

2015 Foreign Minister's Commendations

On 19 August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan announced this year's recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendation.

The Foreign Minister's Commendation is awarded to individuals and groups who have made outstanding achievements in the international field, and acknowledges their contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other nations.

In NSW, the following five individuals (listed alphabetically) were awarded because of their remarkable contributions to promoting mutual understanding between Australia and Japan.

Mr Hideo Dekura

Since arriving in Australia in 1972, Mr Hideo Dekura has contributed to the introduction and promotion of Japanese food culture as one of the pioneers of Japanese cooking in Australia. He currently works as a food critic and is engaged in demonstrating Japanese cooking, lecturing, and consulting with Japanese restaurants.

Cr Jenny Dowell

Under the leadership of Cr Jenny Dowell, who assumed the office of Mayor of Lismore City Council in 2008, sister-city exchange and student exchange have been actively pursued between Lismore and Yamato Takada. Notably, in 2013, the Mayor undertook various activities to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the sister-city relationship.

Ms Cathy Jonak

Ms Cathy Jonak has contributed to the promotion of Japanese language education in Australia through her work as a teacher in state high schools and as the senior lecturer in the Japanese language department at The Japan Foundation. She has also worked for the training of Japanese language teachers throughout Australia and the support of student exchange programs.

Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos

Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos has helped to promote mutual understanding between Japanese and Australian business communities through organizing economic seminars and providing them with relevant economic information. He was Executive Director of Australia-Japan Economic Institute from 1989 to 1998, and is currently Managing Director at Australian and Japanese Economic Intelligence.

Ms Sally Lorraine Shimada

Ms Sally Lorraine Shimada has helped to promote Japanese language education through her role as the Japanese Language Officer at the NSW Department of Education, as well as promoting friendship between the two countries through student exchange and sister city relationship programs.

Presentation ceremonies will be conducted over the next two months.

The Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Masato Takaoka, hosted a reception at his official residence on 25 September to present the Foreign Minister's Commendation to **Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos**. More than 80 people from the Japan-Australia and wider business community joined the celebration.



Mr Manuel Panagiotopoulos with Consul-General Masato Takaoka

Consulate-General Activities—continued



A Sogetsu Master at work

55 Years of Ikebana International Sydney Chapter

On 21 August, Consul-General Masato Takaoka attended a luncheon to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the founding of Ikebana International Sydney Chapter. The Consul-General congratulated the chapter on the milestone and thanked past and current members for their long-time dedication and passionate commitment to promoting ikebana. He said that their efforts had brought Japan and Australia 'closely and beautifully together'.

Masters from the Sogetsu school of ikebana came from Japan to attend the luncheon and gave six different ikebana demonstrations.



There was also an exhibition of beautiful ikebana arrangements by Ikebana International Sydney members.