

## A message from Consul Isao Omae

*Dear Readers,*

*By the time you receive this issue, I will be back in Japan. My two years in Sydney have flown by. The Information and Culture Section at this office has many activities, due in no small part to the active Japanese community and the large number of people who study Japanese language, and it has been a busy but rewarding time.*

*Followers of our Facebook would be aware that the school visit team has been very active travelling around New South Wales and the Northern Territory. I have really appreciated the warm welcomes at all the schools the team has visited and hope that the students we did calligraphy with are inspired to continue with their Japanese language studies.*

*It has been a pleasure to work with many Australians in the course of my work and I would like to thank them for their kind support and enthusiasm for Japanese culture. I hope that they will always keep up their connections with Japan and remain 'Japan-fans' as I have become an 'Australia-fan'! I am sure I will always remember my posting in Sydney.*

*I would like to extend a warm thank-you to everyone who has helped me during my time here and hope that we may meet again.*

*Isao Omae*

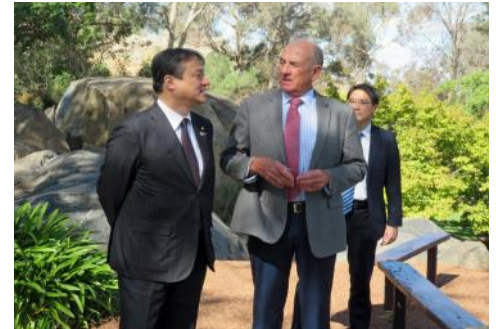
## Cowra-Japan ties

*Recent mutual visits by delegations from Japan and Cowra are examples of the strong ongoing exchange which has helped foster mutual understanding and friendship over so many years.*

On 28 April, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Iwao Horii visited Cowra and met with Mayor Bill West and Cowra-Japan Society Director Tony Mooney. Mr Horii expressed his gratitude for Cowra's continued contribution to Japan-Australia relations and exchanged views on how to strengthen ties in the future.

He also toured the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, the Prisoner of War camp site, and the cemeteries where he laid floral wreaths to pay his respects to the fallen of both countries.

In May, a delegation from Cowra led by Mayor Bill West travelled to Japan visiting Tokyo, Fukuoka Prefecture and Joetsu City, Niigata Prefecture. The three-member delegation paid a courtesy call on Vice-Minister Horii in Tokyo on 9 May. After thanking them for their hospitality in Cowra, Mr Horii said that it was very significant that the delegation took the opportunity of visiting Japan to renew their friendship with those who have contributed to building cordial relations between Japan and Cowra for many years.



**Parliamentary Vice-Minister Iwao Horii speaking with Cr Bill West, Mayor of Cowra, at the Cowra Japanese Garden**



**At the courtesy call in May**

Both parties expressed their willingness to enhance cooperation in the lead up to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the "Cowra Break-out" next year.

*On 5 August 1944, 238 people, including four Australian military personnel, were killed when Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) attempted a mass escape from the local POW camp in an incident known as the "Cowra Break-out".*

## Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting—PALM 8



**Minister for International Development and the Pacific Concetta Fierravanti-Wells and Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Kono**

Leaders from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Fiji, French Polynesia, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Republic of Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Republic of Niue, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu gathered in Iwaki, Fukushima, Japan on 18 and 19 May 2018 for **the Eighth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 8)**.

Japan has been hosting PALM every three years since 1997, providing a forum for leaders to openly discuss various issues such as the challenges regarding their small size and land distribution over a wide area, distance from major international markets, and the vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change.

Australia was represented by the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells. During her visit to Japan for PALM 8, Minister Fierravanti-Wells paid a courtesy call on Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Taro Kono (17 May).

For further details about PALM 8 including statements and a video see:  
[www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/ocn/page25e\\_000190.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/ocn/page25e_000190.html)