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Quarterly Newsletter

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Inaugural Emperor's Birthday Reception for the Emperor Naruhito

On 11 February, Consul-General Kiya Masahiko hosted a reception at his residence in celebration of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. It was the first national day to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito since his accession to the throne in May last year. His Majesty turned sixty years of age on 23 February.

Blessed with fine weather, the event was attended by more than 250 guests from diverse fields.

To open the reception, the national anthems were sung by students from Sydney Japanese International School, followed by a minute's silence to pay respect to those affected by the bushfires.

In the Consul-General's speech, he mentioned that the Japan-Australia relationship in all areas is deeply rooted in mutual trust and friendship between our two countries.



Sydney Japanese International School students were in fine voice, and Premier Berejiklian's SEI-NO-DON countdown led to well-timed mallets breaking open the sake barrels.



The Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, attended the reception and expressed her congratulations to His Majesty the Emperor. The Premier also gave the countdown to the traditional *kagami-biraki* or breaking-open of the sake barrels.

At the reception, a variety of booths promoting Japanese produce, services and companies exhibited. Guests were also entertained by a live Japanese *taiko* drumming performance.

Consul-General Kiya's speech from the event can be found at www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/about_consul_generals_speeches.html

Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs in Sydney



On 22 February, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Nakayama Norihiro, visited Sydney. He observed a class at the Sydney Saturday School of Japanese (SSSJ), the facial recognition system by NEC, and the redevelopment of Central Station as a part of Sydney's Innovation and Technology Precinct.

Photos of the Consul-General's visits and Consulate events are regularly uploaded to our website and Facebook.

Facebook: @CGJSYD

www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp

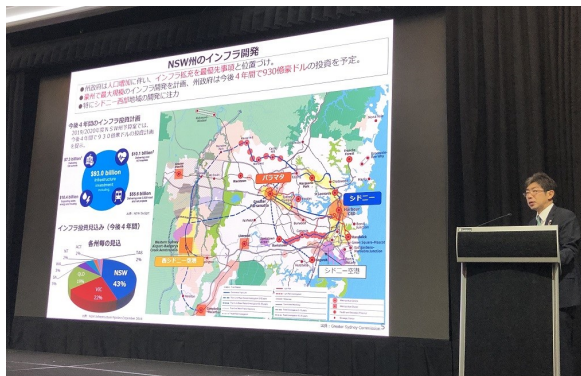
NEW! Instagram: @CGJapanSyd

Consul-General Kiya's official Twitter account—www.twitter.com/CGJapanSydney

Top economic mission visits NSW from Japan

From 5 to 7 February, the **Japan/Tokyo Chambers of Commerce and Industry (JCCI/TCCI) Economic Mission** visited Sydney. The Mission was led by Dr Mimura Akio, the Chairman of JCCI/TCCI.

Consul-General Kiya Masahiko addressed the Mission with a speech on *Economic Growth in NSW and Business Opportunities for Japanese Companies*. JCCI Sydney also gave a presentation on the development of Western Sydney.



Consul-General Kiya during his speech to the Mission

During their visit to Sydney, the Mission also met with the NSW Government and the Business Council of Australia and exchanged views on further strengthening the economic ties between Japan and Australia.

Need to know —

Japan is the second largest trading partner for New South Wales.

1st for exports, and
3rd for imports!

2017/2018

Consul-General Kiya visits Darwin and Alice Springs

This Consulate covers New South Wales and the Northern Territory. While the current COVID-19 situation means interstate travel is restricted, earlier this year, Consul-General Kiya Masahiko visited both Darwin and Alice Springs as part of his undertaking to maintain and deepen strong ties between Japan and the Northern Territory.

From 18 to 20 February, the Consul-General made his second visit to Darwin. Among his many commitments, he attended the Bombing of Darwin Commemorative Service (19 Feb) and laid a wreath at the Cenotaph with representatives of the US. Later in his newsletter No. 10 (see below), he remarked that at the service, he “felt the kind consideration given by Australia to Japan-US-Australia reconciliation.”

In addition to paying courtesy calls on the Administrator of the NT and the Mayor of Darwin, Consul-General Kiya’s visit had a business focus—he visited the INPEX Ichthys LNG Project site and had discussions with representatives of the Northern Territory Departments of Trade, Business and Innovation, of Primary Industry and Resources, and of Tourism, Sports and Culture.

From 12 to 14 March, Consul-General Kiya visited Alice Springs for the first time. He paid a courtesy call on the Mayor of Alice Springs (12 Mar) and later the same day, he met with the NT Minister for Renewables, Energy and Essential Services and discussed collaboration in the areas of solar energy, hydrogen and agriculture.



In Alice Springs, he also met with local Japanese teachers. On 13 March, he observed a Japanese lesson at St Philip’s College and the Consulate also gave a kimono dressing demonstration. In the afternoon, the Consul-General was in Uluru where he gained an insight into issues facing tourism since Uluru closed the Rock to climbers.

The Consul-General is keen for representatives of the Consulate to visit Darwin and Alice Springs as soon as circumstances allow.

Need to know — Japan is the largest source market of international tourists to the Northern Territory.

Consul-General Kiya’s newsletter

Consul-General Kiya writes a regular online newsletter. The purpose of the bilingual e-newsletter is to introduce various activities he engages in as Consul-General and to share some of his thoughts and feelings as he goes about his duties.

He hopes that through these newsletters more people will learn about the multi-faceted connections between Australia and Japan.

Since the last issue, he has written on the following topics:

- No.11 **Australia’s Response to Coronavirus** (March 25, 2020)
- No.10 **Darwin and Japan (Part 2): From the Bombing of Darwin to the Ichthys LNG Project** (March 6, 2020)
- No. 9 **Sports deepen ties between Australia and Japan** (February 21, 2020)
- No. 8 **Bushfires in Australia and Support from Japan** (February 7, 2020)

Previous issues are available online. (No.11 as PDF from top page)

www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/about_consul_generals_newsletter.html



Sport building ties



The JLPT Test

The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) is the largest test of Japanese for non-native speakers and is recognised globally. Many companies and government organisations use the JLPT as a benchmark to gauge a person's Japanese language proficiency.

The JLPT has five levels with the grading scale as follows:



The N1 is often said to be extremely difficult to attain—even for native speakers. However, in pursuit of the N1 you will come across many useful words and grammar structures that appear far more commonly than you would think.

APPLYING

In Australia, the JLPT is held twice a year in July or December at various cities—including in Sydney (December only). The dates for this year's test are 5 July and 6 December 2020. The test is offered by Japan Foundation and organised with the assistance of host institutions and universities. Registration is conducted online. Find details at:

www.jpf.org.au/language/for-learners/jlpt/

STUDYING

One of the most important things when studying for the JLPT is to be familiar with the types of questions and the time constraints. For this reason, doing a practice test ahead of time is a good way to prepare. The Japan Foundation has past exam papers available for loan and is an excellent resource for your Japanese studies.

BEYOND JLPT

Besides specifically studying for the JLPT, there are many other ways to practice and improve your language skills. One good online resource for beginner to intermediate learners is the NHK World Learn Japanese page.

www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/learnjapanese

There is a variety of great series on this site to suit all kinds of learners and boost your listening skills too.

For advanced learners (N2—N1), reading broadly is a good way to reinforce your vocabulary. Why not give NHK's online news articles a go, or Google search in Japanese for topics and blog articles that interest you?

Above all remember that learning a language, while difficult and challenging at times, should be equally enjoyable and rewarding.

HAVE FUN!

Strathfield Lunar New Year



On 25 January, to hail in 2020—the Year of the Rat—Strathfield Council held their inaugural Lunar New Year Festival.

Consul-General Kiya attended the Lunar New Year Festival and greatly enjoyed the festivities. Throughout the festival there were many different performances held on the main stage—from traditional Chinese and Korean dances to singing and instrumental acts. Sydney's own Wadaiko Rindo gave an energetic and powerful performance with their Japanese drumming. Many people also enjoyed trying their hand at origami at the stall run



by Midori Furze. The event showed that Australia has a great appreciation for multi-culturalism and diversity.

SCHOOL VISITS

On 27 February, the school visit team had the opportunity to hold a calligraphy workshop at **Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School**. The team looks forward to resuming visits in the near future. For more information:

www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/education_school_visit.html



A previous workshop

*Schools in regional areas and the NT are welcome to apply for visits, however, we may not be able to meet all requests.

**Due to the high number of outstanding requests and the COVID-19 situation, there may be a long wait time for new applications.



Author: Jessica Scott

The bittersweet realisation of the impermanent and transient nature of things.

Mono no aware is a concept well ingrained in Japanese culture and tradition and has a long history dating back to the Heian Period (794 – 1185). The period was named after the location of the imperial capital, which moved from Nara to Heian-kyo (now Kyoto), and was characterised by court aristocracy, the pursuit of aesthetic refinement in art and literature, and the rise of Buddhism.



Image: National Diet Library of Japan

A scene from *The Tale of Genji*

The phrase **mono no aware** was famously used over 1,000 times in the great classic novel *The Tale of Genji*, written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu during this era about life in the Japanese Imperial Court, love and human relations.

Cherry Blossoms

One of the most notable aspects of nature that encapsulates this difficult-to-translate phrase are Japan's beloved **sakura** — or cherry blossoms. Every year the **sakura** season heralds the beginning of spring and brings in many tourists and locals alike.

These beautiful flowers bloom right across the nation, from the very tip of Hokkaido down to the tropical islands of Okinawa, which claims the first bloom of the country – as early as February – with petals of vibrant pink.

But out of all the flowers in Japan, including the **ume** (plum flowers) – which are often commonly mistaken for **sakura** due to their similar colour, shape and bloom time – why are the **sakura** particularly revered? It all comes back to **mono no aware**: **sakura** are only in full bloom for a week before falling and covering the ground like a blanket.

O-hanami

To celebrate the blossoms and appreciate their spectacular beauty, many people gather in local parks, bringing along a blanket and packed picnic lunches to enjoy with friends and family as they sit beneath the cherry trees. This special tradition in Japan is called **o-hanami** (お花見). The kanji 花 represents 'flower' and 見 represents 'view' or 'see', which together mean 'flower viewing'.

Matsuri

Large cherry blossom festivals, called **sakura matsuri**, are usually held at prime **o-hanami** spots. If you didn't pack a lunch, you could always go for a wander past the food stalls and see what tasty Japanese festival foods await.



While you're walking around with petals falling

gently in the wind, make sure you don't pass up the opportunity to try the seasonal limited edition **sakura** flavoured ice-creams. These delicious cones of soft pink swirls may look extra sweet, but they have a surprisingly salty side to them, too.

Finally, don't forget to step back from your camera and enjoy nature unfolding around you with a sense of "ah" - or **mono no aware**.





Jessica was a JET participant based in Akita Prefecture from 2017–2019.

Want to experience all that Japan has to offer—including **sakura** season? Apply for the JET Programme!

Visit jetprogramme.org/en/ or contact (02) 9250 1000 to learn more!

World Heritage Site: Itsukushima — a ‘floating’ shrine

Japan's UNESCO World Heritage sites include some of the country's most popular travel destinations today. Some sites have become famous internationally after receiving World Heritage recognition, for example the beautiful villages of Shirakawago and Gokayama with their distinctive gassho-style houses as pictured on the cover. Other sites have long appeared in tourist guides on Japan—a veritable icon is the ‘floating’ shrine of Itsukushima, which was inscribed as a World Heritage site in 1996.

Better known by the name of the island, Miyajima, the shrine is famous for its vermillion painted torii gate standing in the Setonaikai Inland sea. The torii is so well known, it is almost a cliché, but don't let that deter you. You would be missing out.

Itsukushima Shrine with its imposing torii gate is traditionally considered one of Japan's three most scenic spots or 日本三景 (Nihon Sankei), and to this day, the shrine delights visitors with its changing appearance as the tides ebb in and out under the cluster of pavilions that make up the Main Hall of Itsukushima Shrine. The shrine at high tide truly appears to float. At low tide, it is possible to walk out to the very foot of the magnificent torii.

A sacred island

Since ancient times the island of Itsukushima has been an important Shinto site—Shinto being the native religion of Japan. You will also find Buddhist temples on the island, reflecting the merging of Shinto and Buddhist beliefs that developed in Japan. The first shrine is believed to have been built as far back as the late 6th century.

Spiritually significant for centuries, it rose to national prominence more than eight centuries ago, when a powerful warrior and courtier Taira no Kiyomori (1118-81) became a worshipper at the shrine. Out of gratitude for the success he achieved, he had Itsukushima Shrine renovated. The buildings were constructed in the Shinden-zukuri style of Heian Period (794-1185) court buildings. Although many of the buildings have been rebuilt in later eras, they remain largely as in Kiyomori's time. Indeed, it is this integrity of its original design that makes Itsukushima so remarkable.

The famous O-torii or the Grand Torii Gate is now in its 8th incarnation (1875). Its present style is said to date from when it was rebuilt in 1594. And what about that colour? The stunning bright orange-red of the O-torii and the shrine is thought to ward off evil spirits. The five-storeyed pagoda (below) shares the same colour and dates from 1407.



Not just for day trips

At its closest point, Miyajima lies only 500 metres from the Honshu mainland and the city of Hiroshima. Most visitors travel to Miyajima as a day-trip from Hiroshima, but it is well worth considering at least an overnight stay on the island, to enjoy the quiet of the island and the shrine in the morning and evening. There is plenty to fill in a day or two. Mt Misen is 535 metres tall and is also regarded as sacred. You can walk to the summit for beautiful views of the island and out over the sea to the city of Hiroshima. There's also a cable car for a more relaxed way to get to the top.

Staying overnight gives more opportunity to sample some of the island's food. Oysters and eel would be good choices for dinner. The local version of okonomiyaki is another option. The *momiji manju* or maple-leaf shaped, bean-paste filled cakes are the favourite sweet on the island and make for a great souvenir. You'll see them everywhere!



Take a virtual tour of Itsukushima Shrine at www.miyajima.or.jp/english/

This Miyajima Tourist Association website is very informative, explaining the history and significance of the site well. It also has many beautiful images to inspire.

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