



Newsletter



Welcome to

DISCOVER

JAPAN

Welcome to

Akkeshi

City

Akkeshi Town is situated in the south-eastern region of Hokkaido, covering an area of approximately 739 square kilometres and is home to around 8,000 residents. With a long-standing history as a regional hub in eastern Hokkaido, the town has flourished thanks to its abundant natural environment. Today, Akkeshi Town thrives on its well-established fishing and dairy farming industries. Akkeshi Town is nationally renowned as one of Japan's leading oyster-producing regions. Harvested year-round from the town's uniquely shaped coastal waters, Akkeshi oysters are prized for their tender texture and rich, sweet flavour. In addition, 'Akkeshi Whisky', crafted using the town's cool and humid climate to its advantage, has earned international recognition in recent years, winning multiple international awards.

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Welcome to Akkeshi City



This year marks the 43rd anniversary of Akkeshi Town's sister city relationship with Clarence City, established in 1982. The origins of this relationship trace back to a historical event: a whaling ship, the *Eamont*, sailing from Clarence City, was shipwrecked off the coast of Akkeshi, and all 32 crew members were successfully rescued by local residents. The story was later publicised through books and media coverage, which ultimately led to the formalisation of the sister city agreement. Over the years, Akkeshi Town and Clarence City have strengthened their relationship through various exchange programmes, including courtesy visits and visits aimed at promoting educational exchanges among junior and senior high school students. These exchanges have continued into 2025. In March 2025, a

group of ten junior high school students residing in Akkeshi, accompanied by three chaperones, visited Clarence City. During their stay, they participated in homestays with local host families. The programme included recreational activities at Rose Bay High School, a cultural presentation on Indigenous heritage at the City Hall, and visits to various local facilities. These experiences gave students valuable insights into Australian life and culture, offering a firsthand understanding of the differences between Japan and Australia.



In September, Akkeshi Town is scheduled to welcome a delegation from Clarence City, consisting of 23 students and three accompanying staff from Rose Bay High School. Moving forward, Akkeshi Town remains committed to promoting further mutual exchange and cooperation with Clarence City, with the aim of deepening the sister city relationship and fostering lasting international friendship.



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)



Announcement from Hamamatsu City Government

Evangelion's SHIN HAMAMATSU PLAN Has Been Activated in Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka

An EVA-01 TEST TYPE has appeared in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka-home of Mt. Fuji!



Snap a photo with the larger-than-life statue, then hop aboard the Evangelion themed-train with your limited-edition 'Enshu Railway x Tenryu Hamanako Railway Joint Day Pass' to explore tourist spots across Hamamatsu City. During the event period, collect all 10 different stamp designs to receive an exclusive 'Evangelion x Enshu Railway/Tenryu Hamanako Railway collaboration sticker'! This limited-time event runs until February 2026. Don't miss your chance to experience Evangelion in Hamamatsu! <https://www.hamamatsu-japan.com/en/news/55536/>



Announcement from Kitakyushu City Government

Kitakyushu International Manga Competition: Send Us Your Amazing Four-Panel Manga!

The Kitakyushu Manga Museum is now accepting applications for its four-panel manga contest.

Entry Details

Divisions: General Division, Junior Division (Age 12 or under as of 1 April, 2026)

*Open to both professional and amateur

Theme: Iron (applies to both divisions)

Eligibility: Original, unpublished work of your own

Application period: From 11:00 AM (JST) on Sunday, 1 June, 2025 to 2:00 PM (JST) on Monday, 1 September, 2025

Announcement of Results

Winning entries will be announced on the official Kitakyushu International Manga Competition website in early December 2025. Prize-winning works and excellent entries will be published online.



How to Apply

All submissions must be made via the official website.

Please fill out the application form and upload your work as a data file.

Website (English): <https://kitakyushu-mangataisho.com/en/>

For inquiries about submissions: manga@kitakyushu-mangataisho.com

Other inquiries: manga@city.kitakyushu.lg.jp

CLAIR Sydney May Activity Report

Cowra Kōyō Matsuri and Mayoral Reception (2–3 May)

Cowra Kōyō Matsuri (Autumn Leaves Festival) was held from 2 and 3 May at the Cowra Japanese Garden, a four-hour drive inland from Sydney, where we participated in the welcoming reception.

The Mayor of Cowra, Mr Paul Smith, and the Japanese Ambassador to Australia, Mr Kazuhiro Suzuki, gave speeches at the reception, which also featured a tea ceremony demonstration. We were delighted to engage with attendees and exchange meaningful insights.

The following day, Saturday 3 May, saw this festival open to the public, with a variety of entertainment and events taking place in the garden. A large number of visitors attended to



observe and immerse themselves in the richness of Japanese culture. Over the two days, we were able to strengthen our friendships with many of those involved. We hope that these friendly exchanges for peace will continue in the future. We will continue to strengthen the good relationship between the two countries by fostering closer ties between local authorities.



Kodomo no Hi Japan Festival in South Australia (4 May)

On Sunday, 4 May, the Kodomo no Hi Japan Festival was held in Adelaide. This annual event, first held in 1995, celebrates the cultural and social ties between Japan and Australia. CLAIR Sydney has proudly participated for five consecutive years since 2021.



At our booth, we promoted tourism to various regions of Japan, including Okayama Prefecture, partnered with South Australia through a friendship agreement, and Himeji City in Hyogo Prefecture, Adelaide's sister city.

Visitors to our booth ranged from those who had never been to Japan but were eager to go, to seasoned travellers looking for new places to explore on their next visit. We were pleased to see strong interest in Japan and once again felt the

great appeal Japan holds for many Australians.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support and promote local governments across Japan by participating in a variety of tourism and cultural promotion opportunities. A big thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth!



Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS-NSW) 2025 Student Awards Evening (15 May)

On Thursday, 15 May, the AJS-NSW hosted an awards ceremony for outstanding Japanese language students at the



Japan Foundation, Sydney. The Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, Mr Osamu Yamanaka, presented certificates to students from eight Sydney-area universities who had achieved outstanding results in their Japanese studies.

During the ceremony, the winners gave speeches in Japanese, talking about how they became interested in the language, how interesting it is to study Japanese, and their future goals in life. After the ceremony, at a networking event, AJS-NSW officials and representatives of Japanese



government-related organisations praised the efforts of the award winners. We have been working with the Australia-Japan Society NSW by attending events such as this one and we will continue to strengthen ties with the AJS and other relevant organisations.

Darwin Fusion 2025 International Relations Conference (21 May)

On Thursday, 21 May, we attended the Darwin Fusion 2025 International Relations Conference held in Darwin. The



conference brought together international, national and local policymakers, academic and industry experts, and businesses and civic leaders to share and discuss the challenges, benefits and opportunities Sister Cities frameworks and relationships bring. The programme featured



speeches by representatives from Darwin's sister and friendship cities, presentations by Charles Darwin University and the Australian Government, and a showcase from the City of Hobart highlighting its ongoing educational and cultural exchanges with Yaizu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, including student exchanges and the co-creation of a Japanese garden. CLAIR Sydney presented the results of the recent Sister City Research Survey conducted across all local governments in Australia and New Zealand, along with a case study on the sister city exchange between Sydney and Nagoya.

Supporting Activity for Aomori Prefecture (25 May)

On 25 May, the Snow Travel Expo 2025 was held in Sydney, bringing together ski resorts, equipment retailers, and travel agencies from around the world for a dynamic showcase of snow travel opportunities. At the request of Aomori Prefecture, CLAIR Sydney supported promotional activities at the Tohoku booth, highlighting Aomori's ski resorts and accommodation options to the Australian market.

The event attracted a wide range of visitors including individual travellers and travel agents in search of fresh, exciting destinations. Many visitors to the booth expressed particular interest in resorts catered to extended family stays and winter activities set against stunning natural backdrops. Some attendees had already visited Japan more than ten times and were eager to discover hidden gems and lesser-known regions off the beaten path. In addition to skiing and snowboarding, the booth featured other uniquely Japanese experiences such as hot springs, historic townscapes, and regional cuisine, offering a well-rounded introduction to Aomori as a winter travel destination. CLAIR Sydney remains committed to supporting Japanese local governments in promoting unique activities and attractions across Australia.



Japan Festival 2025 in Victoria (25 May)

On 25 May, the Japan Festival 2025 was held in the City of Whitehorse, located in metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria. The event featured a lively array of Japanese food stalls, traditional stage performances such as *taiko* drumming and classical



Japanese dance, as well as exhibitions of ikebana (flower arranging) and bonsai. There were also hands-on activities including shogi (Japanese chess) and origami, attracting a large number of enthusiastic visitors.

The CLAIR Sydney office hosted a booth at the event to showcase the charm and appeal of local governments from across Japan. Many attendees expressed interest in regions that have sister city relationships with local councils in Victoria and sought further information about these connections. Others asked specific travel-related questions such as, “When is the best time to see cherry blossoms?” or “I’ve already been to Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto – where else would



you recommend?”

The booth served as a valuable space for gathering detailed travel information. Notably, many visitors were repeat travellers planning their second or even third trip to Japan, underscoring the growing and sustained enthusiasm for Japanese destinations and culture. The festival offered a meaningful opportunity to witness this passion first-hand. Moving forward, we remain committed to promote Japan’s diverse local regions and strengthening the bonds between the people of Japan and Australia through continued cultural exchange and engagement.

From the Executive Director

A Farewell Message from the Executive Director, Manya Hiraki



As my three-year term draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your unwavering support and warm friendship throughout my tenure with CLAIR Sydney. It has been a privilege to work alongside such dedicated and inspiring individuals. I am pleased to announce that Ms Yuko Mitsunaga will be joining CLAIR Sydney as the Executive Director at the end of June. I kindly ask for your continued support and cooperation as she and her new team embark on this new chapter.

Reflecting on my posting in June 2022, I recall that some pandemic-related restrictions were still in place. As those limitations were gradually lifted, the exchanges and interactions between Japan and Australia/New Zealand have gained momentum, making up for lost time. I have truly felt the strength and resilience of the relationships between our countries, and it has been a great honour to be involved with their revitalisation. I sincerely hope these friendships will continue to flourish and remain strong well into the future.

This was my first time living overseas, but I have been fortunate to visit many regions and meet many wonderful people in Australia and New Zealand, both through work and personal travel. I've been deeply moved by the friendship, generosity, warm hospitality, stunning landscapes and the strong respect for diversity that characterise both countries. I'm especially impressed by—and wish to express my deepest respect for—the dedication by so many, past and present, in nurturing and strengthening ties with Japan. It would be a privilege to continue contributing to these friendships in the future, in whatever way I can.

My wife and daughter have spent three wonderful years with me. During this time, they too were fortunate to form meaningful relationships with kind, supportive teachers and friends, who helped make their lives here deeply fulfilling. One of the most delightful surprises has been my daughter's growing interest in cricket—it's now her favourite sport! We are truly sad to be leaving, but we will carry these experiences and memories with us and cherish them for the rest of our lives.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your continued support and cooperation with me and CLAIR Sydney, and I wish you all the best in health and happiness.

I look forward to seeing you again in Japan.



Level 12, Challis House, 4 Martin Place, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

Tel: 61-2-9241-5033