



# NEWSLETTER

## C O N T E N T S

	(page)
Welcome to Konosu City	1
Study Tour at the Tamworth Regional Council	2
Study Tour at the Byron Shire Council	3
Registrations Open for the Australian Olympic Connect 2021 Program	4
Farewell Messages	5
From the Executive Director	8

## WELCOME TO KONOSU CITY

Located in the centre of Saitama Prefecture, Konosu City was originally developed as the 'Konosu-juku' post station along the Nakasendo route, one of the five major highways in Japan during the Edo period. Since then, the city has prospered into a city that cherishes the interactions between traditional industries and people.

Doll making is a renowned traditional industry in the city. The Konosu Astonishing Doll Festival held annually between mid-

February and early March showcases the tallest pyramid Hina doll display in Japan (31 levels and 7 metres tall), as recognised on 14 Feb 2010 by the Nippon-1 Net, an organisation that acknowledges No. 1 achievements in Japan. At the same time, events that boast the city's status as 'The Hina Doll Town Konosu', such as special exhibitions at the Hina no Sato Hina Doll Museum, are held in various parts of the city.



Konosu City also has a thriving floricultural industry and is known as 'Flower Town Konosu'. The 12.5 ha poppy field 'Poppy Happy Square' on the Arakawa riverbank in the city was recognised as the largest poppy field in Japan on 1 Nov 2008 by the Nippon 1-Net. When the flowers are in full bloom in May every year, the 30 million beautiful red and orange poppies form a colourful carpet. The Poppy Festival is held from mid-May to late May and includes attractions such as performances and sales of local agricultural produce.

Finally, the Konosu Fireworks Festival is a dazzling fireworks festival that is featured prominently in the national fireworks festival rankings. Held at the Arakawa riverbank, the highlight of the festival is the enormous fireworks display that is unique to the widest river in Japan. The firework display on 8 October 2011 named 'Phoenix Dance' was over four minutes long and had a total of 302 firework balls- 300 firework balls with a 30 cm radius and two with a 90 cm radius. Approximately 75.5 shots were fired per minute and the display was recognised as the firework display with the largest number of shots per minute by the Nippon 1-Net.



Please come and visit Konosu City when the travel bans have been lifted and take part in our various festivals!

## Study Tour at the Tamworth Regional Council

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From 18 to 22 Jan, Assistant Director TAKAHASHI Suguru completed a study tour at the Tamworth Regional Council. Tamworth is known for hosting the annual Tamworth Country Music Festival which usually takes place in January every year but unfortunately had to be cancelled this year. In relation to Japan, Tamworth is the sister city of Sannohe in Aomori Prefecture, and the two municipalities share a dynamic exchange relationship.

During his time at Tamworth Regional Council, Mr Takahashi met with Mr Morné Hattingh, Waste & Resource Recovery Manager; and Mr Samuel Swain, Senior Environmental Officer; who provided him with information on Tamworth Regional Council's waste management strategies and also gave him a tour of waste management facilities in Tamworth. Mr Takahashi was able to have a first-hand observation of an Australian local council's waste management policies in action through the meeting with Mr

Hattingh and Mr Swain and the onsite tours.

Mr Takahashi also received briefings from staff from different departments of Tamworth Regional Council. The briefings covered topics such as how the Council manages the Tamworth Regional Airport, which the

Council owns and operates, the Council's strategies on tourism promotion and infrastructure development for industrial promotion, and governance in the Council. Overall, Mr Takahashi had great insight into the operations of Tamworth Regional Council from multiple perspectives.

Mr Takahashi is extremely thankful to Ms Anna Russell and Mr John Sommerlad of Tamworth Regional Council who kindly accommodated his request despite the currently ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and Ms Katie Alchin, who promptly organised the schedule and details despite the short notice. Mr Takahashi would also like to express his deepest appreciation to all the staff who took the time to meet with him in Tamworth.



## Study Tour at the Byron Shire Council

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From 8 to 12 Feb, Assistant Director NISHI Hiroko completed a study tour at the Byron Shire Council. Byron Shire Council is known not only for the tourist attractions in its council area, but also for innovative strategies on support for the homeless, environment policies and biodiversity protection.

During her time at Byron Shire Council, Ms Nishi had onsite tours to learn about the Council's strategies on the promotion of local products; protection of flying foxes, which plays a role in the growth of eucalyptus trees for koalas; and protection of crops from wild animals. Additionally, she had meetings with council staff to learn about topics such as the Council's strategies for disaster management, assistance for the homeless and support for the indigenous population. She was able to learn about effective measures for many challenges that are also common to Japan.



Ms Nishi is extremely thankful to Ms Elizabeth Robertson of Local Government NSW who kindly connected her to the staff of Byron Shire Council and Ms Renae Fegent of Byron Shire Council who kindly organised the schedule for Ms Nishi's visit. Ms Nishi would also like to express her deepest appreciation to all the staff who took the time to meet with her at Byron Shire Council.



## Registrations Open for the Australian Olympic Connect 2021 Program

On 22 Feb, the Australian Olympic Committee opened registrations for the Australian Olympic Connect 2021 Program, which connects schools in Australia and Japan virtually to create cultural exchange opportunities. The registrations are open until 19 Apr.



The Australian Olympic Committee successfully fostered cross-border friendships between approximately 1,500 students in 40 primary and high schools in total from Australia and Japan through online exchange in its pilot program in 2020.

The full-scale program in 2021 has a goal of having 400 schools in total from Australia and Japan. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, it is anticipated that the online format of the program will facilitate the promotion of further exchange between schools and students in Australia and Japan.

For more information, please see the link below.

<https://www.olympics.com.au/community-and-schools/australian-olympic-connect-2020/>

CLAIR Sydney endeavours to promote further exchange between schools in Australia and Japan.

## Farewell Messages

Our Assistant Directors Hiroko NISHI, Suguru TAKAHASHI and Daisuke KIKUTA are leaving Sydney in the middle of March to take up their new roles back in Japan.



### **Hiroko NISHI**

Assistant Director from  
Tsu City in Mie Prefecture

places and socialise with many people.

I would have loved to extend my stay in Sydney, however, it is time for me to go back to Japan. I will do my best back in my home country and not waste the precious experiences I gained in the past two years.

Lastly, I would like to show my deepest appreciation to all the people I have met in Australia and New Zealand. I will never forget the wonderful memories I had in the past two years.

Many thanks and I hope to see you again someday soon.

I have worked in Sydney since April 2019. When I was living in Japan, I had always been keen to work overseas and studied English really hard to make my dream come true. I was lucky to have this opportunity to work and enjoy life in Sydney and make my efforts worthwhile.

I have created many fantastic memories in the past two years. There were times that I struggled with communicating with the locals because of my English ability. Having said that, many people had been very accommodating and spoke slowly and clearly for me to understand. Times like these made me realise that Australia is truly a multicultural society because of the people's kindness towards those from overseas.

I was able to visit many places in Australia and New Zealand, not only for business but also for personal travels. Each place I visited has its distinctive features and I found them all fascinating. There was no place that I found disappointing. The two years in Sydney was the most enjoyable time of my life because I could visit different





**Suguru TAKAHASHI**

Assistant Director from  
Kuroishi City in Aomori Prefecture

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone I have met in Australia and New Zealand.

I was seconded to CLAIR Sydney in April 2019 to promote the tourist destinations in my hometown, Kuroishi in Aomori. Although my time at CLAIR Sydney is limited, I believe I have used it wisely to promote my hometown. I have also been able to learn about the multiculturalism in Australia and the diversity of New Zealand. These were unknown territories for me.

Unfortunately, my secondment to Sydney is ending very soon and I have to return to Japan.

I will return to work for my hometown by using the two years of experiences I have accumulated at CLAIR Sydney.

I like to take photos and during the two years here I was able to travel to different places to take photos. The two photos you can see were taken during my trip to Uluru in Australia and Lake Tekapo in New Zealand.



Taken at Uluru

Sometimes, I wonder why people do not say 'supports'. I understand that 'support' is an uncountable noun, and generally 'supports' is not widely used.

However, I have received a significant amount of support throughout the past two years from everyone I have met in



Australia and New Zealand. So to me, saying 'support' is not enough to express the amount of support I have received.

Thanks to everyone, I was able to enjoy my life and work in Australia and New Zealand.

I would like to end my message by saying, 'Thank you for all your supports'.

Taken at Lake Tekapo

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone I have met in Australia and New Zealand.

It has been approximately two years since I started working at CLAIR Sydney from April 2019. This is my first time living and working overseas.

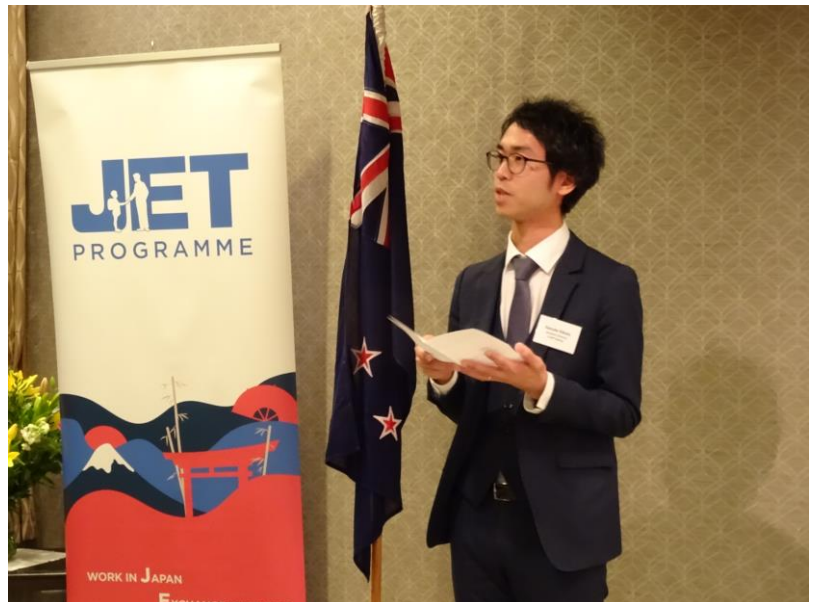
I had been dispatched to work at different external organisations since I started working at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) in Japan, where I am seconded from, but I had never expected to be dispatched overseas.

Before coming to Sydney, I was a little stressed and anxious because I'm not good at speaking English, but everything went very smoothly in the past two years thanks to my colleagues and the friendly people in Australia and New Zealand.

The two years at CLAIR Sydney feels very short to me, but I have had opportunities to visit all states of Australia and both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. I had a wonderful time overall in the past two years and I am sure that I will never forget the experiences I had in Australia and New Zealand, which will most likely be the best two years of my life. The past two years also was a memorable experience for my family. This is evident in my five-year-old son telling me that he would love to return to Sydney someday in the future.

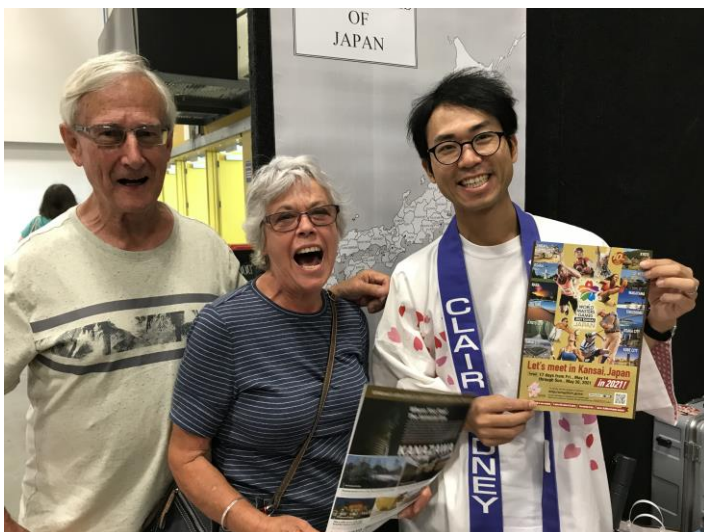
I am very sad to leave Sydney now. I will do my best in Japan by leveraging the experiences I have accumulated over the past two years at CLAIR Sydney.

I'm looking forward to seeing you someday again.



### **Daisuke KIKUTA**

Assistant Director from  
The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications



# From the Executive Director

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- Unprecedented March for CLAIR Sydney -

As described in the CLAIR Sydney Newsletter published in March 2019, similarly to most Japanese organisations, March is the last month of the Japanese financial year and it is when the standard annual personnel transfers take place at CLAIR Sydney. As written in the farewell messages in this newsletter, three staff members are finishing their two-year tenure and are departing Sydney to return to Japan.

Contrary to previous years, instead of leaving Sydney at the end of March, this year's departing group has to leave in mid-March to allow them sufficient time to undergo two weeks of quarantine before returning to their original government organisations respectively at the beginning of April. It is unfortunate that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have had limited opportunities to meet with everyone in Australia and New Zealand in the second half of their tenures in Sydney.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who has kindly assisted or engaged with the three departing staff over the past two years. I believe that all three staff members received considerable support from our partners and partner organisations. I am sure that the three staff members will miss the people they have met and the experiences they have had in Australia and New Zealand. I would be grateful if you could keep in touch and visit them if you have an opportunity to go to Japan once the border restrictions are lifted.

All the remaining CLAIR Sydney staff will take over the three departing members' responsibilities and wish for the same level of support and friendship you and your organisation have extended to the three departing members. I would be grateful if you could please kindly keep in touch with both the three departing staff members and the remaining staff of CLAIR Sydney.