

A farewell message from Consul-General Keizo Takewaka

Dear Readers, My posting as Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, which I assumed in October 2016, came to an end in mid-July.

As I reflect on all the events and meetings that I attended during my time as Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, I wish to underline three points.

First, I was able to perform my job because so many people generously and warmly rendered cooperation and support to me and my office, in areas such as the Western Sydney development, sister-city affiliations, Japanese festivals, language education, and Japanese food or martial arts. Many of these people have committed much time and effort, some over many years. I wish to express a profound sense of gratitude for the kindness and cooperative spirit that I encountered on so many occasions.

Second, I am proud of the active and valuable contributions that Japanese residents are making across diverse fields. I thank the Japanese Society of Sydney, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sydney, Japan Club of Sydney, and all other members of the Japanese community for playing an excellent role in the multicultural society of NSW and Australia. Equally important is the Australian-side of this equation: the Australians who welcome and embrace the contribution of the Japanese community, and who make Sydney and New South Wales such a multicultural and vibrant place to live. There are wonderful networks of partnerships across many areas, including business, culture and sport.

Third, there is a real dynamism here. It is not a question of any particular individual, but people's combined strength. Thanks to the multitude and magnitude of connections between Japanese and Australian people, there is true cooperation and friendship that helps to drive our relationship, and from everything I have seen during my posting in this beautiful city, I am certain that this energy will be a defining feature of the Japan-Australia relationship into the future.

Finally, I express my heartfelt gratitude for the kind cooperation and friendship that has been extended to me and ask that you kindly extend the same warm support to my successor.

Keizo Takewaka



Consul-General Keizo Takewaka with Her Honour the Honourable Vicki O'Halloran AO, Administrator of the Northern Territory, and Mr Craig O'Halloran, during a final courtesy call on 9 July in Darwin. The Northern Territory falls under the jurisdiction of this Consulate.

Reiwa Reception

On 6 May, a reception was held in order to celebrate the Accession to the Throne of His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince, at the Consul-General's official residence.

The Accession itself occurred on 1 May and became the first day of the new *genjo* or 'era name', called the Reiwa Era. It was also a historic succession to the Imperial throne from a living Emperor, the first such instance in approximately 200 years.

The reception was attended by over 100 guests, including Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Tom Bathurst AC, Chief Justice of New South Wales, NSW Cabinet Members and Members of Parliament, mayors and councillors, and representatives from the Japanese Society of Sydney, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Japan Club of Sydney.

During the reception, the calligraphy of "Reiwa" written by Mr Ren Yano was displayed, the national anthems were sung by the Sydney Sakura Choir, and glasses of sake were raised to toast and celebrate the new era.

Consul-General Keizo Takewaka closed his speech with the following words to the assembled guests:

I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for your contributions to the Japan-Australia and Japan-NSW relationship and I ask for your ongoing support as we enter a new era of Reiwa in Japan. Based on our far-reaching achievements in the Heisei era, I am convinced that we will continue peace and prosperity in the Reiwa era, and promote the further development of valuable relations between Japan and Australia, as well as Japan and New South Wales.



The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, Premier of NSW, addressing guests



Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of NSW, and Mr Wilson with Consul-General and Mrs Takewaka



Representatives of the Japanese business community [above] and Japanese community groups were also in attendance



2019 Spring Imperial Decorations

On 21 April 2019, the Government of Japan announced the foreign recipients of the 2019 Spring Imperial Decorations, the first to be recognised in the Reiwa Era. **Mrs Roslynn V. Bracher** is among this year's foreign recipients.

In recognition of her contributions to the promotion of Japan-Australia relations and friendship, she is to receive the **Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon**.

Summary of Contributions

Mrs Roslynn Bracher was appointed Honorary Consul-General of Japan in Darwin in April 2002 and held the position for ten years until April 2012. During the decade she held the position, Mrs Bracher greatly contributed to promoting strong relations between Japan and the Northern Territory, fostering friendship between the people of Japan and Australia.

Having worked for a major pearling company which has been closely associated with Japan since the early 1950s, Mrs Bracher drew on her years of experience in business with Japan and knowledge gained from numerous visits to Japan on both business and personal occasions.

In 2008, Mrs Bracher was appointed as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia in part for service to the promotion of cultural relations with Japan.

Explaining Reiwa

Much careful consideration was given to the selection of the name of the new Imperial Era—Reiwa. The standard English translation is "beautiful harmony" and this does capture the essence of the word, but knowing a little more about where the name came from gives a better idea of the aspirations behind the choice.

Reiwa 令和 consists of two Japanese characters: REI 令 plus WA 和. These characters were taken from wording in the *Manyoshu*, Japan's oldest poetry anthology, which

was compiled more than 1,200 years ago. The passage is: "In this auspicious month of early spring, the weather is fine and the wind gentle. The plum blossoms open like powder before a mirror while orchids give off the sweet scent of a sachet." "Reiwa" includes the meaning of culture coming into being and flourishing when people bring their hearts and minds together in a beautiful manner. This meaning has been encapsulated in the English "beautiful harmony".

As far as the formalities, on 1 April 2019, a Cabinet decision was taken on a Cabinet Order to change the name of the era. The final day of the Heisei Era was

30 April 2019, and the first day of the Reiwa Era was 1 May 2019, the day that His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince Naruhito became the new Emperor of Japan.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe explained the name further in a statement after the Cabinet decision: "Just as the plum blossoms announce the arrival of spring after the harsh cold of winter and bloom splendidly in all their glory, all Japanese will be able to make their own blossoms come into full bloom, together with their hopes for tomorrow. We decided on "Reiwa" with the hope that Japan will be just such a nation."