

A message from Consul Isao Omae

Dear Readers,

As the consul in charge of cultural affairs and education, 2017 was notable for the introduction of calligraphy workshops under the consulate's school visit program.

I have really enjoyed seeing young Australians writing Japanese characters for the first time with brush and ink. Many students in our workshops, with very little direct tutoring from us, showed real talent, and what I really admired was how every student was keen to give it a go.

I have also attended several community festivals where Japanese musicians and dancers have energised the crowds with dynamic performances. Local community festivals are a great way to introduce Japanese culture to people throughout greater Sydney. Perhaps some of them were inspired to visit Tumbalong Park for Matsuri-Japan Festival. The 2017 festival attracted an estimated 50,000 people.

I saw a similar spirit up in Byron Bay at the first ever Japan Festival organised by the local Japanese community. It was wonderful to see the support of the shire council, and people could enjoy everything from Japanese drumming to the much quieter pastime of the tea ceremony.

Isao Omae

National Day Reception

The National Day reception in celebration of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan was hosted by the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Keizo Takewaka, on 5 December.

Consul-General Takewaka welcomed more than 300 guests to the reception to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's 84th Birthday. Guests in attendance were from a wide range of fields, representing the breadth of Japan-Australia ties.

After the national anthems were performed by members of the Royal Australian Navy, the Consul-General delivered his welcome remarks, which were followed by a speech by Dr Geoff Lee, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Western Sydney and Multiculturalism. Guests then enjoyed *kagami-biraki* (the ceremonial breaking open of sake barrels), after which the Hon. Tom Bathurst, Chief Justice of NSW, and Mr Takewaka gave the toasts.



Distinguished guests joined the Consul-General to take part in *kagami-biraki*, opening the sake barrels to release the harmony and good fortune thought to be contained in the barrels.

At the reception, sushi, sake and Japanese food were offered, and tourism information was provided by Japanese government organisations and airline companies. A Japanese taiko drumming group also gave a live performance.



Australia-Japan Roundtable

On 6 November, the Australia-Japan Roundtable was held at the residence of Consul-General Keizo Takewaka. The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, Premier of New South Wales, joined as a guest speaker and many Japanese companies participated. In her speech, the Premier pointed to the strong relationship between Japan and NSW.



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