

# 春 Festival fun

On 8 December 2018, Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour in Sydney was alive with the sound of happy voices enjoying all the fun of the 2018 **Matsuri-Japan Festival**. Around 40,000 attended, and it was clear to see that some people had really planned ahead to make the most of the day with families coming early to get a prized spot in the shade [below].



As always there were great performances on the stage of music, dance and martial arts, and people thronged to take part in the hands-on activities in the booths or pick up information about travelling to Japan. Many people made their own fun by dressing up in yukata or cosplay.

Before the *kagamibiraki* ceremony [above], Cr Robert Kok, City of Sydney, remarked on how much the Matsuri-Japan Festival had grown over the years.

***That is thanks to the many organisers, supporters and volunteers.***

In other festival news, at **Ryde Granny Smith Festival** on 20 October in Eastwood, it was wonderful to see how much people enjoyed the dynamic performances by Wadaiko Rindo Sydney and Soran Odoritai. The performances were presented by the Consulate-General of Japan, Sydney, as part of our efforts to introduce Japanese culture at local community festivals.

# The 2019 Japanese calendar

Hanging a new calendar on the wall marks the beginning of a new year and represents a fresh start. In Japan there has long been a type of 'double' New Year—the calendar year beginning in January and then a few months later another 'new year' as March gives way to April.



In Japan, the Chinese zodiac year is also used, but instead of waiting until the actual start of the lunar new year which can fall as late as mid-February, the animal of the year appears on Japanese New Year cards and as decorations around the end and start of the calendar year.  
In 2019, we are in the year of the boar or pig.

The first of April is in no way a day for fools in Japan. It is a very important day being the first day of the academic and business year.

In 2019 there will be an additional and poignant extra marker on the Japanese calendar—the *nenjō* 年号 or 'era name' of Heisei will come to an end and a new *nenjō* will be announced.

### A new era begins in 2019

On 30 April, His Majesty the Emperor of Japan will abdicate, and on 1 May, his son, His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito, will accede to the Chrysanthemum Throne. Therefore, 30 April will be the last day of the Heisei 'Achieving Peace' Era and 1 May will be the first day of a new era or *nenjō*. The Enthronement Ceremony will take place later in the year on 22 October.

*Nenjō* coincide with imperial reigns and are a type of official 'slogan', usually with a good meaning. It used to be possible to have several *nenjō* within an imperial reign (an extra challenge for students of Japanese history), but since the Meiji period there can only be the one.

The *nenjō* system is still used extensively in official documents, and if you live and work in Japan, it is essential that you know your date of birth using the era name and the Gregorian calendar.

The next era name is yet to be announced. What is certain is that much careful thought will have been given to the naming of the new *nenjō*.