



# NEWSLETTER

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## Welcome to Higashikawa

*Culture Capital of Photography*

*The Town of Photography—Higashikawa*

The Town of Higashikawa is located in central Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan, and has a population of approximately 8,300. Higashikawa is surrounded by plenty of nature—the town overlooks the largest national park in Japan, the Daisetsu Mountain Range; and the highest mountain in Hokkaido, Mount Asahidake.



Water is a vital resource for Higashikawa. The snow that falls on Mount Daisetsu turns into mineral-rich groundwater. This groundwater is not only an essential source of water for the locals of Higashikawa, but it also nourishes the beautiful rice fields around the town that is renowned as one of the best rice production areas in Hokkaido.

In 1985, Higashikawa declared itself as the world's first Town of



Photography and has since been interacting with people globally through photography. In 2015, the International High School Student's Photo Festival Exchange was held for the first time and was attended by high school students from all over the world who gathered in Higashikawa to expand their friendship circle through photography. From Australia, students from Canberra have been participating in the festival since its inception. In 2019, students from 24 schools in 22 countries and regions gathered in the town for the festival. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the event was held virtually in 2020.



As the 'Culture Capital of Photography', the small town of Higashikawa has been spreading its culture globally through various events and projects. Higashikawa is home to Japan's first public Japanese language school and hosts many international students. The town also runs the annual Higashikawa International Photography Festival, a major event in the town. This Festival is centred on the Higashikawa Prize, which has grown into an internationally recognised photography award.



As one of the top five furniture producing regions of Japan and a major producer of Asahikawa furniture, Higashikawa also has a stake in the furniture industry. The inaugural "Kengo Kuma & Higashikawa" KAGU Design Competition' was held earlier this year, which accepted entries of furniture design from young designers around the world to inspire a new sophisticated style of furniture.

## Sister Cities New Zealand 2021 40th Anniversary Annual Conference



On 15 and 16 Apr, the Sister Cities New Zealand 2021 Annual Conference was held in Wellington, New Zealand, and attracted more than 100 participants from all over New Zealand. This conference also commemorates the 40th anniversary of Sister Cities New Zealand. Representatives from various sister city organisations overseas including CLAIR, sent video messages to celebrate the 40th anniversary and the messages were played at the conference. The promotional video of the World Masters Games 2021 KANSAI, which have been postponed to May 2022, was also played at the conference and it drew

the attention of the conference participants.

CLAIR Sydney staff attended the conference virtually to gain a better understanding of sister city exchanges.

We will continue to collaborate with Sister Cities New Zealand to contribute to the enhancement of sister city exchanges between Japan and New Zealand.



## Conferment of the Foreign Minister's Commendation for JETAA NSW



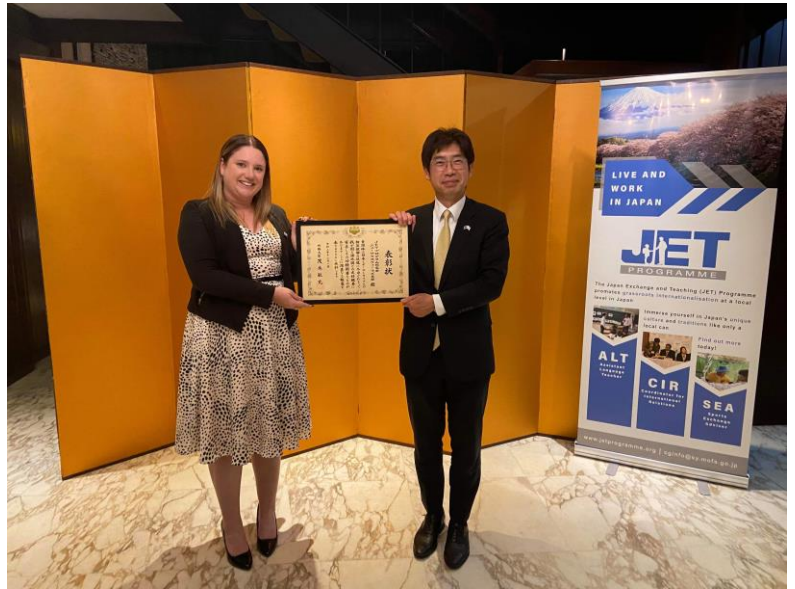
Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme Alumni Association of New South Wales (JETAA NSW) was conferred the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation for the 2020 financial year and was presented with the Commendation by Mr KIYA Masahiko, Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, at his official residence on 30 Apr.

Since its foundation, JETAA NSW has been instrumental in promoting mutual understanding and friendships between Japan and Australia for over 30 years. Examples of the chapter's engagements include promoting the Japanese language and culture, supporting the administration of the JET Programme and liaising with the local Japanese community to forge robust partnerships. These contributions were highly acclaimed which led to the conferment.

In recent years, CLAIR Sydney has collaborated with JETAA NSW on occasions including the hosting of the JETAA Oceania Conference in Sydney which invited representatives from JETAA chapters across the Oceania region and running a booth

at an event that CLAIR Sydney took part in in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Congratulations to JETAA NSW for the award and we look forward to seeing further collaborations between CLAIR Sydney and JETAA NSW, as well as other JETAA chapters across the Oceania region.



## The Kodomo no Hi Japan Festival 2021 in South Australia

On 2 May, the Kodomo no Hi Japan Festival 2021 was held in the City of West Torrens in Greater Adelaide, the state capital of South Australia.

CLAIR Sydney took part in the event for the first time and we ran a booth next to members of the local chapter of the JET Programme Alumni Association (JETAA). At the event, CLAIR Sydney and JETAA joined forces to promote the JET Programme; the World Masters Games 2021 KANSAI; the 19th FINA World Championships 2021 Fukuoka & the 19th FINA World Masters Championships 2021 Kyushu, which have



been postponed to 2022; and various tourist destinations in Japan. The number of festival attendees who visited our booth was more than expected. The festival attendees visited our booth to find out information on popular tourist spots in Japan and destinations for cherry blossom viewing, as well as information on Okayama Prefecture and Himeji

City, the sister state of South Australia and sister city of the City of Adelaide, respectively.



Many attendees expressed that they would like to visit Japan to enjoy the beautiful scenery, wonderful culture, and delicious food once the restrictions on overseas travel are lifted. We anticipate that demand for inbound tourism in Japan will bounce back after the pandemic is brought under control globally.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support Japanese local governments' destination promotion activities in Australia and New Zealand.



## The Cowra Koyo Festival (Autumn Festival)



Between 4 May and 5 May, CLAIR Sydney staff members took part in the Cowra Koyo Matsuri (Autumn Festival) held in Cowra. The Cowra Koyo Matsuri was held for the first time for purposes such as celebrating the annual Japanese holidays of Greenery Day (4 May) and Children's Day (5 May).

On the first day of the Festival, a memorial service was held for the casualties of war. Following that, at the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, an inaugural oration was delivered by Dr Peter Armstrong, Honorary Associate Professor of the School of Architecture, Design and Planning at the University of Sydney. Thereafter, the Centre hosted various cultural programs such as flower arrangement, tea ceremony,

and origami demonstrations.

The following day, approximately 100 local primary school students gathered to learn about Japanese culture and traditions through experiences such as picture-story shows, paper-cutting and Kimono dress-up.

The CLAIR Sydney staff members were able to strengthen our connections with Cr Bill West, Mayor of Cowra; Mr Bob Griffiths, Chairperson of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre; Mr Tony Mooney OAM ORS, Director of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre and Deputy Chairperson of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Foundation; and many other representatives.



A prisoner-of-war camp was set up in Cowra during WWII where the Cowra Outbreak occurred in 1944 and resulted in the death of 231 Japanese prisoners of war and 4 Australian guards. After the war, the City of Cowra constructed various significant sites in the city such as the Japanese War Cemetery, Japanese Garden and Sakura Avenue, and Cowra has emerged as a city that symbolises the postwar reconciliation between Japan and Australia.



Over three-quarters of a century since the end of WWII, CLAIR Sydney endeavours to support the friendly relationships between Australia and Japan, and facilitate the peacebuilding interactions and exchange between local governments in the two countries.



## AJS University Awards 2021 Annual Presentation Ceremony



The Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS NSW) held the AJS University Awards 2021 Annual Presentation Ceremony at The Japan Foundation, Sydney, on 25 May. University students who are studying Japanese and obtained exceptional academic achievements were presented with the Award by Mr KIYA Masahiko,

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney.

In their acceptance speeches, the award winners spoke about the challenges they faced and the satisfaction they experienced whilst learning Japanese. In the networking session that followed, AJS NSW affiliates and representatives from various Japanese organisations at the session praised the award recipients' efforts.

In recent years, CLAIR Sydney has been strengthening our ties with AJS NSW on occasions such as attending events like this University Awards held by AJS NSW. We look forward to deepening our relationships further with AJS NSW and other Japan-related organisations.



# Postcards from the City of Busselton to Sister City Friends

*Written by the City of Busselton*

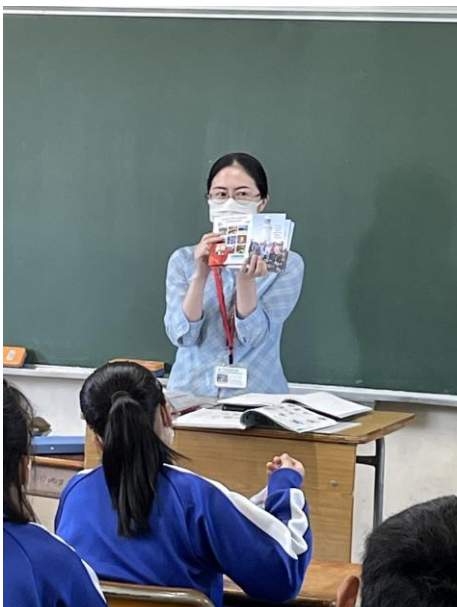


The Busselton and Sugito Sister Cities Association (BASSCA) have recently organised for over 450 goodwill postcards to be sent to students in the City of Busselton’s sister city—Sugito, Japan.

Local Busselton students have written messages of hope and support to students in Sugito who have been hard hit by COVID restrictions and measures.

BASSCA Committee member Scott Pearce, recently returned from two and a half years of teaching in Japan. His last year there, during the COVID-19 restrictions.

“It’s been tough for Japanese school students in parts of Japan affected by restrictive measures. Students still attend school but with a lot of restrictions. For many students this has meant no after school activities, sport or socialising with friends for months at a time” said Scott.



Our popular student exchanges between Busselton and Sugito have also been put on hold for since 2020.

It is hoped these cards will lift the spirits of our friends in Japan.

The community of JETAA Qld has thrived in the first half of 2021. As we emerge from the turbulence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, we have focused our efforts on in-person events to reconnect and strengthen member relationships.

The year opened with the official start of our new “JyoDanKai” (女男会) monthly social events. We hope these monthly outings will continue supporting local Japanese restaurants and businesses in Brisbane. We have also had the opportunity of adding two new events to our calendar this year. In March, we held a Japanese Sign Language workshop in recognition of World Hearing Day at the Brisbane City Square Library. The event was led by our valued friend Chikako Hara, originally from Nagoya. The event covered alphabet fingerspelling and introductory phrases useful for communication with the deaf and hard of hearing communities of Japan. There were over thirty people in attendance from members of JETAA Qld and the local community.

Following that, in April, we held a Japanese Morse Code workshop. It was a great success and brought together people with an interest in Japanese and amateur radio. There were lively discussions on the Australian codebreakers of WWII and places of historical interest in Brisbane, Wabun code and Morse-code variations and attendees had the opportunity to gain practical experience on a traditional Morse key.

Later in April we held our Annual General Meeting via Zoom and welcomed new alumni and the new committee members of 2021-2022. We outlined and discussed our plans for the next 12-months and received valuable input on the future direction of our chapter. Our May event held an international focus for our members and friends with a Eurovision watch-party over Japanese hot pot.

It has been wonderful to see our community spring back to life, and over the next year we hope there will be more opportunities to connect, collaborate and contribute to the strengthening and development of the Australia-Japan relationship and the community we serve.

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## From the Executive Director

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### **— Initiating New Sister City Relationships with Local Governments in Japan amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic —**

“Never let a good crisis go to waste” is a statement that is attributed to Sir Winston Churchill. We believe that this statement can be adapted and applied to sister, friendship, or partner relationships between international cities amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the numerous challenges and hindrances experienced by all in the current environment, we have been informed by local governments in Australia and New Zealand that they are seeking to further expand their existing international relationships. Some are even contemplating initiating new sister city relationships with local governments in Japan.



As described in the CLAIR Sydney Newsletter published in September 2018, there are many appealing aspects for local governments in Australia and New Zealand to initiate new sister city relationships with Japanese local governments. The three countries share similarities on many levels, including democracy, the richness of nature and the high level of safety. There are also little time differences between Australia/New Zealand and Japan, which means that students in Australia/New Zealand and Japan can participate in language exchange sessions during school hours. It is needless to mention that based on the well-rounded relationships between Australia/New Zealand and Japan, any kind of interactions between the three countries will undoubtedly be favourable and straightforward.

We earnestly hope that Australian and New Zealand local governments that currently do not have any partner local government in Japan can consider leveraging the current quiescent times and explore the potential of initiating an international partnership with a local government in Japan. CLAIR Sydney can support local governments in Australia/New Zealand in their search for suitable partnering local governments in Japan. If your local government is interested in finding local government partners in Japan, please send an email to <[mailbox@jlgc.org.au](mailto:mailbox@jlgc.org.au)>.

Nothing would please us more than connecting potential partnering cities, and witnessing the relationship flourish into a new sister, friendship or partner city relationship. We look forward to receiving many enquiries from local governments in Australia and New Zealand, which will lay the groundwork for the establishment of new sister city relationships with Japanese local governments. We anticipate that the new partnerships formed during the pandemic will have lasting positive contributions to the further development of the local governments involved, and these contributions will extend beyond the end of the pandemic. We believe now is an ideal time to actualise the idea of “tough times bring opportunities”.