

# NEWSLETTER

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Japan Local Government Centre  
Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR, Sydney)

## Welcome to Oyama City

Oyama City is located in the southern part of Tochigi Prefecture, approximately 60 km north of Tokyo and 30 km south of Utsunomiya City, the prefectural capital, and takes approximately 40 minutes from Tokyo by Shinkansen bullet train. National highways and railways run north-south and east-west through the city, making it an important transportation hub.

With a population of approximately 166,000, this city ranks as the second largest in the prefecture. The number of foreign residents is approximately 7400, and the residency rate is the second highest in the prefecture, making it one of the municipalities with a large foreign population nationwide.

Moreover, there is a well-balanced mix of agriculture and commerce, and the area surrounding the urban centre features rich pastoral environments, including farmland and flatwood forests.

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Oyama City is a 'Garden City' that stands out within the metropolitan area, characterised by a harmonious balance between a rich rural environment and urban surrounding, shaped by a long-standing history, traditions, and culture that have been passed down for generations, creating expansive and vibrant atmosphere.

In spring, visitors can enjoy vivid cherry blossoms, including Omoigawazakura, a variety native to Oyama City with pale pink flowers. Visitors can walk or jog while viewing the cherry blossoms, or capture photogenic pictures along the cherry tree-lined approach.



Festivals and events are also among the attractions of Oyama City. Every year on 5th of May, one of Kanto region's leading eccentric festivals, "Mamada no Jagamaita," is held, designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties of the nation. Seven giant snakes made of bamboo and ferns parade through the Mamada area, praying for a rich harvest and good health.

In late July every year, one of the biggest events in Oyama City, the "Oyama Summer Festival" is held lighting up the summer night sky with over 20,000 fireworks and leaving inspiration to many people.



Additionally, as an important environmental resource to be passed on to future generations, there is the vast Watarase Retarding Basin(Watarase-yusuichi), which spans four prefectures (Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, and Ibaraki).

In the Watarase Retarding Basin, designated as a Ramsar Convention wetland in 2012, visitors can enjoy a variety of natural landscapes throughout the four seasons. And since 2018, the Oriental Stork, designated as a Special Natural Monument of Japan, has been establishing a habitat and from 2020, chicks have been born for four consecutive years.



The inhabiting and breeding of the Oriental Stork serve as evidence of the rich and harmonious ecosystem in the surrounding area of Watarase Retarding Basin.



Oyama City is actively promoting citizen international exchange and international understanding. In 2005, the city formed a sister city affiliation with Cairns, Queensland. Since then, students responsible for the future of both cities have served as bridges between them by engaging in language training and interactions with local residents.

Although in-person exchanges were impossible by the challenges posed by the pandemic, in 2021, a commemorative ceremony was held to mark the 15th anniversary of the sister city affiliation. During the event, the mayors of both cities held a virtual meeting, reaffirming the deep bond between the sister cities.

While the local exchange program was temporarily suspended, in August 2023, 22 students from Oyama City visited Cairns for the first time in four years. Through activities such as a visit to the city hall, school exchanges, and homestays, they were able to deepen friendships with local residents.

The exchange with Cairns City holds great significance for the future of Oyama City.

Oyama City will continue to foster a deeper and enduring relationship between the two cities by implementing various exchanges, including student exchanges.



# News from CLAIR Sydney

## School Exchange Opportunities

To support cultural exchange between schools in Japan and Australia/New Zealand, CLAIR Sydney has a dedicated page on our website that lists schools in Japan that are interested in initiating cultural exchange with schools in Australia/New Zealand.

Please click on the link or scan the QR code below for more information on the respective schools.

Should you be interested in a particular school, please get in touch with them!



[Schools interested in exchange opportunities - CLAIR Sydney \(jlhc.org.au\)](https://www.jlhc.org.au)



## CLAIR Sydney October Activity Report

### Support Activities for Hokkaido Association of Towns and Villages (9 Oct 2023)

On 9 October, the delegation from Hokkaido Association of Towns and Villages (HATV) for overseas administrative inspection and research visited the CLAIR Sydney office. The delegation was made up of a total of 10 town and village mayors, including Hokuryu Town Mayor Yutaka Sano, who also serves as the Vice Chairman of HATV.

The delegation visited Australia this time to learn from Australia's advanced efforts in areas such as urban planning, fishery industry, dairy farming, and environmental policies.

CLAIR Sydney provided the delegation with a briefing and Q&A session on the administration, political and economic overview of Australia in advance of the 5-day on-site investigation by the delegation. During the briefing, there were surprising observations regarding the differences with Japan and the high level of interest in Japan. For instance, it was mentioned that the top executive positions in local government (CEO or GM) may be publicly advertised, and Australia is ranked first in the world in terms of the number of Japanese learners per 100,000 population.

During the Q&A session, we received a multitude of questions, covering topics such as financial structure, immigration policy, and more.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support the overseas activities of Japanese local governments visiting Australia to address the challenges faced by local governments.



## SusHi Tech Tokyo 2024 Promotion at the 2023 Asia Pacific Cities Summit (11-13 Oct 2023)

From 11 to 13 October, the 2023 Asia Pacific Cities Summit (APCS), an international conference where city representatives and business people mainly from the Asia Pacific region gathered, was held at the Brisbane Exhibition Center. This year's conference was themed on "Shaping Cities for our Future," and participants from various countries set up booths in the exhibition hall to promote their products, services and policies.

In response to a request from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), a CLAIR Sydney office staff attended the APCS together with TMG members to support their promotion for the SusHi Tech Tokyo 2024, a large-scale event that will be held by the TMG in 2024.

More than 250 people visited the TMG's booth, including city leaders, councillors, executives, and business people. In particular, the "SusHi Tech Tokyo 2024" logo with a sushi motif attracted the attention of visitors.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support each local government's promotion in Australia.

<https://www.sushi-tech-tokyo2024.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/> for details of SusHi Tech Tokyo 2024.



## Sister Cities Australia 2023 National Conference (12 Oct 2023)

On 12 October, the Sister Cities Australia 2023 National Conference was held in Wyndham, Victoria. It has been four years since the face-to-face conference was held in 2019. Over 100 representatives from Australian local governments, sister city committees, and relevant organizations in Australia, New Zealand, United States of America, Italy and China participated in this conference.

At the conference, topics such as examples of outstanding sister city exchanges, engagement of the younger generation, and the benefits of sister city exchanges were shared.

CLAIR Sydney promoted sister city relationships between Japan and Australia, and our Japanese local government support



activities at the information table. It was our pleasure to network with conference attendees who are interested in finding more about CLAIR or have an existing relationship with Japan.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to work together with Sister Cities Australia and take up every opportunity to strengthen the relationship with local governments, sister city committees, and contribute to the further exchanges.



## Support Activities for Okayama Prefecture (18,21 Oct 2023)

From 18 October, the delegation from Okayama Prefecture led by Governor of Okayama Prefecture, Mr. Ryuta Ibaragi, visited Australia for events such as the 30th anniversary reception of the Sister State relationship between Okayama Prefecture and South Australia.

CLAIR Sydney provided support for activities in Adelaide and Sydney such as accompanying their visit.

The delegation met the Governor and the Premier of South Australia, and the 30th anniversary reception was held in Adelaide hosted by the Deputy Premier of South Australia, the Honourable Dr Susan Close MP. At the reception, it was mutually acknowledged between Okayama Prefecture and South Australia that they aim to continue fostering friendly relations in various fields, including economics and education, with the hope that they can celebrate just like they did today 30 years from now.



On 21 October, the delegation visited the CLAIR Sydney office.

CLAIR Sydney provided them with a briefing and Q&A session on the overview of Australia with a focus on changes over the past five years.

They expressed surprise at the progressing multiculturalism in Australia over the past five years and the especially high national minimum wage in Australia.

Furthermore, our staffs accompanied the inspection of public transportation and other visits that took place afterwards. It is expected that this visit will be a catalyst for a stronger relationship between Okayama Prefecture and South Australia and this relationship will continue to thrive through exchanges such as in economy and education.



## Support Activities for Nagano Prefecture (24 Oct 2023)

On 24 October, two members of the Nagano Prefectural Assembly, Masayasu Shimizu and Hideki Yamada, visited the CLAIR Sydney office.

They visited Australia this time to investigate the latest developments, including Australia's economic conditions, to assist in policy formulation and review related to the activities of local companies in the prefecture, attracting tourism to Nagano Prefecture, and expanding the export of locally-produced goods.

CLAIR Sydney provided them with a briefing and Q&A session on the administration, political and economic overview of Australia and Australia's multiculturalism policies.

During the Q&A session, we received a multitude of questions, not limited to the purpose of this investigation but also covering CLAIR's role, sister cities, and topics such as the national referendum that took place on 14 October.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support the overseas activities of Japanese local governments investigating the latest developments in Australia.



## Support Activities for Tochigi Prefecture (26 Oct 2023)

On 26 October, the delegation from the Tochigi Prefectural Assembly for overseas administrative research, led by Masao Kotoyori, visited the CLAIR Sydney office.

The delegation visited Australia this time to research Australia's advanced efforts in areas such as infrastructure development for multicultural coexistence that should be addressed in Tochigi Prefectural government's future policies. This investigation will be utilised to improve the prefectural assembly operations and policy formulation capabilities.

CLAIR Sydney provided them with a briefing and Q&A session on the administration, political and economic overview of Australia and Australia's multiculturalism policies.

Especially in regard to the multiculturalism policies, we provided explanations based on our past research and our staff's first-hand experiences living in Australia, we received a multitude of questions from various perspectives.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support the overseas activities of Japanese local governments investigating the latest developments in Australia.

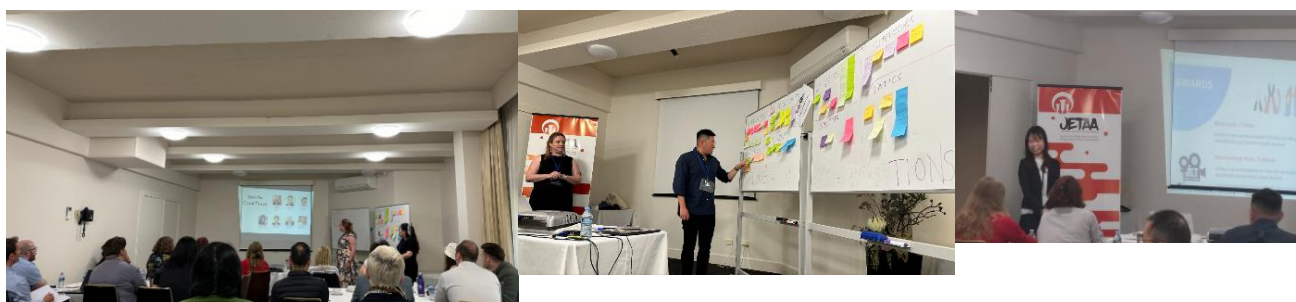


## JETAA Oceania Conference in Melbourne (28-29 Oct 2023)

From 28 to 29 October, the annual Oceania conference of JETAA was held in Melbourne, bringing together representatives from various branches in Australia and New Zealand and even Singapore.

On the evening before the conference, a welcome reception was hosted by the Consulate General of Japan in Melbourne for JETAA participants and those returning to Melbourne after completing the programme this year.

During the conference, attendees engaged in lively discussions, exchanging their recent activities and sharing ideas to deal with issues they face.





CLAIR Sydney also conducted a presentation, sharing our recent activities this year.

We express our gratitude for the unwavering cooperation from each JETAA branch towards the JET program and their enduring commitment to maintaining connections with Japan even after they finished the programme. We will continue to offer dedicated support to JETAA, ensuring that their future activities are even more enriching.



## **First Anniversary Events of the Friendship City Affiliation between Moka City and Harvey City Villages (31 Oct 2023)**

In commemoration of the first anniversary of the friendship city partnership established in June 2022 between Moka City in Tochigi Prefecture and Harvey Shire in Western Australia, a Celebration Dinner was held on 31 October. Participants from Moka City included Mayor Shinichi Ishizaka, Chairman Takayuki Kushige, school representatives, and city officials, who visited Western Australia for the occasion.

The interaction between the two cities began in 2003, when Moka Junior High School and Australind Senior High School signed a sister school agreement. Online discussions between the mayors, as well as online exchanges between three junior high schools in Moka City and Harvey Senior High School, further deepened their ties in 2021, leading to the establishment of the friendship city relationship in June 2022. The dinner featured a slideshow video showcasing the history of interactions between the two cities, which was greatly appreciated by the attendees.

Furthermore, Mayor Ishizaka, Mayor of Harvey Shire, and the Acting Premier of Western Australia, expressed a desire for greater collaboration between the two cities during their speech, raising hopes for the continued development of this cordial relationship.

CLAIR Sydney participated in the commemorative events for Moka City and Harvey Shire, providing an opportunity to reaffirm the outstanding friendship between the two cities. We remain committed to supporting and promoting the friendship city exchanges between Moka City and Harvey Shire in the future.



# From the Executive Director

## **JETAA - A Vital Link Between Australia/New Zealand and Japan.**

Last month, we attended the JETAA Oceania Conference held in Melbourne. JETAA is an abbreviation for JET Alumni Association which is a self-supporting alumni association established to strengthen and maintain the bonds of friendship formed between JET Programme participants. The purpose of JETAA is to promote a broader and deeper understanding between Japan and the countries participating on the JET Programme. There are eight JETAA chapters in Australia and New Zealand. They continue to be a vital link between Australia/New Zealand and Japan.

Representatives from each branch in Australia and New Zealand gather once a year for the JETAA Oceania Conference, where they engage in lively discussions, exchanging recent activities and sharing ideas to address issues they face. The Singapore representative also attended this year's conference. Each branch hosts it once a year on a rotational basis. We would like to express our gratitude to the VIC/TAS/SA chapter for organising this event. On the evening before the conference, a welcome reception was hosted by the Consulate General of Japan in Melbourne. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them. I was once again deeply impressed and humbled by their sincere efforts throughout the conference. It was truly amazing.

As of 1 July 2023, there are 455 JET Program participants from Australia/New Zealand in Japan. We believe they are helping to maximise the potential of young Japanese people, especially in regard to globalisation and they gain many exciting and unique experiences that they will continue to cherish after leaving Japan. We hope that after their time as a JET, they will participate in JETAA activities and continue to be a vital link between Australia/New Zealand and Japan. We would greatly appreciate if you could introduce JETAA to former JET Program participants around you. CLAIR Sydney will continue to support JETAA.



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