

Newsletter

December 2025

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DISCOVER JAPAN

Welcome to Saiki City

Saiki City is located in southern Oita Prefecture, with a population of approximately 64,000 and an area of roughly 903 square kilometres, making it the largest city in Kyushu by area. Forests cover 90% of its land, and its 270-kilometre coastline supports diverse wildlife, yielding around 350 types of seafood each year. The city is known for its rich food culture, including local dishes such as *Saiki Sushi*, prepared with fresh regional fish. Shipbuilding is another major industry and the launching ceremony for large vessels, known as the *Shinsui-shiki*, attracts many visitors.



Fujigawachi Valley



Saiki Sushi



Shinsui-shiki

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Welcome to Saiki City

Saiki established a sister-city relationship with the Gladstone Region in September 1996. Gladstone is located on Australia's east coast, 550 kilometres north of Brisbane and faces the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef. It has a population of approximately 50,000 and shares several characteristics with Saiki, including its role as a port town. The year 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of their sister-city relationship.

The two cities have participated in various exchange programs, including triathlon-based sports events and homestay programs for junior high school students. Annual initiatives continue to promote cultural understanding, such as reciprocal exhibitions of artworks by primary and junior high school students, photographic displays by residents of both cities, and exchanges of picture books.



Triathlon



Triathlon



Reciprocal Exhibition

On Onyujima Island in Saiki Bay, a commemorative park celebrates the relationship between the two cities. It features a bronze statue titled the 'Reclining Kangaroo,' by Gladstone sculptor Paul Adamson, a pole with Aboriginal art, and Australian trees.



Reclining Kangaroo

Every five years, the cities take turns sending delegations led by their mayors to facilitate direct cultural exchange. Although the planned 25th-anniversary visit by the Gladstone delegation in 2021 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Saiki delegation is scheduled to visit Gladstone in 2026 for the 30th anniversary.

Moving forward, Saiki City and Gladstone will continue to deepen mutual understanding through exchange programs, aiming to further strengthen their sister-city relationship and maintain long-term friendly ties.



Shinsui-shiki



Bungo Futamigaura

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JAPAN**

CLAIR Sydney November Activity Report

Commemorating 45 Years of Sister City Relations between the City of Nagoya and the City of Sydney (Sister city activity)

The City of Nagoya and the City of Sydney celebrated the 45th anniversary of their sister city relationship this year, with a series of commemorative events held in Sydney in late October.

The two cities have enjoyed a wide range of exchanges over the years. These include animal exchanges between their zoos, with koalas and gorillas gifted from Sydney to Nagoya, as well as active high school student exchange programs.



CLAIR Sydney supported the City of Nagoya's activities throughout the commemorative events.

At the Japan Expo held in Sydney on 25 October, the City of Nagoya hosted a booth where Mayor Ichiro Hiroswawa and other representatives showcased the city's appeal by serving local cuisine such as *tenmusu*, *miso katsu* and *uirō* to visitors



JETAA Oceania Conference 2025 in Canberra (1-2 November)

From 1 to 2 November 2025, CLAIR Sydney took part in the JETAA Oceania Conference 2025 in Canberra. The event brought together representatives from five Australian JETAA chapters, the three New Zealand chapters and the Singapore chapter, fostering collaboration and exchange across the region. On the night before the conference, the Embassy of Japan in Australia hosted a welcome reception, offering a warm and friendly setting for attendees to connect.



During the conference, participants shared their stories about why they joined the JET Programme, the experiences that shaped their personal and professional growth, and ideas for initiatives to inspire future applicants. This annual conference is a valuable chance for representatives from all Oceania chapters to strengthen connections and engage in lively discussions throughout the event.



From the CLAIR Head Office, Executive Adviser Mitsuru Kitano spoke about the JET Programme's contribution to local language education and the internationalization of local communities. He also shared insights from JETAA conferences he has attended in other regions. Mr Kitano further noted that next year marks the 40th anniversary of the JET Programme and expressed CLAIR's commitment to strengthening collaboration with JETAA as the programme continues to grow.

CLAIR Sydney introduced activities from JETAA chapters in other countries and exchanged ideas with participants on ways to further deepen cooperation with JETAA.

Being part of this conference once again reminded us of the strong passion JETAA members have for the continued growth of the JET Programme. We look forward to working closely with JETAA to support its ongoing development in the years ahead!



Celebrating Hutt Japan Day 2025 in New Zealand (9 November)

On 9 November, Hutt City in New Zealand hosted Hutt Japan Day 2025, an event celebrating Japanese culture. This year's event was especially significant, marking the 30th anniversary of their sister-city relationship with Minoh City in Osaka Prefecture.



The venue was bustling with visitors and the market stalls and food booths selling Japan-related products were so popular that it was difficult to walk around. On stage, a wide variety of traditional Japanese performances were showcased, including taiko drumming, kyudo (archery) and dance. There were also hands-on activities, allowing people of all ages to enjoy Japanese culture.



At the CLAIR Sydney booth, we promoted tourism information from around Japan, including municipalities that have friendships with local governments in New Zealand. We were delighted to speak with many people who are planning to visit Japan or who have visited before.



Thank you very much to everyone who stopped by our booth!



Supporting the Ishikawa Prefectural Assembly Delegation's Visit to Australia (13 November)



On Thursday, 13 November, thirteen members of the Ishikawa Prefectural Assembly's Administrative Study Delegation to Australia visited the CLAIR Sydney office. The delegation came to Australia to research the country's political and economic situation, as well as its government policies.

In addition to introducing the office's activities, CLAIR Sydney shared key information on Australia's demographics and economy, as well as the history of its multicultural policies. This was followed by an in-depth discussion, with delegates asking questions about differences between Japanese and Australian local government authorities and recent trends in Australia's multicultural policy.

The Director of CLAIR Sydney, who previously worked at the Ishikawa Prefectural Government, was delighted to reunite with members of the Prefectural Assembly for the first time in about six months and truly enjoyed the time together.



The 45th anniversary of the sister city relationship between Napier and Tomakomai (20 November)



On 20 November, the Executive Director of CLAIR Sydney attended a ceremony held in Napier, New Zealand, to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the sister city relationship between Napier City and Tomakomai City in Hokkaido.

The exchange between the two cities began with a joint venture between Oji Paper and a local timber company in Napier. The establishment of a regular shipping route to transport pulp from the joint venture to Tomakomai for use in newspaper production helped foster student exchange programs and citizen interactions, leading to the signing of a sister city agreement in 1980.

This year's ceremony marked the first in ten years, as the 40th anniversary celebration scheduled five years ago was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ceremony was attended by approximately 20 delegates from Japan, including the Mayor and City Council Chair of Tomakomai, Mr Hiroyuki Isono (President and CEO of Oji Holdings Corporation), HE Mr Makoto Osawa (Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand) and Ms Hiromi Morris (Emeritus President of Global Cities New Zealand). From Napier, the Mayor, city councillors, and many other stakeholders also joined, sharing the joy of reconnecting after a decade.



On the morning of the ceremony, the delegation was welcomed with a traditional Māori ritual called Pōhiri. During the event, the Tomakomai delegation also introduced Ainu culture through traditional songs and dances.

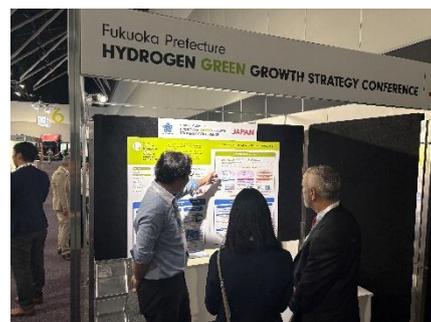
Ambassador Osawa noted that the relationship between the two cities is regarded as one of the most successful sister city relationships between Japan and New Zealand.

We look forward to further strengthening exchanges, including those that celebrate traditional cultures.

Support Efforts for Fukuoka Prefectural Government (20-21 November)

On 20 and 21 November, the Fukuoka Prefectural Government hosted a booth at the exhibition hall of the Asia-Pacific Hydrogen Summit held in Sydney. The booth showcased hydrogen-related initiatives led by the prefecture and Kyushu University and featured product promotions by four companies based in Fukuoka.

Throughout the event, many attendees visited the booth, with some expressing strong interest and asking detailed questions. In 2023, the Fukuoka Prefectural Government signed an MOU with the NSW Government to promote cooperation in the hydrogen sector. During this visit, in addition to exhibiting at the summit, the delegation also toured hydrogen-related facilities to further strengthen their collaboration.



CLAIR Sydney assisted with booth operations and accompanied the delegation on their site visits. We will continue to support the activities of Japanese local governments engaged in exchanges with Australia and New Zealand. If you are interested in receiving such support, please do not hesitate to contact us.



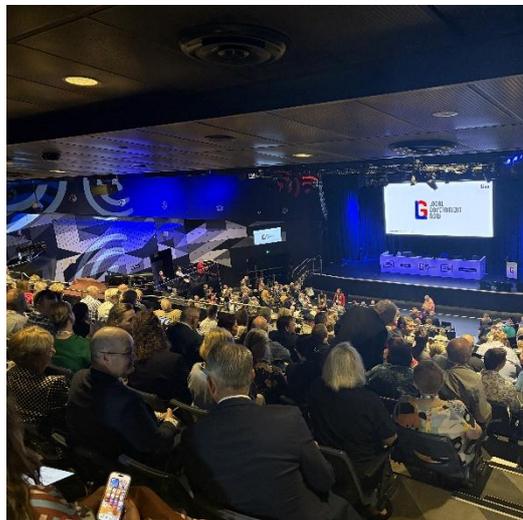
Participation in the LGNSW Annual Conference 2025 (23-25 November)

The LGNSW Annual Conference 2025 was held in Penrith from 23 to 25 November, attracting around 1,000 attendees, including mayors, councillors, and senior staff from local councils across New South Wales.

CLAIR Sydney hosted an exhibition booth, where we introduced our activities, including a seminar that invites senior local government officials from Australia and New Zealand to Japan to learn about Japanese local administration through briefings, site visits and hands-on experiences. We also promoted the CLAIR Forum, which brings together local government representatives from Japan, Australia, and New Zealand to share case studies and exchange views on policy challenges commonly faced across the region.



We enjoyed engaging with many attendees who expressed interest in topics such as waste management initiatives implemented by Japanese local governments and sister city exchanges with Japanese municipalities. The event also provided a valuable opportunity to reconnect with mayors, councillors and senior staff who have supported our activities over the years and to reaffirm our commitment to ongoing cooperation and exchange.



Attending the JET Returnees Welcome Reception in Sydney (26 November)

On 26 November, CLAIR Sydney attended the JET Programme Returnees Welcome Reception hosted by the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney.

The JET Programme returnees were warmly welcomed by representatives from JETAA, the NSW Government and the education sector. They shared memorable experiences from their time in Japan and discussed their future plans with attendees.



The reception, thoughtfully arranged by Consul-General Osamu Yamanaka, provided a valuable opportunity for networking and meaningful conversations among those with strong ties to Japan.

We hope the returnees will continue to play an active role as bridges between Japan and Australia, making the most of the insights and experiences they gained through the JET Programme.



▼ Overview of the JET Programme

<https://jetprogramme.org/en/about-jet/>

Announcement from Sendai City Government

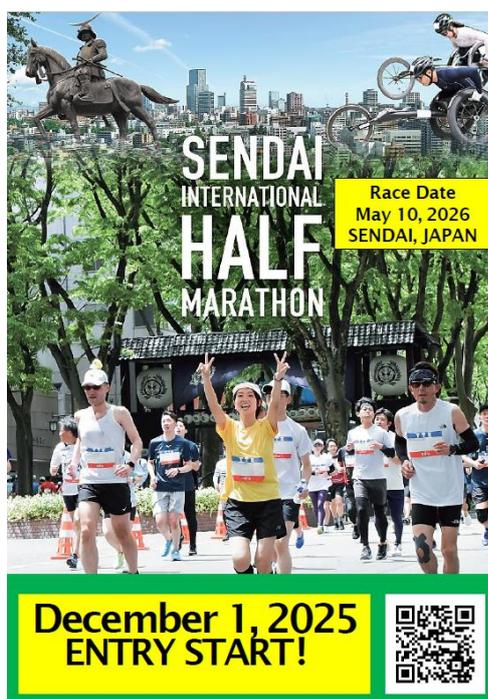
Sendai International Half Marathon 🏃

The Sendai International Half Marathon is one of Japan's premier urban road races, held annually on the second Sunday of May in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. Next year's marathon in 2026 will take place on 10 May .

Approximately 10,000 runners take part each year, enjoying a course that winds through the lush greenery of Sendai, famously known as the 'City of Trees.' The event welcomes participants of all levels, from elite athletes to recreational runners and also features a wheelchair division. As an international competition, it attracts numerous athletes from all over the world.

We look forward to seeing you there!

<https://www.sendaihalf.com/en/>



News from CLAIR Sydney

School Exchange Opportunities

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



Welcome Message from Georgia

My name is Georgia and it's an honour to introduce myself as the new Research and Liaison Officer at CLAIR Sydney. Coming from a small country town in rural Queensland, Japanese became my bridge to the wider world and led me on an adventure I never imagined I would embark on.

A student exchange to Osaka through my hometown's sister city program inspired me to move to Japan after graduating high school. I spent a year studying Japanese at language school in Nagoya before entering university in Tokyo, where I majored in product design and explored my love for Japanese stationery, illustration and character culture. After six years in Japan, I returned to Australia and completed my master's degree in Japanese Translation and Interpreting.

Being able to begin my career at CLAIR Sydney has been an incredible opportunity to put my studies into practice and pursue my lifelong passion for language learning and cultural exchange between Australia and Japan. I am truly honoured to work with such a warm, dedicated, and passionate team here at CLAIR Sydney.



From the Executive Director

Public Holiday Differences Between Japan and Australia & a Year-End Message

Since I started living in Sydney, I've been surprised by several things regarding public holidays.

In Australia, public holidays are set by legislation in each state and territory, meaning that in addition to nationwide holidays, there are public holidays unique to each state or territory. For example, the Melbourne Cup, held on the first Tuesday of November is a public holiday in Victoria but remains a regular workday in other states and territories. As a result, the total number of public holidays varies across the country, and even public holidays with the same name may fall on different dates. For instance, the King's Birthday is observed on the second Monday in June in New South Wales and most other states, while in Queensland, it falls on the first Monday in October.

In contrast, national holidays in Japan are established under the Act on National Holidays and are observed across the country. Currently, there are 16 national holidays each year. Some public holidays have fixed dates, such as National Foundation Commemoration Day on 11 February and Culture Day on 3 November. Others, like Marine Day (the third Monday in July) and Sports Day (the second Monday in October), are observed on a particular Monday in a month, so that a long weekend is created from Saturday through to the holiday.

I was also surprised by how few public holidays there are compared to Japan. In 2025, Japan has 19 public holidays, while New South Wales has only 11 (or 12 if you include Bank Holiday).

Furthermore, in Japan, there is at least one public holiday almost every month, with June and December being the only months without any public holidays. In addition to the New Year period, there are extended holiday periods such as Golden Week from late April to early May and Silver Week in mid-September.

By contrast, in New South Wales, some months have a concentration of holidays, such as April, which has a total of five public holidays including ANZAC Day and the Easter holidays. Many other months, however, have none at all. This makes me miss life in Japan, where there are national holidays almost every month.

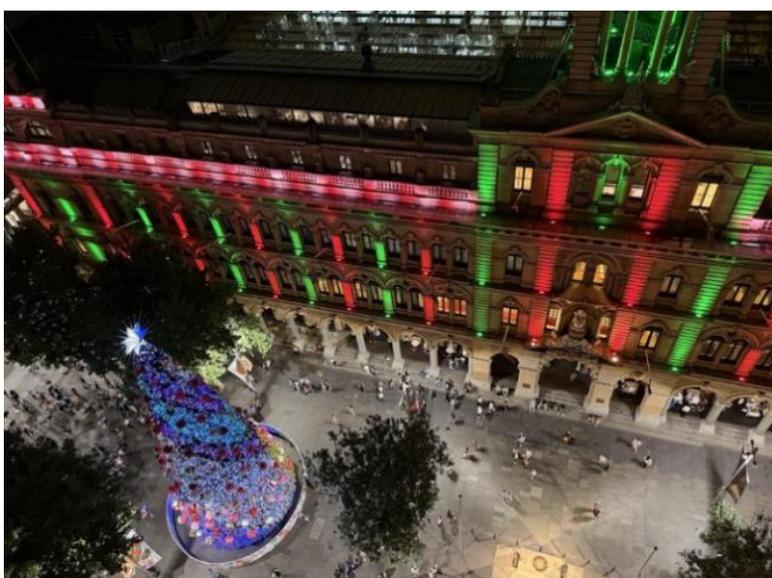
To address this, our office has set a few additional holidays on top of those observed in New South Wales, in order to maintain alignment with our Tokyo headquarters and other overseas offices.

<List of Public Holidays in Japan and New South Wales in 2025>

	Japan		New South Wales	
	date	name	date	name
1	1 January	New year's Day	1 January	New Year's Day
2	13 January	Coming-of-Age Day	27 January	Australia Day
3	11 February	National Foundation Commemoration Day	18 April	Good Friday
4	23 February	Emperor's Birthday	19 April	Easter Saturday
5	24 February	Observed Holiday *	20 April	Easter Sunday
6	20 March	Vernal Equinox Day	21 April	Easter Monday
7	29 April	Showa Day	25 April	ANZAC Day
8	3 May	Constitution Memorial Day	9 June	King's Birthday
9	4 May	Greenery Day	6 October	Labour Day
10	5 May	Children's Day	25 December	Christmas Day
11	6 May	Observed Holiday *	26 December	Boxing Day
12	21 July	Marine Day	4 August	Bank Holiday
13	11 August	Mountain Day		
14	15 September	Respect for the Aged Day		
15	23 September	Autumnal Equinox Day		
16	13 October	Sports Day		
17	3 November	Culture Day		
18	23 November	Labour Thanksgiving Day		
19	24 November	Observed Holiday *		

*Japan has 16 designated national holidays. However, if a national holiday falls on a Sunday, the closest following day that is not a national holiday is to be considered as a public holiday. As a result, Japan has 19 holidays in 2025.

How was 2025 for you? For me, it was the most eventful year of my life so far. After completing a three-year assignment at Ishikawa Prefectural Government, I was transferred to Sydney, which not only involved another domestic relocation but also marked my first experience living overseas. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout this year and I wish you all a wonderful 2026.



Festive views of Martin Place from the office rooftop



Christmas Tree at Martin Place