

Correspondence

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Welcome to Saitama Prefecture

Get to Know Saitama Prefecture!

Saitama is located just north of Tokyo, close to the centre of the metropolis and with convenient public transportation. The city of Kawagoe, located just 30 minutes from Tokyo by train, features historical streets lined with traditional Japanese warehouses. The Chichibu region, though located 70 minutes from Tokyo, is the perfect place for enjoying hands-on experiences, such as fruit-picking and making soba noodles, and appreciating nature, such as the beautiful hills covered in shibazakura (mountain phlox) in spring.

Kawagoe: Streets Lined with Traditional Warehouses and Candy Shops

Experience the feel of old Edo (present-day Tokyo) on a walk through Kawagoe's streets, which are lined with traditional warehouses and are a popular draw for tourists who want to experience the Japan of the past. This historical cityscape was recognised as a designated Important Traditional Architecture Area by the national government in 1999 and as one of the 100 Beautiful and Historic Sites of Japan in 2007.



Streets with Traditional Japanese Warehouses

Near these streets is Kashiya Yokochō, also known as Confectionery Row or Penny Candy Lane. While the stone-paved road inlaid with coloured glass is enough to draw anyone's eye, this area's main attraction lies in the many traditional candy stores and snack shops beloved by the local Japanese population and visitors young and old for decades.



Kashiya Yokochō (Penny Candy Lane)

The Chichibu Region: Hitsujiyama Park's Shibazakura and Nagatoro Boat Tours

The Chichibu region is blanketed in greenery and nature, but a particularly famous spot is the shibazakura hills in Hitsujiyama Park. The shibazakura bloom from April through early May and welcome enthusiastic tourists every year. Mt. Bukō, a symbol of Chichibu, provides a backdrop for the 17,500 square meters of pink and light blue blossoms that sprout from the 400,000 shibazakura plants.

Nagatoro, also located in the Chichibu region, is essentially a valley through which one of Japan's most famous rivers, the Arakawa, flows. Nagatoro's natural beauty calls to mind carefully crafted works of art that take an observer's breath away. Visitors can immerse themselves in this gorgeous valley by taking a ride down the Arakawa in a traditional Japanese boat and learning more about Nagatoro from their boat tour guide. From gentle curves to rolling rapids, visitors can truly experience the force and beauty of the river and the region.



Shibazakura at Hitsujiyama Park



Nagatoro Boat Tour

25th Anniversary “Tokimeki international school”

From 5 to 6 August, we supported Odawara city (Kanagawa prefecture) delegates' visit to their friendship city, Manly. The cities have their mutual exchange program called “Tokimeki International School”. This year marked the 25th anniversary of their great program. The Mayor of Odawara also visited Manly to celebrate the anniversary. This time, 25 students enjoyed the program; the students stayed at their host families' homes, whose children visited Odawara in early July. The Odawara delegates learned Manly Council's activities with a study tour, hearing about the protection of little penguins and maintenance of the area's natural beauty.



In the past 25 years, around 1,450 young people from both cities participated in the Tokimeki International School program.

Thanks to this program, many of them have chosen to move into international fields as they reach adulthood. This program has a great positive impact on young people in both cities. We are sure that their friendship will help keep the deep ties between Japan and Australia.

Penrith, Fujieda and Hakusan sister city activities

On 6 August, we attended a special reception organised by Penrith City Council to commemorate the Bicentenary of Penrith, which has sister city relationships with Fujieda city (Shizuoka prefecture) and Hakusan city (Ishikawa prefecture). Last year marked the 30th anniversary with Fujieda and 25th anniversary with Hakusan. Delegates from both cities also attended the reception to celebrate their sister city's important milestone.

We met one of the volunteers who supported this memorial reception, a former JET participant who worked in Fujieda! We are delighted to know that there are connections between sister city relationships and the JET Program.



On 8 August, the Deputy Mayor of Fujieda City, city councillors and staff came to our office on Martin Place in Sydney. Our Director gave them a briefing on Australian politics, economics and the local government system.

As well, on 12 August, we attended a farewell reception for students from Fujieda. All of them gave the attendees a farewell speech, talking about their stay in Penrith and their future with much wit. We are sure they will support activities between Japan and Australia as well as between Fujieda and Penrith in the years to come.

This month we met many people supporting sister city activities in Penrith. We can see their volunteer spirit supporting healthy sister city activities.

Port Macquarie Hastings and Handa

commemorate 25th Anniversary

The sister city relationship between Port Macquarie Hastings and Handa (Aichi prefecture) has marked its 25th anniversary this year. A special delegation group including the Mayor of Handa and the Speaker of the City Assembly visited Port Macquarie Hastings to celebrate their milestone.



We were fortunate to attend the celebratory reception on 20 August. During the reception, delegates spoke both of past and of future activities under the auspices of their relationship. We heard they are considering cooperation between universities in their respective local government areas.

Also, all the attendees danced "Bon-odori", which is a Japanese traditional summer dance. We look forward to seeing their sister city activities become even more vivid as the years progress.

24th Kawasaki Junior Cultural Prize winners' visit to Wollongong

We attended the welcome reception for the 24th Kawasaki Junior Cultural Prize winner visit in Wollongong on 20 August.

This cultural prize is an art and essay competition for Kawasaki year 5-6 students and sponsored by Kawasaki Shinkin Bank. The competition has been providing opportunities for students as Kawasaki International Friendship Ambassadors to visit Wollongong, their sister city.



Two winners each from the art and essay categories, chosen from a total of 4,658 entrants, got the chance to go this year.

At the reception, the winners handed their works to the Deputy Lord Mayor of Wollongong – the works will be displayed in the Wollongong Council offices and open to local residents. Some students learning Japanese language in Wollongong attended the reception and made speeches in Japanese, much to the delight of the visitors from Kawasaki.

Next year will be two milestones in this relationship: the Kawasaki Junior Art Cultural Prize will mark its 25th anniversary in 2016, and the total number of ambassadors will have exceeded 100 students.

Remuneration system of Local Government Employees in NSW



From 24 to 27 August, we supported Professor Nishimura in her research into the remuneration system of local government employees in NSW.

During her stay, she and her colleague visited the Industrial Relations Commission, NSW Industrial Relations, Ashfield City Council, Manly Council, City of Sydney, Local Government NSW, United Services Union and Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government.

There are some differences between the Japanese system and Australian system like award systems and job evaluation systems. However thanks to their thorough explanations, Professor Nishimura and her colleague got a good understanding of the Australian pay system.

In Japan, public sector salary is one of the major concerns, and Japanese local governments are required to implement personal evaluation systems for their workers by April 2016.

In light of this, their research will be of much use to many local governments in Japan.

We really appreciate the warm welcome we received during this visit, and look forward to working with them again soon.

Nagoya City High School Students Visiting Sydney

16 Nagoya City High School Students came to Sydney for their 10 day Study Tour. Right after arriving at the Sydney International Airport on 28 July, they directly headed to Chester Hill High School to participate in a School Visit Programme which ran until 2 August.

Japanese students were delighted to be asked about Japan by their Australian buddies and they were impressed about how the class was run, not only by the teachers but also by the students. In addition they realised how important it is to know about their own country, Japan, and to study English.



At Kiama, Donna at the 2nd from the right

Unlike last year, they experienced school visits only, at Chester Hill High School and St Aloysius College. They were then hosted by David Bucher – chairman of the Sydney-Nagoya Sister City Committee – and committee member Donna, as well as Andy and Kay – friends of David – for 2 nights at their residences near Jamberoo. They kindly took the students to Kiama to do the Gerringong Coast Walk' section 3. The weather was incredibly fine. Students got very excited and were touched by the beautiful view from the coast.

On the other hand the accompanying teachers stayed at a hotel in Jamberoo during those 2 days. They also seemed nostalgic, as if they had been in a film, about the classical hotel with a pub on the ground level, people around the village and other cyclists gathering there.

On 4 August students made a courtesy call to Town Hall, where they met Councillor Robert Kok who kindly hosted them with an afternoon tea, after Phillip Black and Kieran Tonge, current committee members, gave them a tour of the Sydney Town hall. At the event, the students were happy that they could see their hosts, David and Donna, again. This year marks the 35th anniversary of sister city relationship between Sydney and Nagoya. Students will not forget the very warm hospitality shown by the committee members.



At Town Hall, Robert Kok at the 3rd from the right on the middle line, David Bucher at the 4th from the left on the 3rd line

Celebration for the 35th Anniversary of

Victoria-Aichi sister-state relationship

Between 23-25 August, Vice-Governor of Aichi Prefecture Mr Senta Morioka, Vice-Chairman of the Prefecture Mr Takanari Sugiura and their delegation visited Victoria for the 35th anniversary of the Aichi-Victoria sister-state relationship.

The visitors first made a courtesy call to Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria and the Hon. Daniel Andrews MP, Victorian Premier. Then the Victorian Government held the Engaging Japan Forum as a memorable project for the celebration, in which two workshops were held.

One was about the value of sister-city relationships, for which our Director Mr Katsunori Kamibo gave a presentation. Another one was about harnessing trade and investment opportunities between Australia and Japan. The Engaging Japan Forum was a success and allowed many representatives of local governments from all around Victoria to discuss about the challenges and rewards of sister-city relationships. In addition, a similar forum, called Japan-Victoria Business Forum was held by a Japanese semi-government body the following day.

At the “Friends of Aichi” reception held by Aichi on 25 August, two sister-university agreements were signed: one between Deakin University and Aichi Prefectural University, and another between Swinburne University of Technology and Aichi Prefectural University. The relationship between Victoria and Aichi was strengthened at the event, and both parties felt that their relationship was more of a familial one than a simple friendship, and hoped for continuous exchange and communication.



“Family rather than friend, whatever happen!”



Tow Sister- University agreements signed

MINAMI ALPS STUDENTS VISIT QUEANBEYAN

~ Article and photos from Queanbeyan City Council ~



Tree Planting in Sister City Park

During their stay the group enjoyed so much that is on offer in Queanbeyan and Canberra including trips to the Australian National Museum, the National Gallery and Questacon. As is a tradition the group planted a tree in Sister City Park Queanbeyan.

A highlight of the trip was getting up close and personal with kangaroos (on the local Queanbeyan Golf Course), sampling traditional foods (kangaroo, emu and crocodile) and participating in sheep shearing. Another highlight was a day spent at Karabar High School.

Queanbeyan's valued relationship with Sister City Minami Alps was strengthened recently when a group of students and teachers from the Japanese region visited Queanbeyan for ten days from 30 July to 7 August 2015. Eight students and two chaperones visited with all participants being home hosted.



With Mayor Tim Overall, General Manager Peter Tegart and Sister City Co-ordinator Helen Hone



Parliament House Canberra



Chaperones Kaori Hara and Hajime Niitsu

JETAA Queensland Activities

~ Article and photos from Richard Wilding, JETAA Queensland ~

University of Queensland Careers Fair – 25 March

Members of JETAA and CLAIR spent a busy day introducing the JET Programme to students at UQ. The interest level was very high – I think we talked for four hours non-stop! Thanks to Noriyuki Shiba of CLAIR, Sydney, for making the trip up to Brisbane to help us out.

Members Dinner – 9th May

Our autumn dinner at Bishamon gave a chance for members to meet the new committee while sharing some great sukiyaki and shabu shabu. This year we had quite a few of the newly selected JETs join us for some pre-departure tips and advice.



Brisbane River Walk – 24 May

A group of dedicated members got up early on a Sunday for a casual walk along the re-opened River Walk from New Farm to the CBD where we enjoyed a relaxing drink at a local cafe. The latest 2 month old member of JETAA was the centre of attention. The weather was perfect and the feedback on the event has been great, especially regarding its family-friendliness, so another walk is planned for the future.



Pre-departure Workshops – June & July

The JETAA committee helped organise and run the workshops at the Consulate-General of Japan for this year's departing JETs. Topics included a Q&A panel on life as a JET, using transport, team teaching, survival Japanese and navigating cultural differences. This year's group is very diverse but extremely switched-on – super ALTs in the making! We wish them all the best during their time on the programme and hope they will get involved with JETAA when they decide to come back to Australia.

Unfortunately, our trivia event didn't go ahead this year, but we are planning a bumper hanami under the jacarandas in New Farm Park in October.

Richard Wilding

President – JETAA QLD

Farewell Message



Julien Takumi Ansart
Research & Liaison Officer

Time indeed flies, and more than two years have passed since I took up my role at CLAIR. Working at CLAIR has allowed me to meet people and see places that I would otherwise not have, and I will be forever grateful for the opportunity I was given.

As well as to my colleagues, past and present, I would like to thank all of those who have helped me during these two wonderful years, and wish you all success in all future endeavours.

Cheers.!

From the Director

1 - Outline of Local Governments in Japan - A Year of Local Governments in Japan

As you may already know, I have worked for four local governments in Japan during my career (Niigata Prefecture, Yokohama City, Wakayama Prefecture and Sakai City), so in every upcoming issue I would like to talk to you about some of the seasonal events and work that Japanese local governments do. In this issue however, I will introduce a simple outline of Japanese local governments.

Japan has a two-tier local government system which consists of, as of 2015, 47 prefectures and 1,718 municipalities (including 790 cities). Each local government has an assembly as its highest decision making body, whose members are directly elected by its citizens. The head of a local government – a governor in a prefecture, and a mayor in a municipality – is also directly elected.

Almost all staff of a local government start their careers in their 20s, working for the same local government until their retirement at the age of 60 – a typical “lifetime employment”. So governors, mayors, and members of assemblies often change, but the local government offices do not.

The financial year of local governments runs from April to March, and almost all changes in staff are done in April. Right now – autumn in Japan – there are many events held by local governments and their organisations, because new teams were organised in April and they have been planning and preparing for events taking place this season. I look forward to telling you about these in the upcoming issues.