Festivals around Japan: Vol. 11 Fukushima

Samurai Festival in Sydney 2016

A group of Samurai students visiting Australia from Minami Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture.

In early August, eight Samurai came to Sydney from Japan to take part in the Samurai Festival in Sydney.

A variety of Samurai performances were displayed on stages in Manly Scenic Walkway and Martin Place, attracting large audiences and media attention.

The Samurai were high school students of Minami Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture who were affected by the tsunami and nuclear plant accident due to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

Minami Soma City has a traditional 1,000 year-old Samurai festival, called Soma Nomaoi, considered an important intangible cultural asset by the central government of Japan. It is part of traditional samurai culture and has been continually celebrated since the Warring States Period. As Soma Nomaoi is a shrine ritual festival, the general public rarely get involved.

As a result, students started an event, the Samurai Festival, which incorporates a style more familiar to the general public in May, 2015.

This festival allows participants to wear rental armour to join battles, or to make their own armor at a workshop. In the Samurai Village attractions, you can take photos of participants in real armour, watch Samurai dramas, and hang out with costume players.

This is a Samurai festival for the younger generation which is a bit different from Soma Nomaoi. Their purpose is to help promote tourism by performing traditional samurai battles and introducing samurai culture inside and outside Japan to help revitalise Minami Soma.

In the Samurai Festival in Sydney one could also see a few rescue volunteers who headed to the north east of Japan for investigation and rescue activities after the Great East Japan Earthquake.
NSW Fire Brigade helped coordinate the stage in Martin Place and invited students to the rescue fire boat, treating them with a cruise around Sydney bay. Students of Minami Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture visited Sydney with a strong will to spread their local samurai traditional culture across the world to establish a foothold for the revitalization of Fukushima. They completed their mission brilliantly. The Samurai Festival is annually held in May, and Soma Nomaoi is held in Minami Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture in August every year.

Why don’t you come and see the passionate samurai performance in Fukushima?

Supporting Hokkaido prefecture

On 1 and 2 August, CLAIR Sydney supported the activities of the Hokkaido Prefectural Government. From 2014, the Hokkaido government has been working on increasing exports by focusing on promoting Japanese sake and agricultural produce. Hokkaido officials came to Sydney to conduct research on how to market its produce in Australia. CLAIR Sydney provided support by accompanying the Hokkaido officials to Australian liquor stores and supermarkets and also briefed them on the Australian economy. As of late, Japanese sake in Australia is imported from other prefectures in Japan. Hokkaido will be making a plan to break into the market based on the research they are currently conducting.

Supporting the Joetsu and Cowra friendship

On 7 August, Joetsu City Mayor, Mr Hideyuki Murayama and his staff visited Cowra, NSW and then stopped by our office in Sydney where we made a presentation outlining Australia for them. During World War II, a prisoner of war camp was built in Cowra where many Japanese POWs were detained and where the Cowra Outbreak of 1944 took place, causing casualties amongst both Japanese and Australians. Joetsu City was also the site of a prisoner of war camp where many Australian POWs were detained. Joetsu City and Cowra now have a long-standing friendship agreement and staff exchange program which we hope will strengthen the goodwill and friendship not only between the two cities but also between Australia and Japan.
Nagoya Students visit to Sydney

From 26 July to 4 August, 12 high school students from Nagoya visited Sydney for a ten-day study tour. First, they visited Cherry Brook Technology High School to experience classes in Australia for three days. After that, they headed for Kiama to meet some of the Sydney-Nagoya Sister City Committee members and their host families. At night, they had a good time enjoying dinner at a popular restaurant in the area where the students also surprised patrons with a dance performance. The host families also kindly took the students to Kiama to do the Gerringong Coast Walk during their stay. They learned not only about the beauty of Australia but also the Australian culture and way of life.

On 1 August, they visited St. Aloysius College to attend class with students in Australia. During the class, St Aloysius students studying Japanese delivered a presentation on sports and animals in Australia in Japanese for the visiting Nagoya students. The students also formed teams to take part in a quiz about Australian and Japanese culture and language which proved to be a lot of fun. The visiting Nagoya students made use of their prepared self-introduction speeches and photos of Nagoya during their conversation with the students from St Aloysius.

On 2 August, Nagoya student’s delegation visited splendid Sydney Town Hall to pay a courtesy call to Councillor Robert Kok. Following a delightful tour of Town Hall led by Kieran Tonge, the president of the Friends of Sydney Town Hall, Nagoya students participated in the Welcome Reception co-hosted by Cr. Robert Kok and Sydney-Nagoya Sister City Committee. The Lord Mayoress' room was filled with an enjoyable mood, combined with Japanese song and dance performed by the students.

On 3 August, Nagoya students visited Shore school and Wenona school in North Sydney. All the Nagoya students tried their best to communicate in English with the Aussie students who participated actively in group discussions. After the study tour, the students interviewed CLAIR staff about life in Australia and career progression, expressing what they dreamed for their futures.

On 4 August, Nagoya students visited Taronga Zoo which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Taronga and Nagoya Higashiyama Zoo, as part of their sister zoo relationship, have been exchanging a variety of flora and fauna via an exchange programme over the past 30 years since the first Koala went to Japan in 1984. The students were really proactive in sparking conversation with locals in English during the study tour and a student representative also made a speech in front of a number of sister city committee members in Town Hall. We believe the students will be active global citizens in various fields in the future.
Shiroishi students visit to CLAIR Sydney office

On 2 August, ten junior high school students from Shiroishi city in Miyagi prefecture visited our CLAIR Sydney office. We gave them a brief presentation on Australia and the role of CLAIR Sydney. We also answered many questions about work and life in Australia based on our own personal experiences.

Shiroishi City is sister cities with Hurstville city. As part of this relationship, every year, junior high school students from Shiroishi fly over to visit Hurstville. The visits promote cultural understanding and help develop global-minded young adults for the workforce.

This year, they visited Cowra and Canberra for homestay and saw many heritage-listed sites. They also visited our office for the first time to gain insights into working abroad.

Our staff (from both Japan and Australia) talked about the differences in working conditions and everyday life between the two countries. As most of the students aspired to work overseas or at least have the opportunity to continue to use their English skills, we encouraged them to pursue their dreams and extolled the virtues of life abroad.

With globalisation progressing at a rapid rate, it will be even more important to be proficient in the global language, English. As a result of their visit, we trust the students are now even more inspired to achieve their goals. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours and hope to see them working abroad in the near future.

30th Anniversary of Mildura-Kumatoriori Sister city exchange programme

On 22 August, we attended a special dinner organised by Mildura City Council that welcomed the visiting delegation from Kumatoriori Town in Osaka. The cities have been conducting a mutual students exchange program for 30 years and have been sister cities for 15 years.

Both mayors expressed deep gratitude to the host families of each city, which for many years supported the youth exchange and expressed their desire to continue their friendly exchange into the future. Kumatoriori junior high school students attended a local school class and went camping together during their homestay.
At SMASH! The Sydney Manga and Anime Show

On 20 and 21 August, CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at SMASH! (The Sydney Manga and Anime Show) 2016. SMASH! is one of the biggest events of Japanese pop culture in Australia and this year marks its 10th anniversary. At SMASH!, the Australian representatives who will be competing at the WCS (World Cosplay Summit) next year in Nagoya, were also selected.

CLAIR Sydney promoted Japanese local governments that use animation or comics as part of advertising strategies. Many visitors came by our booth showing deep interest in Japanese pop culture and history. We were also promoting the JET programme at the event with the help of the Consulate General of Japan in Sydney and JETAA NSW. As most of the visitors were young students we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to promote the JET programme and answer any questions potential candidates might have.

We hope we were able to help them with some information about the JET programme and places to visit in Japan. Thanks to all who dropped by our booth to say konnichiwa.

We look forward to providing you with more exciting information about local governments in Japan.

Supporting Hiroshima city councillors

On 25th August, city councillors from Hiroshima visited our office. We gave a presentation on Australia and how to attract international tourists to Hiroshima city and discussed differences between Australia and Japan, resident registration systems, the census and the election system.
Supporting Nagoya city’s activities

Visiting a former chair of the Sydney-Nagoya Sister City Committee in Tasmania
On 22-23 August, CLAIR accompanied Ms Mayumi Kondo who was sent from Nagoya City to visit Mr John McSullea, a former chair of the Sydney–Nagoya Sister City Committee. John was a long-standing member of this committee, but he recently moved to Launceston in Tasmania. He regularly flew over to participate in the Nagoya Festival held every year in October. Although he’s no longer in Sydney, he still keeps in touch with other members of the committee and he was keen to know more about the current relationship between both cities. John was eager to get back to Nagoya after our visit brought back many fond memories.

Fifteen years ago, Ms Kondo first met John when she was despatched from Nagoya as a trainee to the City of Sydney on a 12-month program. This reunion in collaboration with CLAIR Sydney’s support further contributes to the continuity and development of this sister-city relationship.

Supporting Fukushima’s Samurai Festival

On 4 August, students from Minamisoma city, Fukushima prefecture, visited North Sydney Girls High School and Davidson High School in Sydney. The visit was part of the Rainbow Project sponsored by the Japan Club of Sydney, a non-profit organization. The students showcased a samurai performance wearing traditional samurai armour, gave a presentation in English, and also sold some samurai goods. The visiting students had a great time holding conversations with Australian students in English.

On 9 August, the students displayed a samurai performance in Martin Place, the heart of Sydney’s CBD. Students from Peakhurst and Orange high were among the many who came to see the performance. The students’ main goal is to showcase the tradition of Minamisoma city to the world and further promote the revitalisation of Tohoku.
Supporting Toda city’s students visit

On 1 August, fifteen junior high students from Toda city, Saitama prefecture visited CLAIR Sydney. Staff members talked about how they got the opportunity to work abroad and explained the role of CLAIR Sydney to the visiting students. We also answered many interesting questions about public transportation, food and sports in Australia. This opportunity helped us promote the efforts of CLAIR Sydney and we also got to know what young Japanese students think about foreign countries.

While they were in Australia, they enjoyed two days in Sydney and six days of homestay in Liverpool city, the sister city of Toda.

Cherry Blossom Festival in Auburn Botanic Gardens

On the weekends of 20-21 and 27-28 August, the Sydney Cherry Blossom Festival was held at Auburn Botanic Gardens in Cumberland, NSW. Some cherry blossom trees were planted as part of the Japanese garden which makes up part of the Botanic Garden and when they bloom in late August, become really popular with visitors.

CLAIR Sydney attended the official reception of this event on 19 August. Viv May, the Administrator of Cumberland Council and Paul Toole, Minister for Local Government, attended the reception, along with a few Japanese government agencies and company representatives. It was a great opportunity to further strengthen the ties between the NSW government, Cumberland Council and Japan.

There were various events held as part of the festival such as Sumo wrestling, martial art demonstrations, Japanese flower arrangement displays, Yosakoi dance performances, Origami Art workshops and so on. There were about 45,000 visitors to the festival this year. We believe this festival has the potential to further promote Japanese tourism in Australia. As such, we would love to take part in next year’s festival to promote Japanese local councils and their unique attractions as tourist destinations.
Sister city activities between Wollongong and Kawasaki

On 18 August, CLAIR attended the official reception of the 25th Kawasaki Junior Cultural Prize Presentation in Wollongong. Four students of age 10-12 from Kawasaki were chosen as recipients of the award based on their outstanding art and essay submissions. The prize, sponsored by Kawasaki Shinkin Bank, is the opportunity for select students in Japan to visit Wollongong, which is a sister city of Kawasaki. During the presentation ceremony, the prize winners handed their works over to the Lord Mayor of Wollongong to be displayed in the Wollongong Council offices.

During the reception, the Consul General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Takaoka, gave a speech and the Mayor of Kawasaki addressed the reception via video message to congratulate the students and say thank you to Wollongong for its ongoing support. Some students learning Japanese in Wollongong also gave speeches in Japanese during the ceremony.

Kawasaki Shinkin Bank has sent over 100 children to Wollongong as Child Friendship Ambassadors over the past 25 years. We hope this program continues to strengthen the friendly ties between Wollongong and Kawasaki into the future.

Meeting with JETAA chapters in Australia

On 27 August, CLAIR Sydney organised a meeting with five JETAA chapters in Australia. First, we separately discussed with each chapter about the JET Programme 30th Anniversary event, support for JET returnees and cooperation in sister city related events.

After that, we had a meeting with all chapters for an exchange of ideas. JETAA chapters shared their plan for the 30th anniversary and gave advice to each other.

One thing that many agreed on was to establish a job recruitment database to share across the organisation.

It was a great opportunity to strengthen relations between CLAIR and JETAA; we will continue to strive to work together.
It has been a busy first half of the year for JETAA Vic/Tas/SA. The Vic group has been busy with many events and activities for our members. This year in May we attended the Box Hill Japan Festival and manned a stall to promote the JET Programme and JETAA. We met lots of people eager to learn more about the JET Programme, and also people who shared their experiences of their time on JET or who had just been to Japan on holiday.

We also attended the Pre-departure orientation session held with the Consulate-General of Japan in Melbourne and met the 30 excited new JETs who left for Japan in July. It is hard not to be envious of the new JETs! Our upcoming events include a welcome back event for the newly returned JETs, a careers and networking night, and we also have plans underway for an event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the JET Programme later in the year.

The Tas group has also attended a Japanese festival, this time the Japanese summer festival held in March at the local dojo, and had the opportunity to chat to lots of people who were interested in the JET Programme, as well as meeting more former JET participants. In May, they had one of their bigger events, a dinner at Three Japanese to celebrate JET’s 30th anniversary. There were 14 people in attendance, including several new members. In September they will be going out of the city to enjoy a meal at Masaaki’s Sushi in Geeveston. Joining them will be several members of the local chapter of the Australia Japan Society, as well as their local Japanese Language Meetup group. A Hanami picnic and summer BBQ will be their final events for the year.

The SA group had a big planning session in June to set up their events for the rest of the year. They held a very successful farewell dinner for their recently departed JETs at a Japanese restaurant in Adelaide. Their fortnightly kaiwa sessions have also allowed them to engage with people interested in Japan and the Japanese language outside of the JETAA community. For the remainder of the year, the SA group is looking forward to having a welcome back brunch with the returning JETs later in September and also celebrating 30 years of the JET Programme at their banquet dinner in October. And finally, all three groups in our chapter got together separately this month to take a group photo that was submitted as our chapter’s ‘Arigato campaign’ thank you message.
Introducing Our New interns

Hello everyone. My name is Arisa Tani and I will be working here at CLAIR as an intern for 3 months. I am currently studying a Masters of Social Work at the Australian Catholic University and this is my first time in a long term internship position. I am excited for all the new experiences I will gain through this internship.

During this internship, I would love to deepen my understanding of policies, systems and social structures in Australia through my research. I have started conducting research in regards to needs/difficulties of international students in Australia in order to bolster support systems for them.

I am honored to be a part of CLAIR and will do my best to contribute to CLAIR by assisting research assignments and helping in support activities. Consequently, I hope I will be one of those who contribute to strengthening the relationship between Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Hello everyone. My name is Riko Yaezaki and I have been with CLAIR as an intern for two months now. I am in my final year of my undergraduate study in Marketing at Macquarie University. As I would like to work in the public sector after I graduate, I hope this internship at CLAIR will give me the opportunity to prepare myself for my future career.

During my time at CLAIR, I have had the chance to accompany the visits of government officials from Aichi as well as high school students from Nagoya city to Sydney. Now I have a better understanding of the deep-rooted relationship between Sydney and Nagoya city. I was also able to join the stall at the annual event called SMASH! (The Sydney Manga and Anime Show) to promote prefectures and cities all over Japan. It was a pleasure meeting a lot of people who are interested in Japan and Japanese culture.

My research during this internship is on the MICE industry in Australia. Since I did not know of this term until I started this research, I think it is a great chance to develop my knowledge about the Australian business events industry and how the government at all levels attempt to maximize their economic potential.

I sincerely appreciate the staff at CLAIR for having me as an intern and giving me this great opportunity to learn a lot of new things that will be helpful to me in the future.
From the Director

10 – Aged Day – A Year of Local Government in Japan

The third Monday of September is a public holiday in Japan known as Respect for the Aged Day in Japan. We Japanese celebrate the longevity of our elders and give gifts to them. Japan is a country where both men and women rank highly when it comes to average life expectancies and we are proud of our healthy washoku diet and health care system, but...

According to the 2015 census, more than a quarter (26.7 per cent) of the Japanese population, approximately 33.4 million, is aged 65 years or older. On the other hand, in Australia the ratio was 14 per cent in 2011 and in the New Zealand it was 14.3 per cent in 2013. Japan is the most aged society in the world and this aging in society has taken place in a shorter span of time than in any other country. In 1965, nine working-aged people (20 to 64 years of age) supported one elderly person, but now it is 2.4 working-aged people. It is predicted that support will need to be provided by just 1.2 working-aged people, almost a one-to-one ratio, in 2050.

We must prepare the budget for old-age pensions, additional nursing care centres & personnel and upgrades to facilities, housing & various kinds of transport for the elderly. With the exception of the pension, most Japanese local governments struggle to deal with these demands.

In terms of multicultural policies, Australia and New Zealand are more advanced than Japan, but our ageing society means we may have to consider similar policies with more urgency.

Please keep an eye on how we respond to the challenges of our ageing population; we will be sure to keep you updated.

Katsunori Kamibo
Director