



NEWSLETTER

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Ube City

Ube City is an industrial city with an area of approximately 287 square kilometres and a population of approximately 160,000, and is the third largest city in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The city enjoys a mild climate and is comfortable to live in. Yamaguchi-Ube Airport is the gateway by air to Ube and there are flights to Tokyo every day.

The City devotes itself to achieving the city motto of being “the city of greenery, flowers and sculptures” by continuing to hold the UBE Biennale, a sculpture festival that is the third longest running sculpture festival in the world with an aim to create an attractive city with originality.

One of the main attractions of Ube City is Tokiwa Park, a multi-purpose leisure ground built around Lake Tokiwa. The lake is surrounded by thick greenery, flowers, and sculptures. The park includes areas such as Iris Garden, which has over 80,000

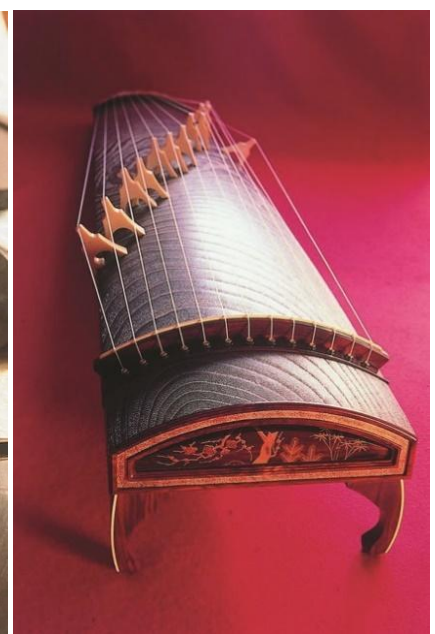


irises in 150 different species; UBE Biennale Sculptures Hill; Tokiwa Plant Museum which showcases a wide variety of rare plants, flowers, and fruits from all around the world; Tokiwa Zoo which features animals in natural habitat exhibits; as well as a coal-mining history museum that tells the history of Ube City. The park is also a good place for a walk and do bird watching.

Ube City is home to many fine sculptures. Many of which came out of the UBE Biennale that the city has been holding since 1961. The 1961 exhibit was the first trial of displaying sculptures in Japan with the aim of developing the city area. Since then, Ube City has acquired about 400 sculptures.



The Northern region of Ube City is renowned for the craftsmanship of the Akama-suzuri, inkstones made with Japanese lacquer which are essential tools for calligraphers, and Koto, a traditional instrument that creates mesmerising sounds.



Akama-suzuri is a traditional tool with a history of about 800 years. It is a handcrafted product made with traditional methods, using uncut stones mined in Ube City. These methods have been passed down through the generations and inherited in the present

day by the fine craftsmen in the city. Akama-suzuri has been designated as a national traditional craft product due to its reputation for having an elaborate creation process and elegant finish.

The Koto is also a handcrafted product produced in Ube City. Paulownia wood is carefully selected to make the Koto, and they are handcrafted using traditional methods.

Visit to Palmerston North City Council

On 2 June, a CLAIR Sydney office staff who is on a secondment from Mihara City in Hiroshima Prefecture visited Palmerston North City Council in New Zealand and met with the Mayor, Grant Smith.

Palmerston North is the most populated area of the Manawatu region in the southern part of New Zealand's North Island. The city is located on the fertile plains along the Manawatu River and has a long-standing, prosperous dairy

industry. In recent years, businesses have been relocating to the city due to the city's position as an important transportation hub in the region. Palmerston North is also a university town, and its population continues to grow due to the influx of people from both within New Zealand and internationally.

The relationship between Mihara City and Palmerston North began in 2003 when Mihara City invited athletes from Palmerston North to participate in the Triathlon Sagishima held in Mihara City. After reciprocal visits made by the mayors of both cities, a sister city affiliation was concluded in March 2019.

During this visit to Palmerston North, the staff dispatched from Mihara City met with Mayor Grant Smith to discuss future exchange between the two cities. Mayor Smith, who has just been appointed President of Global Cities New Zealand, spoke passionately about the importance of the exchange with Mihara City. Following that, the CLAIR Sydney staff presented the Mayor with a letter from the Mihara City Mayor, Mr Yoshihiro Okada.



The 'Celebrating Our Connections with Japan' Exhibition at the Museum of Fire

On 3 June, the Museum of Fire in Penrith launched the 'Celebrating Our Connections with Japan' exhibition. Penrith has sister city relationships with Fujieda City in Shizuoka Prefecture and Hakusan City in Ishikawa Prefecture. CLAIR Sydney was invited to the launch as we facilitated the communication between the Museum and the two Cities during the preparation stage of this exhibition.

Over the years, both Fujieda City and Hakusan City have donated fire-fighting equipment including a fire engine and a hand-drawn pump to the Museum as part of their sister city exchange with Penrith. In collaboration with the Australian-Japan Foundation, the Museum opened this special permanent exhibition, 'Celebrating our Connections with Japan', in order to strengthen its important relationships with Japan.



CLAIR Sydney hopes that the visitors to the museum will deepen their understanding of Japan through this exhibition and we look forward to seeing the continued sister city exchange activities between Penrith, Fujieda City and Hakusan City.



Japan Festival Wellington

On 18 June, the Japan Festival Wellington was held in Wellington, New Zealand, for the first time in three years. There were as many as 25,000 people at the event on the day.

The Festival had booths showcasing Japanese food, crafts and cultural experiences, and on the stage, there were performances such as Japanese music and martial arts. CLAIR Sydney also took part in the event and our staff distributed brochures to promote Japanese tourist destinations.

At the event, a video message from Mayor Nagafuji of Sakai City, the Japanese sister city of Wellington, and videos on the history of the two cities' relationship were shown. Through these videos, attendees were able to witness the strong relationship and learn about the history of exchange between the two cities.,

This year, New Zealand and Japan will celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relations. We hope that the Japan Festival Wellington event is the catalyst to restart the various exchange and interactions that had to be suspended due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly 2022

The Australian Local Government Association's National General Assembly was held from 19 to 22 June in Canberra and was attended by mayors, councillors and relevant local government officials from all around Australia.

The event included keynote addresses and sessions featuring various local government experts on topics such as local governments' productivity and building stronger communities. The conference also had a booth area that provided promotional opportunities for participating organisations, and networking opportunities for all conference attendees. More than 1,000 participants attended from all around Australia for this invaluable event.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth to distribute information on our recent activities and promote exchange opportunities such as our Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar. We also promoted various Japanese tourist destinations and upcoming notable sports events held in Japan.

We are extremely pleased to meet many conference attendees who visited our booth to find out more about CLAIR Sydney and Japanese local governments. Many mayors and councillors whose councils have sister city relationships with Japanese local governments also kindly visited us at our booth. Through the opportunities provided by this event, CLAIR Sydney staff were able to network with many local government representatives from across Australia.

We will continue to learn and research current challenges and best practices of Australian local governments, strengthen our relationships with local governments in Australia and promote Japan to Australians.

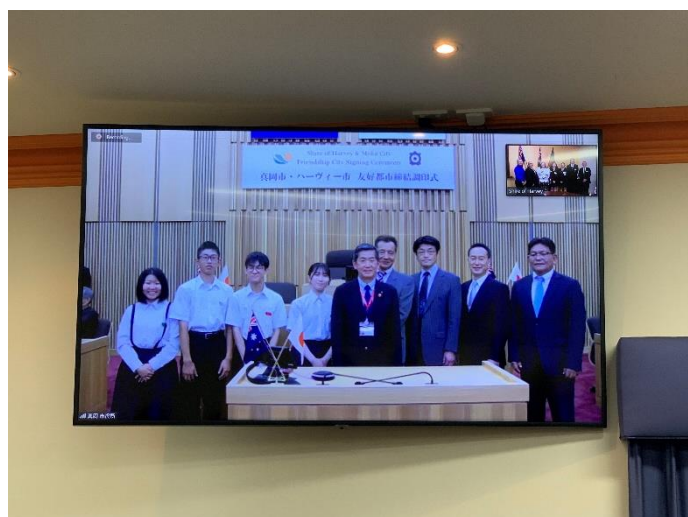


The Online Friendship City Signing Ceremony between Moka City and the Shire of Harvey

On 21 June, Moka City in Tochigi Prefecture and the Shire of Harvey in Western Australia held an online Friendship City Signing Ceremony. CLAIR Sydney attended the ceremony in person in Harvey.

Moka City is located in the centre of the main island of Japan. Moka is a well-balanced city with a fine combination of abundant nature, industry and commerce. The City has earned a reputation by producing some of the tastiest strawberries in Japan. On the other hand, Harvey is renowned for its natural beauty – stunning beaches, rivers and agricultural land.

The relationship between Moka and Harvey started in 2003 with an exchange arrangement between Moka Junior High School and Australind Senior High School. In 2021, the President of the Shire of Harvey and the Mayor of the City of Moka held an online meeting, and there were online cultural exchange sessions between the students of three junior high schools in Moka and Harvey Senior High School. These interactions led to the formalisation of a friendship city agreement between the two cities. We anticipate seeing the exchange between the two cities beyond the area of education.



Visit to Flood Affected Areas and Attendance in the Lantern Parade in Lismore

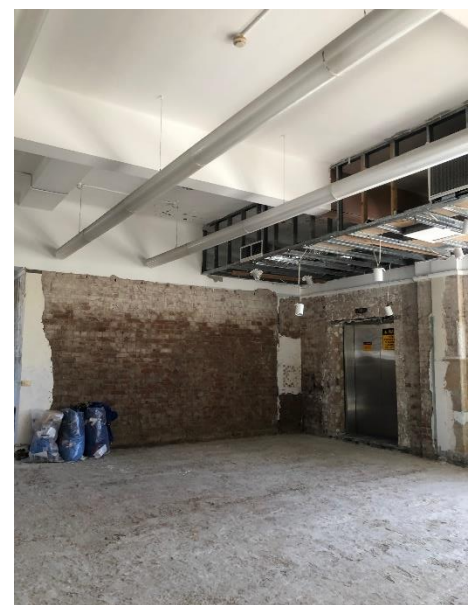
From 24 to 25 June, CLAIR Sydney staff visited Lismore in New South Wales, which had suffered the worst flooding in recorded history in February and March this year. Together with a delegation that consisted of members from the Embassy of Japan in Australia and the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, our staff participated in the Lismore Lantern Parade and visited areas devastated by the flooding.

On 24 January, the delegation of visitors visited Lismore City Hall to meet with the Mayor and other officials and was briefed on the damages from the flooding. The delegation was then guided by the Mayor on a tour of the city's facilities which included the baseball stadium and an art gallery, all of which were severely damaged.

The next stop was Southern Cross University, where the Ambassador of Japan to Australia delivered a speech and took part in a discussion on Australia-Japan relations with university staff and students. After the discussion, the delegation moved to the Japan-Australia Centre at the university, where a welcome ceremony for the Ambassador was held by the university.

On 25 January, the Deputy Mayor of Ballina Shire Council, the LGA next to Lismore City Council which had also been affected by severe flooding, guided us on a tour of the affected areas in Ballina. That evening, our staff participated in the Lismore Lantern Parade and along with the Mayor of Lismore and representatives from the Japan-Australia Centre, the Embassy of Japan in Australia and the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, paraded the lantern of Miku-chan, the mascot character of Yamatotakada City in Nara Prefecture. Yamatotakada City concluded a sister city agreement with Lismore in 1963, which is the first-ever sister city relationship between Australia and Japan.

In the town centre, where the parade started, the aftermath of the flooding could still be seen—there were still traces of mud on glass windows and many empty shops lined the streets. In contrast to this, the bright smiles and loud cheers of the many people gathered along the streets were impressive. We sincerely hope that life will return to normal very soon for the locals in the affected areas.



From the Executive Director

– A New Era of Sister City Exchange –

I arrived in Sydney in mid-June. As our readers may know, one of CLAIR's main missions is to support exchange between local governments in Japan and Australia/New Zealand. Since arriving in Sydney, I was fortunate to have opportunities to go on two business trips within a two-week period. The first was to Chatswood to visit Willoughby City Council and the second was to Lismore to visit the City Hall and disaster-affected areas and to attend the Lismore Lantern Parade. Both of these trips were for sister city-related events.

There are 1786 sister city relationships between local governments in Japan and other countries as of July 1, 2022. Within this, Japan has 107 sister city relationships with Australia and 44 with New Zealand. For Japan, Australia is the country which Japan has the fourth largest number of sister cities with and New Zealand is the tenth largest. There is a long history of sister city relationships between Japan and Australia/New Zealand. The first sister city relationship between Japan and Australia was established in 1963, and the first between Japan and New Zealand was established in 1973. It is pleasing to see the large number of friendly relationships Japan has with Australia and New Zealand.

I have heard that people in Australia and New Zealand generally have a good impression of Japan, and I believe this is due in part to the interactions and exchange activities under the many sister city relations.

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. On the other hand, I think that online interaction will be more active than ever before. I believe that a combination of in-person and online interactions will become the new standard style of interaction in the future.

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.