

Tokyo 2020—sporting ties to the fore

On 18 March 2019, a Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games Reception was held at the residence of the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Keizo Takewaka. Mr John Coates, President of the Australian Olympic Committee, and IOC Chairman of Coordination Commission for Tokyo 2020, gave a special briefing on Tokyo's progress.

More than 70 people attended the event, among them many Sydney-based representatives of Japanese companies who are official sponsors and supporters of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The idea for the reception and briefing grew from a conversation between Mr Coates and the President of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, Mr Yoshiro Mori. Mr Mori, a former Prime Minister of Japan, recorded a message especially for the reception, which was played during Mr Coates' speech.



After thanking Mr Coates, the AOC and Paralympics Australia for their support, Consul-General Takewaka spoke of the close relationship between Japan and Australia. Among other points, he explained that there are fifteen local governments in Japan which are “Host Towns” for the Australian team, and that it is anticipated that these types of ties will lead to ever deeper exchange between Japan and Australia, including in business and cultural fields.

Mr Coates gave a highly informative briefing. He noted that Tokyo will be the largest Olympics in terms of the number of events (339) and the number of sports (33), and it will have the highest participation of female athletes of any Games to date (48.8%). He also mentioned several challenges that have been overcome, discussed the legacy of Tokyo 2020 which will include 440 hectares of new green space, and above all, delivered the main message that Tokyo 2020 preparations are on track and the Tokyo 2020 Games will pay for themselves, a message he feels should be shared.

All three speakers noted that Tokyo 2020 would be an opportunity to show the world Japan's recovery after the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster. In addition, the Olympic flame will be displayed in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures, before the torch relay sets off from Fukushima in March 2020 to travel around Japan.

Ms Jenny Dowell receives Imperial Decoration

On 7 February 2019, Ms Jenny Dowell received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, from the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Keizo Takewaka, who travelled to Lismore in northern New South Wales in order to present the Imperial Decoration. Ms Dowell was recognised by the Government of Japan in the 2018 (Heisei 30) Autumn Conferment of Imperial Decorations.

Ms Dowell, a former Mayor of Lismore City, contributed to maintaining and expanding the sister-city relationship between Lismore and Yamato-Takada in Nara Prefecture, which has continued since 1963. They were the very first sister-cities between Japan and Australia. Ms Dowell was recognized for her work revitalising the relationship, leading to promoting exchange between Japanese and Australian youth, thus enabling the sister-city relationship to deepen and flourish into the future.

In his speech, Consul-General Takewaka highlighted Ms Dowell's contributions to the sister-city relationship and shared his own memories of attending the recent lantern parade to celebrate the 55th anniversary in June 2018. The Consul-General expressed his appreciation and expectation that such grassroots initiatives will lead to the vibrant development of the relationship between Japan and Australia.



Consul-General Takewaka with Ms Jenny Dowell, recipient of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette