



Speech

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC
Governor of New South Wales

Emperor's Birthday Reception

2 March 2022
Official residence of the Consul-General of Japan

'Bujari gamarruwa

Diyin Babana Gamarada Gadigal Ngura'

I pay my respects to the Gadigal people, the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather. Consul-General, Mrs Kiya, distinguished guests: *Konbanwa*.

Australia, as we know, is an ancient land, and so it is a great honour to share with you, Consul-General and Mrs Kiya and the Japanese community of Sydney, an ancient tradition of your land, the celebration of the birthday of the Emperor ... A celebration which, I understand, dates back to 775 to Emperor Kōnin's time in the *Hōki* era. Centrepiece of the celebration was a feast and the service of the Emperor's favourite sake, a tradition which continues to this day.

Today is the first Japanese national day reception in the reign of the 126th Emperor, in the era of "*Reiwa*" - The official English translation of this era is "*beautiful harmony*". "*Reiwa*" is a combination of two words from a beautiful Japanese poem celebrating the blossoming of the plum flower tree: "*Rei*" meaning an auspicious wave of energy of the plum blossoms carried by the wind, and "*Wa*", the general character of peace and tranquillity.

These combined concepts of energy on the one hand, and peace and tranquillity on the other, speak strongly to our relationship with Japan, particularly in a time of uncertain peace. Although this week is a serious time in world affairs, it is an important time to celebrate what we share. In December, Consul-General, you staged the best return concert of what is popularly known as the *COVID-era* with '*Japanaroo*' at the Sydney Town Hall. One of the many highlights was the

fabulous performance of William Barton on the ancient Indigenous instrument, the Didgeridoo and Satsuki Odamura on the ancient Japanese zither.

One of my favourite Australia Day events is the Oz Day 10k wheelchair race at which you, Consul-General, unfailingly attend, even though the Japanese competitors were not able to be here in 2021 or this year. They have been missed. The Japanese team are world champions in this distance and they bring out the best in our champions.

Indeed, we have much to share - from trade to culture, to sport to defence and much more. Most importantly, we share a common humanity. After a war in which we were enemies, we each quickly learned that friendship is the true bond of humankind, as was so respectfully demonstrated in the joint commemorations last month of the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin and the mini-submarine attacks on Sydney Harbour.

Tonight's celebration has two more significant aspects which I wish to mention. The first is that it is the last celebration that Chief Justice Bathurst will attend as Chief Justice with his retirement this week. Chief Justice Bathurst has been a great Chief Justice and an important friend of Japan, not only through his relationship with the Consul-Generals of Japan but through his leadership of Australia in *LawAsia*.

The other is that tonight, our good friend Mr John Ajaka, recently retired President of the NSW Legislative Council, will be conferred with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette Service for his promotion of bilateral ties with Japan.

Thank you, Chief Justice, and Mr Ajaka, for your contribution to this most important relationship.

Mr Kiya, you have done much to enhance the relationship of New South Wales and Japan. It is a relationship which the Imperial family has long fostered with visits by the now Emperor, both as a 14-year-old and then officially with a State visit in 2002. It is - and will remain - a most valued friendship.

On behalf of the people of New South Wales I convey best wishes to His Majesty, the Emperor, to the Empress and to the people of Japan.

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