural backgrounds are making a significant contribution to mutual understanding and exchange between Japan and Australia by promoting ikebana while using flowers and materials that are unique to Australia.

Over the last month, for the first time after a long while, I have attended many face-to-face events and I have met with various people involved in different forms of exchange between Japan and Australia. Through this, I realised anew that there truly are so many people who have been supporting Japan-Australia ties over decades.

I myself would like to further expand the circle of Japan-Australia exchange by attending more and more face-to-face activities. If you are organising any Japan-Australia exchange events in the future, please let me know.

Kiya Masahiko, Consul-General of Japan in Sydney

(Ends)