



NEWSLETTER

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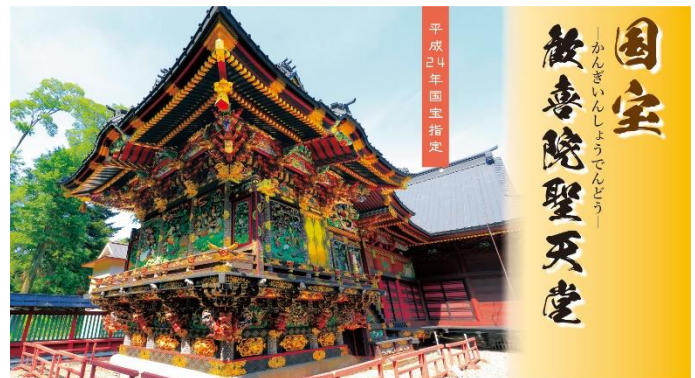
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Kumagaya is also a city with attractive culture and history. A famous site in the city is Kangiin shoudendo, a designated national treasure temple. Kumagaya Uchiwa Festival, the best Gion festival in Kanto, and the Kumagaya Fireworks Festival are major annual events in the city. Kumagaya also has international connections. In 1993, Kumagaya formalised a sister city relationship with the City of Invercargill in New Zealand.

In spring, the cherry blossoms, which is Kumagaya's city flower, bloom spectacularly across the city. In particular, Kumagaya Sakura-tsutsumi, a famous area with about 500 Somei Yoshino cherry blossom trees that stretches 2km in length, has been selected as one of the 100 Best Cherry Blossom Spots in Japan. Besides the cherry blossoms, the contrast of colours between the yellow rape blossoms and the clear blue sky also attracts many visitors during spring.

Welcome to Kumagaya City

Kumagaya City is located in the northern part of Saitama Prefecture, approximately 50 to 70km from central Tokyo. Two major rivers, the Arakawa and Tone Rivers, flow through the city. Surrounded by fertile land, rich water resources and an abundance of greenery, Kumagaya has prospered as a transport hub since ancient times and the city's agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors have developed simultaneously over the decades.





Kumagaya, which has declared itself a 'City enthusiastic about sports', is working on community development through sports. Kumagaya was one of the host cities of the 2019 Rugby World Cup and in 2021, the Japanese powerhouse rugby team, the Saitama Panasonic Wild Knights, relocated its base to Kumagaya. The city is now drawing attention as 'Rugby Town Kumagaya'. With the slogan "SKUMAM! Kumagaya!", which is based on the rugby concept of 'scrum', Kumagaya is taking action to further develop itself as an attractive city by bringing all citizens together in a 'scrum', and promoting itself as a sustainable city that is full of appeal.



The Australia-Japan and the New Zealand-Japan Sister City Webinar Series

On 31 Jan, CLAIR Sydney held a webinar session for employees of Japanese local governments that have sister city/state relationships with state or local governments in Australia and New Zealand. This was the fifth and final webinar series session CLAIR Sydney held in this Japanese financial year to encourage sister city projects even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this webinar, Professor Carol Mills, Director of the Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) and the Centre for Local Government (CLG) at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS); Ms Melissa Attia, Director of Community and Organisation Development and Deputy General Manager of Cumberland City Council in New South Wales; Dr Mike Reid, Principal Policy Advisor of Local Government New Zealand; and Ms Vanessa Chan, Industry Fellow at IPPG-CLG, UTS; had a panel discussion centred around the challenges local governments in Australia and New Zealand face during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each panellist presented examples of Australian and New Zealand local



governments' response to COVID-19, outcomes of these responses and the challenges local governments faced and shared their expertise on these topics. Despite being in different countries, there were many similarities in Australian, New Zealand and Japanese local governments' responses and challenges during the pandemic and the outcomes of their responses. The information delivered by the panellists were immensely beneficial for local government employees in Japan who are in charge of sister city/state projects.



We will continue to engage in supporting sister city/state exchange activities.

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan's Birthday Reception in Melbourne



On 17 Feb, a reception celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan was held in the Residence of the Consul-General of Japan in Melbourne. Approximately 260 guests were invited to the reception, including various representatives from the Victorian State Government, the City of Melbourne and other organisations engaged in exchange with Japan.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at the reception to provide general information and tourist destination information on Aichi Prefecture and Osaka, which respectively have a sister state and sister city relationship with Victoria and Melbourne. We also provided guests with information on the FINA World Championships Fukuoka & FINA World Championships Kyushu which will be held in 2023. While promoting Japanese local government areas and tourist destinations at our booth, our staff were able to talk with guests who are passionately engaging in exchange with Japan and hear about their past experiences and visits to Japan.

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



2021/2022 CLAIR Forum

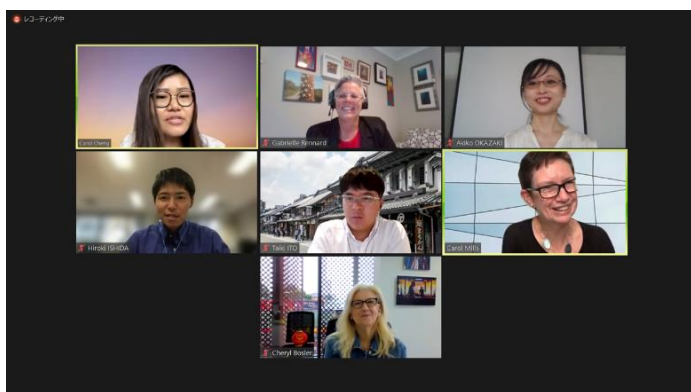
On 22 Feb, CLAIR Sydney held the CLAIR Forum 2021/2022 in collaboration with the Institute for Public Policy and Governance at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS: IPPG). In light of the recent COVID-19 circumstances, this year's Forum was held virtually for the first time.

CLAIR Forum is the event for staff of CLAIR Sydney, UTS: IPPG and other local government representatives to present on and discuss strategies of their organisations and their research outcomes concerning common challenges faced by local governments in Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

This year's theme was 'Local Government COVID-19 Community and Business Reactivation and Recovery Initiatives'. At the event, three CLAIR Sydney staff and two guest presenters made a comprehensive presentation each on local government policies and strategies that have reactivated local communities and economies in Japan and Australia in the current ongoing pandemic.

Thank you to all the attendees for joining the event from all over Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. We would also like to express our deepest gratitude to UTS: IPPG for co-hosting this event with us and our wonderful guest speakers for your kind contributions to this year's CLAIR Forum.

We will continue to share knowledge and information with local governments and universities in Australia and New Zealand, and be involved in events and activities that are beneficial for both Japan and Australia/New Zealand local governments.



Central Government's Economic Measures¹²

- Support businesses**
such as restaurants, event and travel-related businesses
- Support workers**
such as job retention and leave compensation
- Support children and households**
such as benefits to households with reduced income

Support Programmes for Infection Prevention

Covid Safe Retail

Setting hand sanitising and temperature check devices at entrances, displaying of COVID safe information, installing plastic sneeze guards, etc...

Sharing good practices

YouTube

Certification

2021 COVID Response Pathways for Food Security

Fairfield City
Celebrating diversity

As I count down to the last days of my time serving as an Event Coordinator for JETAA NSW, reflecting on the past year, I cannot help but feel dumbfounded by the remarkable accomplishments the JETAA NSW team has achieved in the turbulent year that 2021 was.

Our committee kicked off the year in April 2021 with a committee retreat. Wanting to make up for lost time in 2020, we peppered our monthly event calendar with a variety of events, re-organised the responsibilities and roles of titled committee members and brainstormed new networking opportunities with the Japanese community and organisations in NSW. That month ended on a high note when Consul-General Kiya invited eight committee members to his official residence to celebrate JETAA NSW's achievement in being awarded the distinguished Foreign Minister's Commendation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan.

Our next major event, in June, was our longstanding tri-annual collaborative Japanese speaking event with the Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS NSW), Shaberanaito. As it had been 16 long months since our last Shaberanaito, we reinvigorated the event by moving it to a new restaurant, Sakuratei. We had a terrific turn-out of 37 participants and we were looking forward to further JETAA NSW and AJS NSW collaborations to follow.

And then everything came to a screeching halt. As NSW went into lockdown again from the end of June, we leveraged our experiences from 2020 and moved most of our events online. With some alumni being forbidden to even leave our local areas, JETAA NSW's virtual events were a great reprieve for many to maintain our sanity and social skills, especially when it seemed like there was no end in sight for the lockdown.

In the four months of official lockdown, in addition to our monthly Virtual Happy Hour, we were able to host the first-ever 'Wine-d Down and Paint with JETAA NSW', run by our artistic Vice President. We also held many collaborative events with other organisations including co-hosting an Olympic themed trivia night with AJS NSW and a JET Programme Pre-departure Orientation with the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney.

On top of our regular JETAA itinerary of events, 2021 also saw JETAA NSW engaging in an exciting new initiative led by the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney: Japanaroo 2021. As part of the Japanaroo festival, we coordinated and ran the JETAA NSW Visualising Japan Photo Contest and Exhibition, with the support of our incredible partners, AJS NSW; Books Kinokuniya Sydney; Japan National Tourism Organization Sydney Office; The Japan Foundation, Sydney; and SMASH!, as well as our exhibition sponsor, Ted's World of Imaging. The competition received over 70 submissions across the five categories of Travel in Japan, Visions of Japan in Australia, Japan Through the Eyes of Children (Primary School), Japan Through the Eyes of Children (High School) and Cosplay and Pop Culture. Although travelling was near impossible at the time, it was phenomenal to see how Australians connected to Japan through the Photo Contest.

In addition to running an event for Japanaroo, JETAA NSW was also a member of the Task Team that oversaw the organisation of the entire Japanaroo and Japanaroo+ initiatives. Being part of the Task Team was an excellent opportunity for JETAA NSW to engage with many different Japan-related organisations and broaden our reach in the Japanese community of NSW. It was also extremely rewarding being able to collaborate with multiple Japanese

organisations working towards the common goal of promoting Japan to the Australian public. We cannot wait to see what Japanaroo will grow into in the coming years.

At the end of the year, just prior to the arrival of the Omicron wave, we were lucky enough to be able to squeeze in our annual End of Year Networking event. Holding it at the same venue as the 2020 Networking event, the Harbourview Hotel. It felt like Deja Vu, except in between we had experienced a year that felt both incredibly long and ridiculously short at the same time.

Even though the past two years have been full of many unforeseen challenges, it has moulded the JETAA NSW committee into a resilient group of ingenious individuals that collaborate seamlessly together. As we edge towards this year's AGM, I am excited to see what the new committee will bring for us in this auspicious year – the 35th anniversary of the JET Programme, and look forward to seeing the celebrations of this extraordinary program, which has connected so many people together around the globe.

- Carol Cheng, Event Coordinator JETAA NSW

Farewell Messages

Our Assistant Directors, Munekazu Kosugi, Ryota Ichinose and Aika Fukuda are leaving Sydney in March to take up new roles back in Japan.

Munekazu KOSUGI

Assistant Director
from Konosu-city, Saitama Prefecture

I would like to thank all the people I crossed paths with in Australia and New Zealand for their kind assistance during my secondment in Sydney.



Although I was meant to have a two-year term, I spent just approximately one year and five months in Australia due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Konosu City in Saitama Prefecture has not seconded any staff to CLAIR for more than 10 years, so I was the first staff Konosu City has sent overseas for over a decade. My mission was to establish a sister city relationship and restart our city's junior high school exchange program. I would like to continue my mission after I have returned to Japan.

I had lived in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates for two years, so I was not too worried about life in Sydney before I arrived. After moving here, I find that many people are very open and easy to talk to.

It is a pity that I am leaving Australia when I am just getting used to life here. Despite this, I am looking forward to meeting you again.



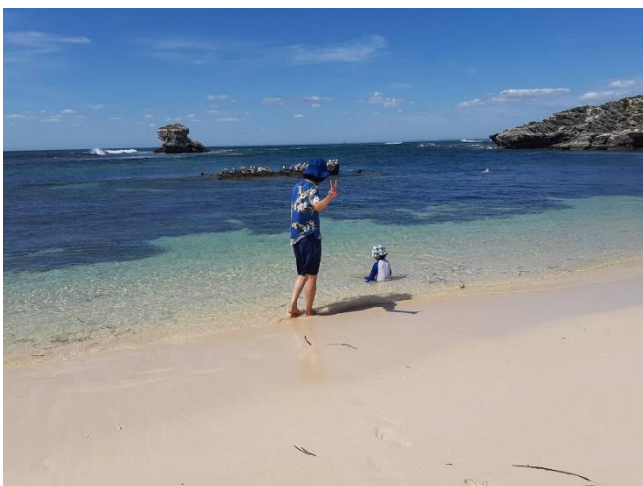
Ryota Ichinose
Assistant Director
from Tokyo Metropolitan Government

I cannot believe it is already the last days of my amazing one-and-a-half years in Sydney.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation for everyone I met here in Australia during my secondment at CLAIR Sydney. Thanks to everyone, I had a great time here even though I spent the whole time living with different levels of COVID-19 restrictions.

It has been an honour to work with and meet so many brilliant people. I have always been so fascinated with how people are warm-hearted, considerate and friendly everywhere I go in Australia and that really made it easier to get used to life in Australia.

Another thing I have been so impressed with is that everyone is so adaptable and flexible. Since I arrived in Sydney, the COVID-19 restrictions have been ever-changing. However, I feel people are quite adaptive to new situations quickly and comply with the latest restrictions without too many difficulties. I think this applies to both the government and the general public. I have learned a lot from seeing this and I would like to follow suit with being flexible in different circumstances that are changing day-by-day even after I return to Tokyo.



Unfortunately, I cannot spread my wings and visit different states this time, but I thoroughly enjoyed travelling around NSW and I hope I can travel all over the country next time I visit Australia.

Again, I am deeply appreciative and grateful for all the people whom I met. I hope I will see you again in the future.

Aika Fukuda

Assistant Director from Wakayama Prefecture



I returned to Japan on 15 Mar and I am writing this message from a hotel in Tokyo, full of nostalgia for Australia.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, although my stay was initially planned to be for two years, I ended up only being able to stay in Sydney for one-and-a-half years. Despite this, I was able to have a very fulfilling time. It was my first time living in another country, so I was able to gain the valuable experience of using English in my day-to-day life.

In my private time, I was able to travel to Melbourne and the Gold Coast, and I also had opportunities to travel to Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane for work. I enjoy drinking coffee and the atmosphere of cafes in Australia, so I stopped by cafes in each of the cities I visited. Coffee is delicious everywhere in Australia, and I feel especially sad when I think about how it will be a while before I can go to an Australian cafe.



I was mainly involved in JET-related matters at CLAIR Sydney. I am especially grateful to the members of the Embassies, Consulates-General of Japan and Consular Offices of Japan in Australia and New Zealand, and the JETAA chapters across Oceania. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind assistance during my time in Australia.



From 1 Apr, I will return to work at my original organisation, the Wakayama Prefectural Government. I am yet to find out what kind of work I will be involved in next, but I will make an effort to work for Wakayama by making use of my experiences in Australia.

Thank you!

From the Executive Director

- Resumption of In-person Exchange Activities between Australia/New Zealand and Japan –

International border restrictions and quarantine requirements for international travellers have been extensively eased in Australia and Japan recently, and New Zealand has announced that it will follow suit in the next two months. Meanwhile, the number of direct flights between Australia and Japan are slated to increase. We have also heard that some in-person exchange activities, such as home-stay and English study programs in Australia, have started to accept participants from Japan. From the standpoint of international exchange, these are all welcoming news that we have longed to hear.

We anticipate that Australian and New Zealand local governments and schools that have Japanese partners would gradually and carefully plan for the resumption of in-person exchange activities to further their partnerships and compensate for the missed opportunities in the past two years. It may be a good idea to explore in-person exchange opportunities while continuing online exchange activities.

Needless to say, we still need to make every effort to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, as the omicron variant and its sub-variant BA.2 are highly infectious. The COVID-19 situation can deteriorate if we were to take any inappropriate actions in the planning and implementation of the resumed exchange activities. All in-person exchange activities should be executed in a COVID safe manner to prevent the spread of the virus.

We hope that your organisation would thoroughly discuss with your Japanese partners, when and how to proceed with the resumption of in-person exchange activities, and how to maximise the benefits of these activities while conducting them in a COVID safe manner. Everyone involved in any upcoming in-person exchange may unexpectedly come across new findings and rediscover the positive effects of exchange through the resumption of in-person exchange activities after two long years of suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic.