



# NEWSLETTER

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## Our New Executive Director: HIRAKI Manya

We would like to introduce our new Executive Director. Welcome to Sydney!



**HIRAKI Manya**

Executive Director of CLAIR Sydney

From Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

I am very honoured to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of the Japan Local Government Centre (CLAIR Sydney). CLAIR Sydney has been committed to developing and strengthening the friendly relations between local governments in Japan and Australia/New Zealand for over 27 years. In this, CLAIR Sydney promotes sister city relationships and supports economic ties between Japan and Australia/New Zealand. Another important mission for us is to support all former and future Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants in Australia and New Zealand. CLAIR Sydney and I thank you for your ongoing support.

Much like the rest of the world, physical interactions and exchange between Japan and Australia/New Zealand had been restricted over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the three countries have been gradually relaxing their restrictions, I anticipate that the interactions between Japan and Australia/New Zealand will gain momentum and steadily make up for lost time. CLAIR Sydney will continue to support and facilitate the further

development of partnerships between Australia/New Zealand and Japan, and I will make all efforts to accomplish this goal.

On a personal note, I joined the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) approximately 20 years ago and have experience in working in all three levels of government in Japan. I have studied and experienced the working and functionality of prefectural and municipal governments in Japan, and have worked in promoting population decentralisation and revitalisation of regional areas. Japan is an ageing society with a declining birthrate. I believe the overall reinvigoration of Japan will eventuate through the revitalisation of individual region areas across Japan.

My recent career is as follows:

5/2021-3/2022 Director of the Policy Division, Agency for Cultural Affairs

4/2018-4/2021 Director General of General Affairs, General Affairs Department, Kagoshima Prefectural Government

7/2016-3/2018 Senior Deputy Director of Regional Policy Department, MIC

This is my first time living overseas. During my time here, I would like to experience Australian and New Zealand cultures, the warm hospitality, delicious food, passionate spectator sports, lovely sceneries, magnificent nature etc., in the two countries. I came to Sydney with my wife and child. My child likes to go to zoos and aquariums and watch sports. During our time in Australia we would like to visit various zoos and aquariums, such as Sea Life Sydney Aquarium in Sydney and Australia Zoo in Queensland, and visit Melbourne to watch the Australian Open live.

I am delighted to work with you here and looking forward to seeing you soon.

*Manya Hiraki*

HIRAKI Manya

## Nonoichi City

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Located near the centre of Ishikawa Prefecture, Nonoichi is the smallest city in the area with just 13.56 square kilometres of land. Yet it is well populated and dotted with numerous shopping malls, medical centres and public facilities, making it one of the most convenient cities to live in Japan. In fact, Nonoichi ranked No.1 in the National Livability Ranking by Toyo Keizai for two years in a row since 2020.

Nonoichi has rich history and culture. There are ancient village ruins from the Jōmon Period (10,000 BC-300 BC) named the Okyōzuka Ruins, now a designated National Historic Site. Also found in Nonoichi are some of the oldest townhouse-style architecture from the Edo Period (1603-1867),



notably the Kita Family House that belonged to the brewers of Japanese sake Shōjō. This sake, once dubbed the “illusionary sake” for its rarity, was no longer produced for a long time until, in 2021, local breweries were able to reproduce it based on yeast remains in the house. Fragrant and refreshing, Shōjō is once again offering the delightful taste of “made in Nonoichi”.



Another highlight of Nonoichi is the Jonkara Festival, where townspeople dance to the tune of Jonkara Bushi, a traditional folksong that has been sung from generation to generation. Other traditional events, such as Mushi Okuri and Shishimai, offer a variety of unique cultural experiences throughout the year.

Nonoichi also has a strong cultural connection with its sister city in New Zealand, Gisborne, such as that they are both renowned for producing delicious kiwifruits. Ever since the establishment of sister city relationship in 1990, the two cities have enjoyed a longstanding friendship, as well as frequent delegation visits and student exchanges. Having reached the 30th milestone, Nonoichi looks forward to continue deepening its ties with Gisborne.



## Kodomo no Hi Japan Festival 2022 in South Australia

On Sunday, 1 May, the Kodomo no Hi Japan Festival 2022 was held in the City of West Torrens in the western area of Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at this event for the second consecutive year, promoting the JET Programme and local governments around Japan, as well as the FINA World Championships 2022 Fukuoka & FINA World Masters Championships 2022 Kyushu scheduled to be held in 2023. Similar to last year, many visitors came to the CLAIR Sydney booth seeking information on popular tourist destinations and cherry blossom viewing spots in Japan. Besides well-known tourist destinations such as Kyoto, Osaka, and Okinawa, visitors also sought information on Okayama Prefecture, South Australia's sister state, and Himeji City, Adelaide's sister city.

In addition to questions about the JET Programme and various regions of Japan, visitors also asked about when the travel restrictions on tourists to Japan will be lifted. We felt that this is an indication of Australians' eagerness to visit Japan to enjoy the delicious food, scenery and culture that are unique to Japan. We hope that the restrictions in Japan will be further eased so the Japanese people can once again welcome tourists from around the world.



## The Cowra Koyo Festival (Autumn Festival)

From Wednesday, 4 to Thursday, 5 May, CLAIR Sydney staff participated in the Cowra Koyo Matsuri (Autumn Festival) and promoted the JET Programme. The Cowra Koyo Matsuri celebrates the two Japanese public holidays—Midori no Hi (Greenery Day) and Kodomo no Hi (Children's Day)—and was held for the second time after last year's inaugural Festival.

On Wednesday, 4 May, a memorial service was held for the casualties of war. Following that, at the Cowra Japanese Garden, an inaugural oration was delivered by Dr Geoff Gallop AC, former Premier of Western Australia and Emeritus Professor of the University of Sydney. An Urasenke style tea ceremony demonstration was also held at the Cultural Centre. We look forward to working with representatives from Cowra again soon.



On the following day, about 500 local students were invited to participate in a paper picture story performance, an ikebana demonstration and a taiko drumming performance to learn about Japanese culture and traditions.

CLAIR Sydney staff were able to deepen their relationship with the Mayor of Cowra, Cr Bill West; Chairman of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre, Mr Bob Griffiths ORS; Director of the Cowra Japanese Garden and Cultural Centre and Acting Chairman of the Cowra Japanese Garden Maintenance Fund, Mr Tony Mooney OAM ORS; and many other people involved. We look forward to working with representatives from Cowra again soon.



## Japan's Children's Day Celebration 2022 in Tasmania

On Saturday, 7 and Sunday, 8 May, CLAIR Sydney took part in the 2022 Japan's Children's Day celebration held in the Japanese Garden in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens in Hobart. The City of Hobart has a sister city relationship with Yaizu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, and this year marks the 45th anniversary of their partnership.



The Japanese Garden was decorated with carp streamers created by children in Hobart, and on the first day that CLAIR Sydney attended the event, there was a singing performance by primary school students studying Japanese.



CLAIR Sydney participated in this event for the first time and at our booth, we promoted various tourist destinations in Japan; the 19th FINA World Championships 2022 Fukuoka & 19th FINA World Masters Championships 2022 Kyushu; which have been postponed to 2023, and the JET Programme.

Several visitors at our booth said that they had never been to Japan and are keen to travel to and visit various places in Japan. We could feel that Japan is still a popular tourist destination for Australians, and hope that Australian tourists can travel to Japan with minimal restrictions soon.



## Australia-Japan Society of NSW 2022 Student Awards Night

The Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS-NSW) held the University Awards Night at The Japan Foundation, Sydney, on Wednesday, 18 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 Awards Night hosted by AJS-NSW. We look forward to further deepening our relationships with AJS-NSW and other Japan-related organisations.

