

Letters and Essays from Sydney 2.0 – Volume 17

～ Imperial Decorations ～

4 November

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On 3 November, the Government of Japan announced the recipients of the 2023 Autumn Imperial Decorations.

Among the recipients is Mr Jonathan O'Dea former Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly who was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in recognition of his significant contribution to developing friendly ties and promoting mutual understanding between Japan and NSW.

At the NSW Legislative Assembly, Mr O'Dea also served as the Chair of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Friendship Group and contributed to the promotion of friendship and exchange with Asia-Pacific countries including Japan. He kindly attended various events held at the official residence of the consul-general, including the Emperor's Birthday Reception. Furthermore, he is a graduate of a Japan-Australia educational exchange program sponsored by a Japanese company and has helped to further educational and youth exchange between our two countries.

I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to Mr O'Dea on receiving the Imperial Decoration.



Imperial Decorations occur twice a year, in spring and in autumn.

In the 2023 Spring Imperial Decorations there were two recipients from NSW: Mayor Bill West (he stepped down as mayor in September) and Mr Thomas Bathurst, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.

Former Mayor of Cowra, Cr Bill West, was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette in recognition of his contribution to the promotion of exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and Australia. As a Councillor since 1999 and as Mayor of Cowra Shire Council since 2008, Mr West supported the holding and management of the annual memorial service held in August at the Japanese War Cemetery in Cowra commemorating the 1944 incident known as the Cowra Breakout when Japanese POWs broke out of the prisoner-of-war camp, and he contributed to the memorial service's continuous observation. He also supported the holding of the Cherry Blossom Festival and the Koyo (Autumn Leaves) Festival and other events at the nearby Japanese Garden as well as the ongoing maintenance of the beautiful Sakura (Cherry Tree) Avenue, also located in Cowra. As chair of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, he supported the maintenance and upkeep of the garden's facilities, contributing to the introduction of Japanese culture. In addition, he worked to deepen exchange with Joetsu City (Niigata Prefecture) and Fukuoka Prefecture, and contributed to the promotion of mutual understanding and the creation of friendly ties between Japan and Australia at the grassroots level.

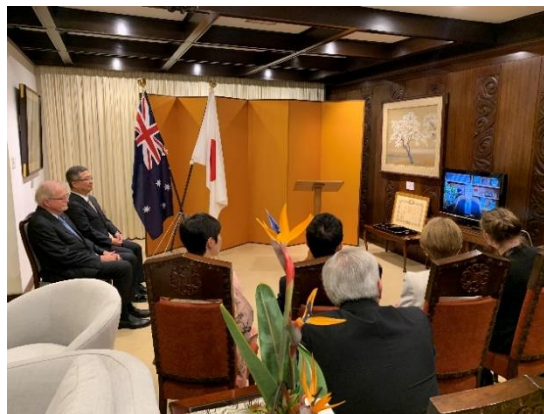
Next year, 2024, will mark the 80th anniversary of the Cowra Breakout. I would like to commend Cr West for his achievements towards exchange between Japan and the town of Cowra which is called the "spiritual home" of the Japan-Australia relationship.

On the day of the conferment ceremony, it was an honour for me to be able to present the Imperial Decoration certificate and medal to him in front of his family and colleagues and many others who are involved in Japan-Australia friendship.



Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and former Chair of the Judicial Section of the Law Association for Asia and the Pacific (LAWASIA), Mr Thomas Frederick Bathurst was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star in recognition of his contribution to strengthening ties between Japan and Australia and the promotion of mutual understanding in the judicial field. As the Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court from 2011, Mr Bathurst provided support to visitors from Japanese courts, including Justices of the Supreme Court of Japan (SCJ), and his cooperation enhanced overseas research by Japanese judges and inspections by the SCJ. In addition, as Chair of LAWASIA, he co-hosted Conferences of Chief Justices of Asia and the Pacific, and in particular, contributed to the success of the 17th Conference held in Tokyo in 2017.

On the day of the conferment ceremony, attendees watched a special congratulatory video message in English which had been sent by Japan's Chief Justice TOKURA Saburo. For my part, it was a privilege to be able to present the Imperial Decoration certificate and medal to Mr Bathurst in the presence of his family and friends from the judicial community. Also in attendance was Assistant Judge SASAKI Kohei, who had been dispatched to Sydney from SCJ to undertake research, and there was much discussion about cooperation in the judicial field.



I think the awarding of Imperial Decorations to acknowledge people who have contributed to the promotion of friendly ties between Japan and Australia is very important as a symbol of the relationship between our two countries. This consulate will provide support and continue its involvement as much as possible.

(Ends)