

2007 LGOTP Participant's Report



Name: Andrew Hannay

Position: Project Officer

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Host Institution: Saitama City,

Saitama Prefecture, Japan

Training Field: General Administration

From May to November 2007 I had the amazing opportunity to participate in the CLAIR Local Government Official Training Program. For 6 months I was posted at Saitama City and undertook a traineeship in many different sectors of the city's local government. This was surely one of the great experiences of my life. It was an excellent opportunity to learn about the Japanese system of Local government, Saitama city and Japanese language and culture. Through my participation in this program I have gained a much greater understanding of international and cross cultural relationships.

After a brief orientation in Tokyo I spent the first six weeks at the Japan Intercultural Academy of Municipalities (JIAM) in Otsu. Whilst there I also had the opportunity to get to know other trainees from many different parts of the world, which was definitely one of the best outcomes of my participation in this program. From July 5th I travelled to Saitama city to undertake my specialised training. Whilst at Saitama city, I undertook a general administration traineeship, focused on many different topics, and covering the entire spectrum of Local government administration. I worked with over 40 different departments during my traineeship, including those dealing with Town Planning, Water and Sewerage, the economy, agriculture and education.

At first I found that having only 6 weeks of Japanese training and the great differences in language and culture made it very difficult to communicate. However, being immersed in the language and culture and especially through participating in a home stay arrangement I quickly picked up a sufficient amount of language skills to communicate and effectively undertake my training. I have learnt a lot about international relationships, and feel I have a better understanding of the potential role of Japan, Australia, and Townsville, on a global scale. The approaches taken to solve problems and carry out programs in Japan are very different to that of Australian Local Government. I was especially impressed by the way certain departments worked closely with the community and the facilities provided to the public. During my entire stay in Saitama I also had the wonderful opportunity to live with a Japanese family. I also went on many sight seeing tours around the local area with my host family, fellow staff or friends. I got to see four different local festivals, and even has the opportunity to participate in a float at the Saitama Citizens Festival, helping carry a giant 80 meter snake around the city's new urban centre.

I strongly recommend participation in the Local government Officials Training Program to any council staff wanting to learn more about Japan, international local government systems, and themselves.



Andrew Hannay