



NEWSLETTER

C O N T E N T S

	(Page)		(Page)
Welcome to Kurashiki City	1-3	National Federation of Australia Japan Societies	7
Japan Expo	3-4	Biennial Conference	
Matsuri Brisbane	4-5	Spring Reception – Embassy of Japan in	8
Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood	5-6	Australia	
South West Festival of Japan	6-7	Sakura Matsuri	8-9
		From the Executive Director	9

Welcome to Kurashiki City

Kurashiki City borders the Seto Inland Sea and is located between Osaka and Hiroshima. The city has a population of about 480,000. Historically, Kurashiki developed as a merchant town in the Edo Period, a textile manufacturing town in the Meiji Period, and an industrial, cultural, and tourist city in recent years.





Each region in Kurashiki has its distinctive character, from the Kurashiki Bikan Area with its beautiful white-walled buildings and rows of willow trees to the beautiful inland seascapes of the Setonaikai National Park.



Exchange with Christchurch

Christchurch in New Zealand and Kurashiki City in Japan signed the first-ever sister city agreement between the two countries on 7 March 1973. Since then, the two cities have continued to build on their sister city history through activities such as mutual exchange visits between citizens, students and people with disabilities, as well as the exchange of people involved in music and sports.

The two cities have offered support to one another at times of crisis in the hope of rapid recovery. In 2011, Kurashiki City dispatched a rescue team to Christchurch three days after the Christchurch earthquake. On the other hand, when devastating torrential rain hit Kurashiki City in 2018, members of the Sister City Committee and citizens from Christchurch visited Kurashiki City to deliver donated relief funds.



Host Town for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Building on the sister city exchange between the two cities, Kurashiki City was selected as a 'Host Town' for New Zealand for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and hosted training camps for the New Zealand weightlifting team in 2018 and 2019. Although a third camp scheduled for just before the Games could not take place due to COVID-19, schoolchildren in Kurashiki City and weightlifting athletes from New Zealand held an online session where they interacted and the schoolchildren cheered on the athletes. A banner with well-wishes from the schoolchildren was later delivered to the athletes.



The 50th Anniversary of Sister City Relations

Christchurch and Kurashiki City will mark the 50th anniversary of their sister city relationship in 2023. To commemorate this special occasion, a yacht rally is being planned. The yachts will depart Christchurch in March 2023 and sail for about three months to Kurashiki City. The planning for a citizen delegation exchange to commemorate the 50th anniversary is also currently underway.

While monitoring the spread of COVID-19, Kurashiki City hopes to resume people-to-people exchanges such as exchange between citizens, students and people with disabilities to further develop the friendship between Kurashiki and Christchurch.



Over 5,000 Attendees at JAPAN EXPO 2022

On Saturday, 3 Sep, JAPAN EXPO 2022 was held in the Great Hall of the University of Sydney. The venue was well-attended by over 5,000 visitors despite the rainy weather. There was a total of 22 booths offering tasting and sales of food such as soba noodles, onigiri rice balls, wagyu beef and sake; as well as booths with kimono displays, ikebana demonstrations, calligraphy and origami experiences, and tourism information.

CLAIR Sydney promoted various Japanese tourist destinations in an effort to boost the number of tourists to Japan once travel restrictions further relaxes. Many event attendees were looking forward to skiing, cycling, and taking part in other sports in Japan, or meeting up with friends living in Japan and sightseeing together. There were also attendees who were gathering information for their future trips to Japan. On the day, we recommended the social media accounts of various Japanese local governments as a way to obtain sightseeing and other information, and many attendees followed the accounts on the spot.

We will continue to promote Japan at similar events to pique Australians' interest in Japan to encourage them to choose Japan as a travel destination. We will also continue our efforts to promote exchange between Australia and Japan.



Matsuri Brisbane 2022 in Queensland

On Saturday, 3 Sep, Matsuri Brisbane 2022 was held in the City of Brisbane, the capital of Queensland.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at this event for the first time, promoting the JET Programme and local governments around Japan. CLAIR Sydney and the Saitama "Kenjinkai" in Queensland, an association of people with connections to Saitama, joined forces to promote Saitama Prefecture, the sister state of Queensland. There were more festival attendees than expected who visited the CLAIR Sydney booth to find information on the JET Programme and popular tourist spots in Japan.



Many of the visitors asked about when the travel restriction 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 will continue to promote Japan at similar events to pique Australians' interest in Japan to encourage them to choose Japan as a travel destination. We will also continue our efforts to promote exchange between Australia and Japan.



Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood 2022

On Saturday, 10 Sep, the Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood 2022, the largest Japanese cultural event in northern Sydney, was held at Chatswood Mall. With a total of 23 booths selling food such as onigiri and okonomiyaki, as well as booths with kimono displays, tourism information and experiences such as origami, flower arrangement, calligraphy and tea ceremony, the event attracted a huge crowd of visitors.

At the Festival, to boost the number of tourists visiting Japan once travel restrictions have been lifted, CLAIR Sydney promoted tourist destinations in along the Sea of Japan in Honshu and introduced visitors to Japanese local governments' dedicated social media pages for tourism. At the same time, we also conducted a survey at our booth to find out which of the sampled images posted on social media the visitors to our booth found the most appealing. From the survey results, we could see that amongst images of nature such as the sea, mountains, lakes and snow; as well as images of festivals such as fireworks festivals that have become synonymous with specific regions in Japan; and transportation such as single-track trains and steam locomotives; the most appealing images are those that capture the beauty of nature.



To ensure that people continue to be up to date on the attractions of the various regions, we asked many of those who responded to our survey to follow the social media pages of Japanese regions. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who kindly followed the pages as per our suggestions.

A staff who is visiting Sydney from our Tokyo Headquarters also took part in the event to promote Fujieda City in Shizuoka Prefecture, where she was seconded from. Samples of gyokuro tea, one of Fujieda's specialties, were very popular amongst the visitors.

There is the “Golden Route” in Japan, a popular famous sightseeing tour route. To promote the equally fascinating tourist destinations that are outside of the Golden Route, we will continue to promote Japan at events such as this Festival to encourage Australians to choose Japan as a travel destination and inform Australians of attractive tourist destinations in various parts of Japan.

South West Festival of Japan

From 9 to 17 Sep, the South West Festival of Japan was held in Bunbury, Western Australia. During the Festival, there were Japan-related events such as a Japanese festival, karaoke, cultural workshops and a stamp rally in the city centre. Bunbury is celebrating the 30th anniversary of its sister city relationship with Setagaya, Tokyo, this year.



On Matsuri Day, 10 Sep, in addition to performances such as Taiko drums and martial arts, there were booths to promote the Bunbury-Setagaya and Busselton-Sugito

(in Saitama) sister city relationships. There were also cultural experiences such as calligraphy and origami run by students from Tokyo City University who were studying abroad in the area. CLAIR Sydney also ran a booth to promote attractions in Setagaya as well as Moka in Tochigi, which is the sister city of Harvey in Western Australia, and other areas in Japan. Many of the visitors to our booth said that they have been waiting for the day when travel restrictions for individual travellers are lifted, while repeat travellers to Japan are making travel plans to specifically visit regional areas.



CLAIR Sydney will continue to support sister city relationships between Australia and Japan to further develop the partnerships between the two countries and increase the interest in Japan.



National Federation of Australia Japan Societies Biennial Conference

From 16 to 18 Sep, the National Federation of Australia Japan Societies Biennial Conference was held in Adelaide, South Australia. The Federation is the national body representing all the Australia-Japan Societies in each state and territory of Australia to promote mutual understanding between Australia and Japan.

This year, the Conference took place in South Australia where there is a thriving space industry. The theme of the

Conference was New Frontiers. During the Conference, there were opening remarks by The Hon Nick Champion MP, South Australian Minister for Trade & Investment, and a panel discussion joined by Mr Timothy Hilton from the Australian Space Agency and Mr Shinichi Nakasuka from the University of Tokyo. CLAIR delivered a presentation on sister-city relationships to share information on the many sister-city relationships between Australia and Japan, the



active exchange activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the city-to-city cooperation activities aiming to solve common issues.

CLAIR will continue to support grass-root activities between Australia and Japan to further deepen the relationship between the two countries.



Spring Reception at the Embassy of Japan in Australia



On Friday 23 Sep, CLAIR Sydney staff attended the Spring Reception held at the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan to Australia. The reception was held to celebrate the arrival of spring and to deepen friendships among the guests, including various Australian representatives, government officials and people from the education sector who are involved in the Australia-Japan relation. This is the second event of its kind, following the Sharing Your Experience of Japan Reception last year.

In his opening remarks, His Excellency Yamagami, the Ambassador of Japan to Australia thanked the guests for

their continuous involvement in the Australia-Japan relationship. The Ambassador also referred to the Japanese Government's announcement of the lifting of travel restrictions to Japan that was made on the day before the reception, 22 September. His Excellency expressed his anticipation for a return of visitors to Japan for the ski season, which is popular with Australians.

CLAIR Sydney staff were able to deepen their friendships with a number of people, including active members of local Japanese societies, people from Japanese businesses and Japanese government organisations.



Sakura Matsuri in Cowra

On Saturday, 24 Sep, Sakura Matsuri was held at the Cowra Japanese Garden where the cherry blossoms were in full bloom. Many visitors were attracted to the event by the numerous Japanese cultural and food booths and stage events.

CLAIR Sydney promoted tourist destinations in various parts of Japan, including Joetsu City in Niigata Prefecture, which has a Peace and Friendship Agreement with Cowra. It could be because it was the day after the announcement of the removal of the cap on the number of international arrivals, the resumption of visa-free entry and the lifting of the ban on individual travel from 11 Oct, people seemed happy to be able to travel freely to Japan and many people visited our booth to gather information to plan their trips to Japan.

We ran a survey at our booth and asked those who visited our booth what they are most interested in when travelling to Japan. The most popular answer was 'tradition', such as temples, castles and festivals, followed by 'nature' and 'cuisine'.



We introduced visitors to our booth to the traditional Japanese toy, Kendama, and invited visitors to try playing with it for themselves. It was the first time for most visitors to try their hand at the Kendama, but it seemed like it was an enjoyable experience for all.

In addition to promoting tourism, we would like to introduce Japanese traditions and culture to interact with visitors to our booth in future.

From the Executive Director

– What Are You Most Interested in When Visiting Japan? –

Individual travel to Japan resumed on 11 October. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan received many tourists. Data released by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) shows that 621,771 visitors from Australia and 94,115 from New Zealand visited Japan in 2019. The number of tourists from Australia and New Zealand visiting Japan had been increasing every year since 2012. Specifically, there were 415,367 more tourists from Australia in 2019 when compared to 2012, an increase of 201.2%. Similarly, the number of New Zealand tourists in 2019 was 62,262 more than the number in 2012, which is an increase of 195.5%. It is pleasing to see these numbers.

We wonder what aspects people are most interested in when they visit Japan, so we surveyed event attendees who visited our booth at Japan-related events. The choices for the survey we created were Tradition, Nature, Cuisine, Recreation Facilities, Art, Experiential Activities, Outdoors and Cultural Exchange. From these choices, Tradition was the most popular and gained around 39% of all votes, followed by Nature and Cuisine. If you were to take part in this survey, which one would you select?

In Japan, temples, shrines and historic streets are well-preserved, and nature shows its distinct beauty in each of the four seasons. There are many delicious cuisines, and the tastes of the same food and dish can vary in each region. For example, ramen has many different broth flavours such as miso, pork bone, soy sauce, seafood, and salt, and there are regional differences in the flavours. There are also many outdoor activities that different regions in Japan offer such as skiing and climbing, and recreation facilities such as onsen for visitors to enjoy.

You may have already visited cities such as Tokyo, Hakone, Nagoya, Osaka, and Kyoto along the popular tourist route known as the "Golden Route" in Japan. Certainly, it is always great to re-visit places you have already been, however, it is also enjoyable to discover new destinations. Whether you are a repeat traveller to Japan, or a first-time traveller, Japan welcomes you. I believe that you will come across fascinating discoveries about Japan each time when you visit. We sincerely look forward to welcoming you to Japan.