

# Newsletter

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## DISCOVER JAPAN

Sugito Town is located in the eastern part of Saitama Prefecture and is a historical town, as it used to be a bustling post town, also known as 'Shukubamachi' along the Nikko Kaido Route in the old days. With a population of approximately 44,000 and an area of 30 square kilometres, and the town's shape is often likened to an eagle flapping its wings.

## Welcome to Sugito Town

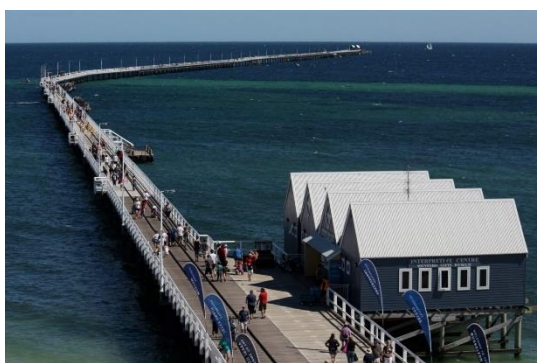


Shape of Sugito Town

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## Welcome to Sugito Town

The town continues to develop as a beautiful garden city, with two major rivers, the Edo River in the east and the Furutone River in the west, running through it. Every summer, the “Furutone River Floating Lantern Festival” takes place, featuring around 250 handmade lanterns gently floating along the river. The riverside scenery, illuminated by the lit lanterns after sunset, is so mesmerising that it entices many visitors from outside the town.



In November 1996, Sugito Town formed a sister city affiliation with the City of Busselton in Western Australia. Since then, the two municipalities deepened their relationship through biennial visits by goodwill delegation, which occurs in alternate years, and exchange programs of middle school students.

Sugito International Association and Busselton and Sugito Sister City Association (BASSCA) play a centre role to maintaining the exchanges.

On 3 November 2023, the Autumn Conferment of Decorations on Foreign Nationals were announced, recognising the efforts of Ms. Pauline Vukelic, the current president of BASSCA. She was honoured with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.



Further information on her achievement can be found here.

<https://www.busselton.wa.gov.au/news/dunsborough-local-recognised-by-emperor-of-japan/550?c=17>

<https://www.busselton.wa.gov.au/news/dunsborough-local-recognised-at-his-majesty-the-emperor-of-japans-birthday-celebrations/611>



She joined BASSCA in 2011 to contribute to community activities and was appointed as the president in 2014. She has actively supported the sister city exchanges by attending delegations from Sugito Town while in Australia, and participating in many visiting delegations from Australia to Japan, where she has helped with interpretation and assisted in events.

With her support, the bilateral relationship, which has been in place for more than 20 years, was recognised as a contributor to promoting mutual understanding between Japan and Australia. As a result, BASSCA received Foreign Minister’s Commendation from Japanese Government in 2017.

In February 2021, the City of Busselton hosted an event to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its sister city relationship.



The event was attended by the then-Ambassador of Japan to Australia and the Consul-General of Japan in Perth. Although a delegation from Sugito Town was unable to attend the ceremony due to the pandemic, then-Mayor Matsuo Furuya was able to send a video message for the event, thanks to Ms. Vukelic’s commitment.

Her conferment has brought huge pride to the sister city associations of both municipalities. Sugito Town would like to express its respect for her achievement and looks forward to witnessing her future success. At the same time, the town sincerely hopes that Busselton and Sugito will continue to strengthen their relationship.



## 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 \(jlgc.org.au\)](https://jlgc.org.au)



# Announcement from Okayama City Government

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Please refer to below information about "Okayama Marathon 2024."

## Recruiting runners for "Okayama Marathon 2024" to be held on Sunday 10th November!

This is a marathon event filled with all of Okayama's charms, including tourist attractions and local gourmet food.

- Event date and time: 10th November (Sunday) 8:45 start
- Events: ① Marathon (42.195km) ② Fun Run (5.6Km)
- Capacity: ① Marathon 15,000 people (overseas quota 250 people)  
② Fun Run 1,400 people (overseas quota 50 people)

\*Overseas quota is on a first-come, first-served basis.

- Recruitment period: 18th April to 20th May
- Official website: <https://www.OkayamaMarathon.jp/en/>



# CLAIR Sydney March Activity Report

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## The Emperor of Japan's Birthday Reception in New Zealand

On 5 March, a reception celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan was held by the Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand. The ceremony was attended by various guests, including officials from central governments, as well as representatives from Japanese companies.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at the reception, offering general and tourism destination information on Japanese local governments and the JET programme.

CLAIR Sydney remains committed to supporting the promotion of Japanese local authorities in Australia and New Zealand.

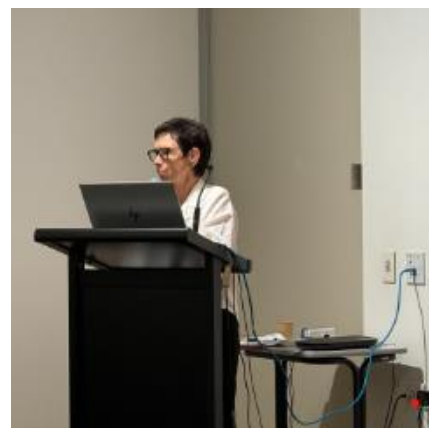
## CLAIR Forum 2024 (11 March 2024)



On 11 March, CLAIR Sydney held the CLAIR Forum 2024 in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Public Policy and Governance ([UTS Institute for Public Policy and Governance](https://www.uts.edu.au/research/uts-institute-for-public-policy-and-governance)).

The CLAIR Forum is an event where CLAIR Sydney, UTS IPPG, and other local government representatives present and discuss their organisations' strategies as well as their research findings on common challenges faced by local governments in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

This year's theme was "Disaster Management and Resilience," with five CLAIR Sydney members and Vanessa Chan from UTS, representing Nicole Parsons from Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, and Tommaso Briscese and Miriam Wassef from Burwood Council, discussing a wide range of disaster/disease preparedness topics. Participants were able to receive useful insights into local government efforts in Japan and Australia and exchange perspectives as a reference for policy-making.



If you are interested in finding out more information, please click on the link below.

[CLAIR Forum - CLAIR Sydney \(jlgc.org.au\)](https://www.jlgc.org.au)



## JET Programme Returnee Welcome Reception in Sydney (12 March 2024)

On 12 March 2024, we attended a Returnee Welcome Reception of the JET Programme (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) organised by the Consulate General of Japan in Sydney. Consul-General Tokuda, a representative of JETAA NSW chapter, and we offered some words of appreciation for the returnees' efforts in Japan and encouraged them to actively join JETAA.

The exchange with the returnees was particularly impressive as they enthusiastically shared their experiences in Japan.



We hope they continue to use the knowledge and connections they developed through their experiences on the JET programme to further deepen the relationship between Japan and Australia.

For more information about the JET Programme, please visit the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/clair.syd/posts/668799495432848>

## Global Cities New Zealand 2024 Annual Conference (14-15 March 2024)

The Global Cities New Zealand 2024 Annual Conference, themed “Reconnecting with the World”, took place on 14 and 15 March in Blenheim, New Zealand. This was the second in-person event since the pandemic, bringing together over 70 local government officials and stakeholders from sister city exchanges across New Zealand. The conference included discussions about resuming student exchanges post-pandemic, as well as workshops on building and maintaining business relationships between sister cities.

The CLAIR Sydney office not only presented its activities but also showcased successful examples of post-pandemic sister city exchanges in Japan. This event provided us with the opportunity to network with a wide range of stakeholders. Moving forward, we will continue to utilise such opportunities to strengthen cooperation with sister city stakeholders and contribute to the revitalisation of sister city exchanges among Japanese local governments.



## Support Activities for Chiba Prefecture (19 March 2024)

On 19 March, the Director General of Regional Revitalisation Division at Chiba Prefecture visited the CLAIR Sydney office. The purpose of this visit was to research the current status of Australia, such as its advanced efforts and attraction of foreign capital.

CLAIR Sydney briefed the Director General on Australia's government, politics, and economics including emphasising the distinctions with Japan and providing information on multicultural policies.

The Director General had several questions concerning future project development in Chiba Prefecture, as well as the tasks assigned to each administrative body in Australia.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support the overseas activities of Japanese local governments by researching the policies and best practices in Australia.



## Perth Japan Festival and Support Activities for Hyogo Prefecture (23 March 2024)



The Perth Japan Festival was held on Saturday, March 23.

CLAIR Sydney, in collaboration with JETAAWA volunteers, utilised a section of the Consulate-General of Japan's booth to promote tourism from various regions across Japan, including Hyogo Prefecture, Western Australia's sister state, and Kagoshima City, Perth's sister city.

Visitors, ranging from those planning their first trip to Japan to seasoned travellers seeking their next destination, enthusiastically shared their experiences and plans.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to promote all of Japan and attract tourists, building on our efforts in municipal PR at Japanese festivals. We sincerely thank everyone who visited our booth! See you later!

\* We provided support activities for Hyogo Prefecture by promoting the festival.



## Webinar to promote exports of Japanese regional goods to Australia (25 March 2024)

On 25 March, CLAIR Sydney hosted a webinar aiming to encourage local government representatives in Japan to export regional goods to Australia. The Director of Simply Native, Yukino Matsumoto, talked about the export of Japanese crafts. Participants expressed opinions such as, "I learned a lot from hearing valuable experiences," and "I reaffirmed the important points in business." Thank you, Matsumoto-san, and everyone who participated!



## Support Activities for Nagoya City (25-28 March 2024)

On 22 May 2007, the International Day for Biological Diversity, Nagoya City and Geelong City formed a wetland partnership. As part of the Nagoya-Geelong Wetland Partnership Human Exchange Project, Nagoya sends high school students from year 7 to 10 to Geelong once every two years. The students learn about Geelong's efforts in wetland conservation and utilisation, and deepen their understanding with the local people. Although the program was temporarily suspended due to the impact of COVID-19, it resumed this year for the first time in six years.

While in Geelong, the students engaged in educational activities at wetlands and beaches, learning about conservation efforts from city officials and local activity groups. They also had the opportunity to observe and study wetland creatures with local primary school students.

CLAIR Sydney facilitated communications with the host institutions, accompanying and providing support during their visits.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support exchanges by local governments.





# From the Executive Director

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## The Difference in Staff Recruitment and Promotion in Local Government Between Japan and Australia/New Zealand

One of our important missions is to conduct research on Australian and New Zealand local governments and create reports for the benefit of Japanese local governments. We have completed the revision of our publication, the “Local Government of Australia and New Zealand” guidebook, which outlines information on the local government system in the two countries. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who kindly assisted with our revision.

I believe that the local government systems in each country differ depending on country’s constitution and societal conditions, and I find the difference between Japan and Australia/New Zealand interesting. I would like to introduce the staff recruitment and promotion in Japanese local government, which differs from those in Australia and New Zealand.

On 1 April every year, at the start of the new financial year, many new staff are hired and many officials are moved within Japanese local governments. Most of these new staffs are recent graduates. Local governments conduct a recruitment examination, including a written test and an interview, in the year prior to recruitment. Recruitment categories are divided into college graduate level, high school graduate level, and so on, with applications restricted based on age.

Since joining a local government, officials do not remain in the same position but are transferred to different workplaces at regular intervals, typically every three years. This rotation allows them to enhance their skills and accumulate experience. After gaining a certain amount of experience, they become eligible for promotion to higher positions. Japanese local governments have a retirement age system, and many officials work for the same local government until they retire. Consequently, a number of staff retire at the end of the fiscal year, leaving vacant positions. These vacancies are filled by transferring other employees of the same rank or by promoting them. The number of newly hired staff is determined each fiscal year, taking into account the number of retirees and other factors.

In contrast, the competition rate for newly hired staffs across local governments in fiscal 2020 was 5.9 times, which is lower than in fiscal 2011. To secure talented human resources, local governments are also making efforts in mid-career recruitment. In fiscal 2020, more than half of all local governments were undertaking this initiative. Mid-career hires follow the process described above.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the difference between Japan and Australia/New Zealand with you.



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