

## **A record of exchange as the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney (Edition 12)**

### **His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday Reception**

27 March

On Thursday, 26 February, we held a reception to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday at my official residence.

Last year, we were blessed with good weather, but this year, unfortunately it rained, and we were unable to use the outdoor space, which made it somewhat cramped for our guests. Around 190 guests, almost the same number as last year joined us on the night and we sincerely thank all the guests who attended despite the rain.

The occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday Reception is also an opportunity to promote Japan's attractions, and we showcased Japanese culture, as well as Japanese products and companies active in Sydney. This year, we also had performers of traditional instruments as part of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Hokkaido Bureau's promotion of the culture of the Ainu, indigenous people who have long inhabited the northern part of the Japanese archipelago, particularly the island of Hokkaido.

Preparations at the residence were made with rain in mind, so I believe the reception proceeded smoothly on site, however, since the residence is located in the suburbs, traffic jams in the city centre caused longer travel times than usual, which inconvenienced our guests.

The celebration ceremony itself began with the national anthems of Japan and Australia. Mr Sadaharu Muramatsu, the artistic director of the Strathfield Symphony Orchestra, conducted the Sydney Japanese Chamber Orchestra, which is composed of young musicians, and together with beautiful vocals by Ms Kay Hughson, they delivered a wonderful performance.

After the anthems, I gave a speech, which was followed by a speech from the guest of honour, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, and then a speech from the Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong, Minister for Industry and Trade, who attended on behalf of the Premier of NSW.

In my speech, I mentioned that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia, and I expressed my respect for the efforts of our predecessors that have led to today's close Japan-Australia

relationship. I also read a congratulatory message from Foreign Minister Motegi on his behalf. In addition, I mentioned the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 to be held in Australia in March and expressed my anticipation for the final match between the Japanese and Australian teams in Sydney (as expected, both teams played a wonderful close game in the final on 21 March, which became a major event in Japan-Australia relations). Governor Beazley revealed her and her husband's great appreciation for Japanese aesthetics and that her husband is even considering building a Japanese garden at their private residence. She also said that His Majesty the Emperor's recitation of a poem praying for peace at the New Year's "Utakai Hajime no Gi" (Imperial New Year's Poetry Reading) was impressive. Minister Chanthivong, interweaving Japanese phrases throughout his speech, said that through his visit to Japan last year, he clearly understood that the spirit of Japanese "omotenashi" (hospitality) attracts many Australian tourists.

Among the many other guests in attendance were President of the Legislative Council Ben Franklin, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Greg Piper, Deputy President of the Legislative Council Rod Roberts (also Co-Chair of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Japan), Mayor Paul Smith (Cowra Council), Mayor Trenton Brown (City of Ryde), Lord Mayor Tania Brown (City of Wollongong), Mayor Josh Black (Dubbo Regional Council), and many others from economic, cultural, and artistic fields.



**Giving my remarks**



**HE Governor Beazley**



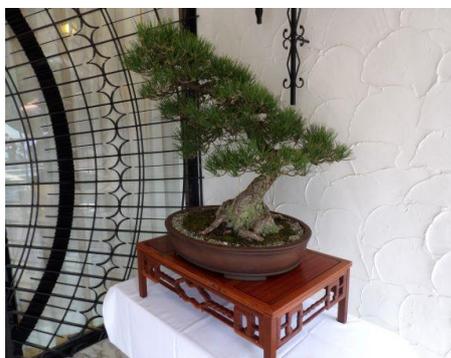
**Minister Chanthivong**

The above is an overview of the ceremony, but as I mentioned at the beginning, one of the aims was to promote the charms of Japan, so I will explain a little more about those arrangements.

First, a magnificent bonsai by Ms Megumi Bennett was placed at the entrance, and a splendid ikebana arrangement by Ms Hiroko Prado, President of Ikebana International Sydney Chapter, was placed in front of the receiving screen for guests to enjoy.



**National flags and ikebana  
arranged by Ikebana International**



**Bonsai by Ms Megumi Bennett**

In the multi-purpose space, there were performances of the *mukkuri*, the Ainu traditional mouth harp, and demonstrations and explanations of Ainu culture. In addition, the Hokkaido Bureau of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism explained Japan's co-existence policy with Ainu culture, which garnered significant interest from Australian guests. Furthermore, four other Japanese government organizations –JETRO, Japan Foundation, CLAIR, JNTO – participated and explained their initiatives for Japan-Australia exchange in economic, cultural, sister city, and tourism aspects. An Australian non-profit organization, the Shepherd Centre, which supports children with hearing impairments, also participated and explained their activities.



**PR booth by the Hokkaido Bureau**

In addition, Japanese companies active in Australia provided and exhibited their products, allowing us to showcase the wide-ranging contributions of Japanese companies to the NSW economy. Listed alphabetically, the following companies were a great success: Coopers (provided Sapporo Beer), FUJIFILM (exhibited cameras and mammography models, and

provided instant photography services with Instax), Lion (Kirin Beer affiliate, provided Kirin Ichiban Shibori and Hyoketsu), Nippon Food Supplies (Takara Shuzo affiliate, provided sparkling sake Mio), Pentel (created on-the-spot custom ballpoint pens with various colour combinations), and Toyota (exhibited the new Crown FCEV hydrogen fuel cell vehicle and conducted test drives). Furthermore, as souvenirs, guests received Kikkoman sashimi soy sauce, yakiniku and yakitori sauce, sushi vinegar and soy sauce sets, as well as Suntory BOSS canned coffee.

Another highlight was the food prepared by Mr Satoru Onishi, Executive Chef for the Consul-General. For appetizers, salmon bruschetta and ratatouille-style bruschetta were served. The main courses included roast beef, scallop with kelp-dashi jelly, braised pork belly with potato *ankake*, *unagi maki* (dashi-maki), and shrimp tempura. For dessert, fruit cups and matcha Basque cheesecake were enjoyed. Sushi was also prepared to welcome guests. All dishes seemed to be well received, as each item quickly disappeared. Based on the menu from last year's reception, Mr Onishi's long hours of thought and preparation paid off, and I believe we were able to further promote the appeal of Japanese cuisine.



**Mr Onishi preparing dishes**

Although this year's reception was unfortunately held in the rain, many people joined us and the event itself was successfully carried out. We apologise for the congestion that resulted, but we would like to express our sincere gratitude once again to all the guests who took time out of their busy schedules to attend, to the sponsoring companies, and to everyone who contributed to a wonderful evening.