

## Correspondence

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## *Festivals around Japan : Shikaoi Town, Hokkaido*

### *Shikaribetsuko-Kotan Festival in Shikaoi, Hokkaido*



“What an amazing place!” is something you are sure to say when you visit the Shikaribetsuko-Kotan Festival.

You can experience the wonderful combination of traditional Japanese hot springs, onsen, and a modern ice bar. The onsen and the ice bar are located on a frozen lake called Lake Shikaribetsu. The ice from the lake is actually carved into a bar! You can even make your own ice glass to drink out of at the ice bar.



You can also experience a lot of snow activities here such as snow hiking, cross-country skiing, riding a snowmobile and enjoying the night views. If you like outdoor camping, you can stay in an ice lodge!

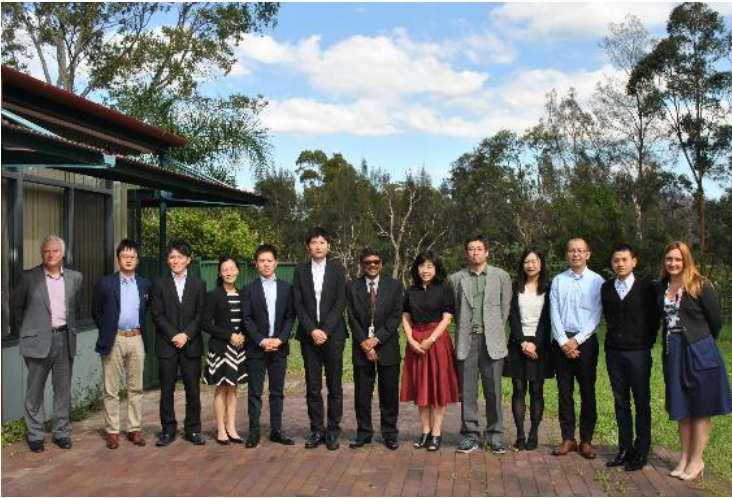
Hokkaido is one of the coldest places in the world so if you can stay here, we think you can probably stay anywhere!

Website (available only in Japanese):

<http://www.shikaoi.net/contents/eventschedule/>

# Understanding Multiculturalism in Australia

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We annually hold a study tour for Japanese local government and related international association staff to understand multiculturalism in Australia.

This year, ten delegates came from Japan and we visited a total of nine organisations providing services relating to disaster prevention awareness, medical and social welfare, settlement support and other fields.

We learned about how they assist and support residents coming from overseas in order for them

to comfortably live in Australia. We were also fortunate enough to participate in Migrant Information Day and further understand how informative these kind of events are for migrants.

The delegates learned more about service sensitivity in regards to population diversity. They were also exposed to the idea of tolerance and the strong volunteer spirit found in Australians through in-depth opinion exchanges and Q&A sessions.

On the last day, the delegates were divided into three groups and presented their main findings and observations through the tour and proactively shared new ideas amongst each other.

Regarding multiculturalism, Japan has a slightly different situation than Australia however the delegates found some good examples, like how to develop community engagement, which could be applied by their own local and prefectural governments and related agencies soon.

Special thanks to this year's study program destinations:

*Multicultural NSW*

*Ethnic Community Services Co-operative*

*NSW State Emergency Service*

*Advance Diversity Services*

*Sydney Local Health District*

*Transcultural Mental Health Service*

*Haberfield Primary School*

*Auburn City Council*

*Centre for Local Government, University of Technology Sydney*

# Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Study Mission Delegation

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The Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Study Mission Delegation visited Sydney from 23 to 24 October. They visited the Royal North Shore Hospital to observe and learn more about its emergency and paramedic facilities and also its transportation services (ambulances etc.) CLAIR supported the Assembly Study Mission in setting up appointments, lectures and accompanying the delegation during their visits.



The delegation members were also able to exchange ideas and opinions regarding Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Royal North Shore Hospital's endeavors in relation to this. The members were also able to visit treatment and therapy facilities where hospital staff provided in depth information regarding hospital protocols.



Also, during the study mission, delegates were able to observe Australian public transportation (specifically trains and ferries) and discuss the user-friendliness of the services provided in regards to hospital patients and their mobility. The delegates were able to draw distinctions between the Japanese Public Transport system and its Australian counterpart, pointing out the advantages of each system.

## Lecture on Japanese Local Gov't System at UTS

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On 2 October, CLAIR Sydney was invited to speak about the makeup of Japanese local governments at the University of Technology Sydney, home of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG).

In Japan, comprehensive decentralisation reforms were implemented twice in 1999 and 2011, so the lecture focused on these reform measures and there was also an overview of the local government system.

The attendees, a mix of graduate students and public servants at local governments, were very

interested in the Japanese system, asking many questions on a range of topics such as why Japanese local governments are responsible for primary and junior-high schools, and how local tax rates are decided.

The Japanese local government system is very different to those in Australia. We will do our best to provide up-to-date information on the Japanese system via this newsletter and whenever the opportunity presents itself.

## Kagoshima Mayors visit Sydney

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On 19 October, eight mayors from Kagoshima Prefecture visited our office to learn more about Australian beef and the potential to export Wagyu from CLAIR and Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) Sydney.

They visited Sydney to gain a better understanding of the Australian meat and livestock industry to gauge the impact of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Many Japanese livestock breeders are worried about the reduced tariffs of imported livestock products as per the JAEPA and the TPP; Kagoshima Prefecture is one of Japan's largest livestock-rearing regions.

## The Canberra-Nara Candle Festival

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On 24 October, CLAIR Sydney participated in the Canberra-Nara Candle Festival held in Canberra.

The festival has been held annually since 2004 in Canberra's Nara Peace Park and Lennox Gardens to further promote the Sister City relationship between Canberra and Nara.

We promoted Nara City's tourist spots along with other areas of Japan. Many people visited our booth, taking brochures and other informative material home with them.

This year, visitors enjoyed Japanese cuisine and culture such as Kendo, *Shodo* (calligraphy), and *Mochitsuki* (Rice cake pounding).

After the sunset, the lantern lighting ceremony was held in the park. The atmosphere was fantastic!



# Saitama Products & Tourism Fair in Sydney

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On 26 October, the first ever Saitama Products & Tourism Fair was held in Sydney. Being the first such event of its kind to promote Saitama products and tourist destinations in Sydney, its proximity to Tokyo (30 minutes by train) was emphasized along with its local dishes, delicacies and historical sites.

10 local business representatives from Saitama participated in the fair to introduce various goodies such as Saitama wheat-based udon, yuzu and gluten-free pancakes. On the day, representatives from an estimated 60 organisations and businesses (120 people) came along to join in on the fun, gathering information about Saitama whilst tasting everything that was on offer, some even proceeding to place orders for their respective businesses.

With Saitama prefecture promoting the historical Kawagoe city and the flora fields of Chichibu (both accessible as day-trip options from Tokyo), we anticipate to see an increase in overall visitors to these gorgeous getaway destinations.



## Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Annual Conference

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From 11–13 October, we took part in the LGNSW Annual Conference in Rosehill, NSW. We promoted CLAIR's activities including sister city relationships between NSW and Japanese local governments and Japanese tourism. We met many familiar faces and of course met lots of new people at our exhibition booth and during the conference.

This conference was a great opportunity for us to see the challenges of local governments in NSW, such as council amalgamations and federal funding for local governments.

We were very glad to talk to many people who stopped by our booth. We look forward to meeting our NSW local government friends again and collaborating with them in the future to further strengthen Australia-Japan ties.

# JETAA Regional Conference in Christchurch

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From 16 to 18 October, we visited Christchurch to attend the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) Oceania Regional Conference hosted by the JETAA SI chapter.

The conference is held every year by JETAA Oceania to discuss and improve its activities and is attended by members from each chapter (five chapters in Australia and three in New Zealand). This year's theme was Staying Connected.



We exchanged ideas on issues such as involving more JETAA members in JETAA activities and how members can stay connected to Japan related groups, sister cities and so on.

The JET Programme will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year. In preparation for this, we discussed possible ideas for the celebration such as a video contest for current JET and alumni members alongside further advertising ideas for the ceremony.

We believe we will continue to see JETAA organise many attractive activities based on their discussions during this conference.

(Please read the article from JETAA SI below for more details)

## JETAA South Island Activities ~ Article and photos from JETAA SI ~

### *Oceania Regional Conference*

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The JETAA Oceania Regional Conference took place in Christchurch, New Zealand this year, over the weekend of Oct 16th-18th. Chapters participated from Australia (QLD, VIC, TAS, SA, NSW, Canberra and WA) and New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington and South Island), as well as the respective country representatives. Australia's Country Representative, Eden Law (ALT Fukushima 2010-2011) reports on the proceedings of the 2015 JETAA Oceania Conference.

As far as I know, the JETAA Oceania Regional Conference is unique in the JETAA world, where two countries share an annual convention – not surprising, considering the geographical proximity

and historically close relations of Australia and New Zealand.

As well as chapter delegates, we also had staff members from CLAIR Sydney, and special guest Mr Fukukawa, an executive consultant from CLAIR in Tokyo, who shared with us upcoming events and campaigns and how they relate to JET and JETAA.

This year's theme was Staying Connected – to past and present JETs and JET community, local Japanese organisations and cultural groups, sister city initiatives and of course, with other chapters. Because it's such a core issue to many chapters, we had a lot to say, discuss and share – opinions, ideas and examples that have worked and didn't.

Some ideas:

- Maintaining connections with new JETs by following up after a month to see how they are going. If you have a newsletter, ask for article contributions (e.g. best experience, most surprising aspect, what I should have packed). These can also be used as material for the next pre-departure orientation.
- Have a committee retreat – have a mini conference by going away to a nice country location to discuss ideas, plan schedule etc.
- Provide some kind of charity work opportunity to give a sense of purpose and satisfaction
- Market JET Programme as a way to gain transitional skills (e.g. being bilingual means you can see things from different viewpoints)
- Sell JET as a professional development program
- For a fun fundraising idea, have a trivia night where answers/clues can be bought for a small fee. Cheat for charity!



The Country Representative presentations were about what we'd do as CRs, considering that the role tended to be re-invented to suit each new candidate's needs and personality. Apart from trying to reduce the wheel-reinvention aspect by keeping records and procedure documentation, we will also aim to focus on community and communication. To that end, I put forward a proposal to have regular, scheduled Google Hangouts for Oceania to keep in touch and continue the flow of dialogue, ideas and support for each other (and if possible, get some participants from outside Oceania to join in!) We will also look at ways of supporting recent returnees, whether in the form of support, mentorship or career opportunities.

We also discussed the Satogaeri Project and the Tokyo November conference, where Satogaeri representatives from several countries (and AJET) will meet and discuss several ideas, such as next year's 30th Anniversary celebratory plans, sporting events in Japan and, most interestingly of all, the possible revival of JETAA International (JETAAI). This chapter had gone dormant for the last few years

since losing funding during austerity measures implemented by previous governments but revival seems imminent. There are other further surprising items on the agenda regarding country representatives, so I'll await the post-conference report with interest.

On a final note, it became clear that the common ingredient running through all successful ideas was networking – building and maintaining relationships which can be tapped into for opportunities. This does require work and commitment – as is the case with anything worthwhile.



# Introducing Our New Staff

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**Damian Spinks**  
Research & Liaison Officer

Hey everyone! My name is Damian Spinks, but you can call me デーミ (De-mi). I'm your new Research and Liaison Officer here at CLAIR Sydney, working alongside Mr. Jason Khoh.

I'm stepping into this role as a fresh UNSW International Studies graduate, and to be honest, I'm quite nervous! I may lack in experience compared to everyone else but I'm determined to learn and absorb as much as I can. よろしくお願ひします！

Just a little background on myself, I'm part Australian part Malaysian. I was born in rural NSW in a small country town called Scone but grew up in the Island of Borneo in the state of Sabah. At 16 I returned to Sydney to pursue an Australian education and went on to major in Asian Studies at The University of New South Wales through which I got to partake in a one-year exchange programme to Gakushuin University in Tokyo.

I have worked in many fields over the years such as hospitality, retail, and market research with a few freelance jobs during my year in Japan. I will be bringing all my experience in these fields into this role and wish to utilise what I have learnt to the fullest in order to be a great research and liaison officer for the team.

I'm really looking forward to working with everyone and gaining more insight and knowledge not only in regards to Japanese local governance but also about my home country Australia. I believe the tasks that lay ahead of me will mould me not only into a more informed citizen but also a better ambassador for international cooperation between Australia and Japan. I know I have big shoes to fill in with the bar set high by my predecessor Mr. Petar Rajic, but I'm determined to give it all I got. がんばります！

## From the Director

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### 3 – Discussion at Assemblies - A Year of Local Governments in Japan

In Japan, most local governments hold a regular assembly session from late November to early December. Regular sessions must be held four times a year and local governments can choose which months the sessions are held. For example, Sakai City in Osaka decided regular sessions should be held in February, May, August and November. In addition, if necessary, a mayor can convene special sessions.

Generally, regular sessions last approximately 20-30 days, excluding days spent discussing administrative duties. The schedule is as follows:

- Mayor's proposal (1 day)
- Assembly members' inquiry and research (1 week)
- Discussion at plenary sessions (2-4 days)
- Discussion at committee meetings (1-2 days)
- Decision (1 day)

Other than the mayor, the deputy mayor and senior municipality officials may respond to questions posed by assembly members. Usually, a summary of the members' questions are sent to the mayor in advance and the mayor and his/her staff check data and discuss how to respond before any formal response. Responding to assembly members' questions is a very challenging time for the mayor and the mayoral office because all responses are

officially recorded and become official municipal policies.

Bills and plans are proposed at every session, but the initial budget should be proposed in February or March to coincide with the start of the Japanese financial year in April. During this time, a special budget committee is added to the proceedings to allow for a few days to discuss this matter.

## Japan Local Government Centre (CLAIR, Sydney)

Level 12 Challis House 4 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000

P: (+61)-2- 9241 5033 F: (+61)-2- 9241 5014

Web: [www.jlgc.org.au](http://www.jlgc.org.au) Email: [mailbox@jlgc.org.au](mailto:mailbox@jlgc.org.au)

