

Newsletter

January 2026

197



Izura Institute of Arts and Culture, Ibaraki University

DISCOVER JAPAN Welcome to Kitaibaraki City

Located on the northernmost tip of Ibaraki Prefecture, Kitaibaraki City is blessed with abundant natural beauty. The city is home to the scenic Izura Coast, recognised as one of Japan's 100 Great Beaches and one of the 100 Soundscapes of Japan, as well as the picturesque Hanazono Valley, known for its vibrant autumn leaves and lush greenery. Visitors can enjoy the greatest number of hydrangea varieties in Japan here as well as numerous hot springs with abundant water sources and a rich natural environment throughout the year.



C O N T E N T S

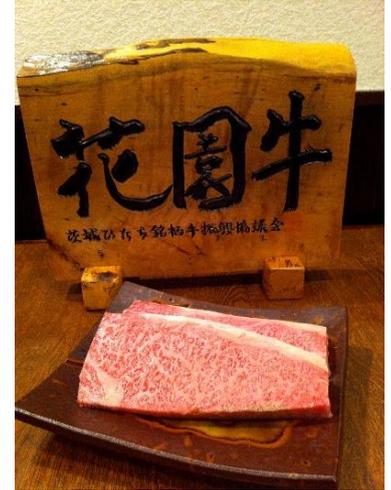
- ★ Discover Japan
- ★ Introducing Our Initiatives
- ★ CLAIR Sydney December Activity Reports
- ★ February's Event
- ★ Notice from Local Gov in Japan
- ★ From Executive Director

Welcome to Kitaibaraki City

Historically, Kitaibaraki developed through agriculture and fishing. However, the discovery of coal in the late Edo period transformed the area into a key centre of the Joban Coalfield, sparking rapid industrial growth. Today, the city continues to prosper as an industrial hub.

In particular, anglerfish is a local speciality in the fishing industry. The city is widely regarded as the birthplace of Anglerfish Nabe Hot Pot, a hearty dish enjoyed especially during the winter months, attracting many visitors eager to savour its flavour.

The city's natural setting also offers a variety of outdoor activities such as sea fishing, surfing, camping, trekking and cycling, all of which allow visitors to experience the changing beauty of Japan's four seasons.



Kitaibaraki City and the Wairoa District of New Zealand are international sister cities. This relationship began in March 1994 with the establishment of the Kitaibaraki International Communications Society (KICS). The Kitaibaraki Young Ambassadors Program (KYAP), one of the city's major initiatives, sends local high school students abroad to foster cross-cultural understanding, share Japanese culture and develop the next generation of leaders for international exchange. In 1995, Wairoa was selected on the recommendation of the New Zealand Tourism Board as a destination for these student exchanges. Since then, 20 delegations have been sent to New Zealand.



In 1997, a delegation from Wairoa College visited Kitaibaraki for the first time, staying with local host families and building friendships that soon developed into reciprocal exchange visits.

Following repeated proposals from Wairoa to formalise this friendship, Kitaibaraki recognised the growing importance of these grassroots exchanges and the value of promoting international understanding. As a result, on 8 May 1999, the two cities were officially recognised as an international friendship city.





Today, KICS continues to promote various international exchange programs beyond the Young Ambassadors initiative.

One such effort involves exchanges between international students from nearby universities and local host families, fostering mutual understanding of each country's natural environment, culture and daily life. To date, 210 students from 17 countries have participated, many of whom continue their friendships with host families even after graduation or starting their careers.



In addition, high school students from Wairoa College visit Kitaibaraki every two years for a 10-day homestay program. To join the program, many students from New Zealand work part-time to save for their travel expenses, a testament to their enthusiasm and dedication. Their sincerity deeply moves the host families and the community comes together to provide memorable experiences, including whitebait fishing, rice harvesting and school visits across all grade levels.



DISCOVER
JAPAN

Although the 8th exchange was suspended due to the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, the program has since been revived and continues to flourish. The students' heartfelt performances of the Haka, the traditional Māori dance, never fail to leave a lasting impression on their Japanese hosts.

While ten days may seem long, the time passes quickly and when the day of farewell arrives, tears inevitably reflect the genuine bonds that have formed.

Through ongoing friendship and exchange, Kitaibaraki City and Wairoa District remain committed to strengthening their ties and promoting global understanding and international cooperation for the future.



Introducing Our Initiatives

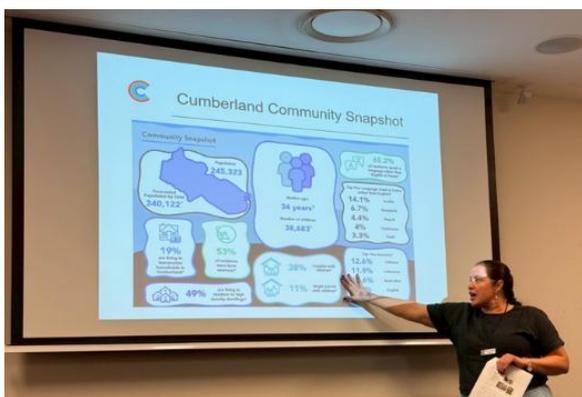
Introducing CLAIR Sydney's Australian Multicultural Policy Exchange Program

The Japan Local Government Centre (CLAIR Sydney) has been hosting the *Australian Multicultural Policy Exchange Program* on an alternating basis in Sydney and Melbourne. Now in its 15th year, the program provides Japanese local government officials, staff from international associations, and NPO practitioners the opportunity to learn about Australia's multicultural policies and their implementation at a grass roots level. It remains one of CLAIR Sydney's flagship initiatives, promoting knowledge sharing and network-building between Japan and Australia.



This year's program was held from 10 to 15 November across the Greater Sydney region of New South Wales (NSW). Participants visited nine organisations, including government agencies, schools, and non-profit service providers. Through site visits and discussions with practitioners, the group explored a wide range of practical initiatives in sectors such as public administration, education, community welfare, health, and emergency management, all aimed at supporting and engaging culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

The first visit was to Cumberland City Council, one of NSW's most culturally diverse local government areas, where more than half of residents were born overseas. Council staff explained how demographic and socio-economic data are used to design community programs that meet the specific needs of their local community. This evidence-driven approach to community planning offered valuable insights for the Japanese participants.

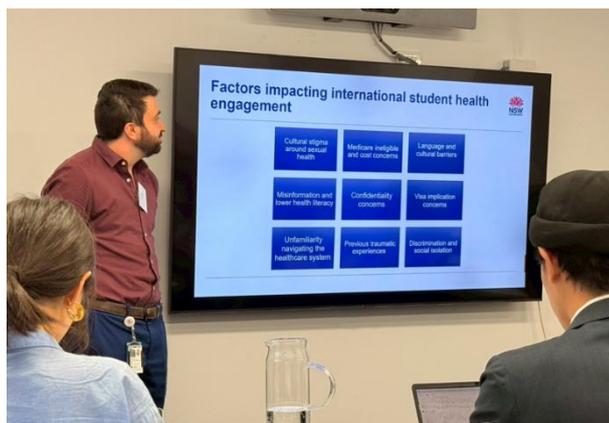


At Multicultural NSW, which oversees multicultural policies in the state, participants learned about the state's overarching policy framework that recognises migrants as a valuable asset to NSW. All state agencies are required to set targets for multicultural initiatives and report annually on their progress. This whole-of-government commitment, underpinned by clearly articulated public values, resonated strongly with the visiting officials.

The NSW Department of Education introduced a range of supports for students from diverse backgrounds, such as anti-racism contact officers, intensive English programs, and bilingual staff who liaise with families. These measures demonstrated how schools can act as an integrated support system for children and their caregivers.



The Sydney Local Health District shared initiatives to improve health access for multicultural communities, including breast cancer screening with multilingual support and specialised health services for international students. Their targeted engagement strategies, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, offered practical examples relevant to Japanese municipalities.



Across all visits, in-depth discussions with frontline staff enabled the Japanese delegation to deepen their understanding of Australian perspectives on social cohesion and multicultural service delivery. Participants actively exchanged ideas on how insights from Australia could be applied within their own municipalities in Japan. The program also highlighted similarities and differences between both countries' approaches, offering fresh insights into how inclusive communities can be strengthened.

Most importantly, this program continues to serve not only as a learning platform for Japanese practitioners, but also as an opportunity for Australian host organisations to reflect on and share their practices. Many hosts commented that engaging with an international audience helped them to reflect on their own strategies and gain new perspectives.

CLAIR Sydney remains committed to creating opportunities for Japanese, Australian, and New Zealand local governments to learn from one another and to collaboratively promote inclusive, resilient, and vibrant communities. We warmly welcome enquiries from councils, state agencies, schools, and community organisations interested in hosting future study visits or partnering with us. We look forward to working with you to further strengthen cross-regional exchange and foster more open, connected, and inclusive local communities.

Local Government Exchange & Cooperation Seminar

Every year, CLAIR Sydney hosts the Local Government Exchange & Cooperation Seminar, a one-week program in Japan for local councillors and senior local government officials from Australia and New Zealand, as well as senior representatives of organisations and institutions involved in regional development and international exchange. Through visits to Japan's local governments and in-depth discussions with Japanese stakeholders, the seminar aims to deepen mutual understanding of local government systems and to build networks between local governments in Japan, Australia and New Zealand.



In 2025, the seminar was held from 26 to 31 October in Tokyo and Kuroishi City, Aomori Prefecture, under the theme “Waste Management through Community Engagement.” A total of six Australian participants, including local councillors and senior local government officials, took part in the program.

In Tokyo, participants visited the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Waste Landfill Management Office, where they learned how waste is managed in a large metropolitan area. The visit highlighted unique systems that significantly reduce waste volume through incineration prior to final disposal, as well as initiatives to extend the lifespan of landfill sites through the phased development of sea-surface landfill sites.



In Kuroishi City, participants were briefed on the city's highly detailed waste separation rules and designated garbage bag system. They also learned about the role played by local community organisations in raising awareness among residents and ensuring that waste separation practices are well understood and integrated into daily life. The group then visited a regional waste treatment facility operated jointly with neighbouring municipalities, gaining a deeper insight into how inter-municipal cooperation can effectively address challenges that individual councils would struggle to manage on their own.



Participants expressed strong interest not only in the institutional frameworks themselves, but also in how administrative initiatives are interpreted by residents and translated into everyday practice. During discussion sessions, participants shared candid perspectives on differences between Japan and Australia in approaches to waste incineration, public awareness and education, and regional cooperation in facility management. They actively explored how these lessons could be applied to their own local governments in Australia.



During their stay in Kuroishi City, the participants also engaged in lively discussions during a courtesy visit to the mayor and the welcome dinner reception. They exchanged views on current administrative challenges as well as the region's future vision, providing valuable opportunities for deeper interaction among all parties involved.

CLAIR Sydney would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Mayor of Kuroishi City and to all related officials and staff for their kind support, and warm hospitality during the 2025 seminar.



CLAIR Sydney December Activity Report

Supporting the Fukuoka Prefectural Government(1-5 December)

From 1 to 5 December, a group of 20 high school students from Fukuoka Prefecture visited Sydney as part of a study tour. During their stay, they took part in exchanges with local high school students, experienced a farm stay, and visited various sites around the city. On the final day, the students delivered presentations reflecting on what they had learned throughout the program, including their observations on the differences between Japan and Australia. Members of the Sydney Fukuoka Kenjinkai also attended the event, and the president offered words of encouragement to the students.



The CLAIR Sydney office supported the city tour and the organisation of the presentation session. We will continue to assist Japanese local governments in their efforts to engage with local councils and organisations across Australia and New Zealand. If you are interested in receiving such support, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Exhibiting at the Matsuri Japan Festival: Where Tradition and Pop Culture Meet (7 December)

The Matsuri Japan Festival was held in Sydney on 7 December. Since it began in 2006, the event has aimed to showcase the charm of Japanese culture and foster friendship between Japan and Australia.

The festival featured an array of Japanese food stalls and cultural activity booths, from traditional tea ceremonies to calligraphy. On stage, dynamic taiko drumming and idol performances kept the atmosphere lively. Throughout the day, lots of visitors enjoyed a wide variety of cultural experiences. CLAIR Sydney operated a joint booth with four prefectures, Nagano, Ishikawa, Hyogo, and Fukuoka, introducing key tourist destinations and unique local attractions from across Japan. Many visitors asked questions such as “Where can I enjoy the best snow activities?” and “When is the best season to see cherry blossoms?”, demonstrating strong interest in Japan’s four seasons and regional diversity.



In addition to visitors dressed in kimono and yukata, free admission for cosplay participants drew many attendees wearing anime and game character costumes. Toward the end of the festival, participants formed a circle to dance Bon Odori together, creating a unique and memorable scene where traditional Japanese culture and modern pop culture blended seamlessly.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to actively promote the appeal of Japanese municipalities throughout Australia and New Zealand.



Supporting the Fukuoka Prefectural Government(11-20 December)

From 11 to 20 December, eight junior and senior high school swimmers selected by the Fukuoka Swimming Association visited New South Wales. Through joint training sessions with local schools and participation in NSW competitions, they connected with swimmers of a similar age.



This exchange program took place under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2023 by Fukuoka Prefecture, the Fukuoka Swimming Association and Swimming NSW.



Clair Sydney accompanied the group for part of the program, taking part in a tour of Sydney and sharing insights about our work and Australia's multiculturalism policies. We will continue to support Japanese local governments in promoting exchanges with local councils and organisations across Australia and New Zealand. Please feel free to contact us if you seek support in strengthening ties with local councils in Japan.



Mark Your Calendar: February's Event

Join us at the upcoming event!

We'd love to see you at the CLAIR booth—please drop by if you're around!

- **Japan Day 2026**

When: 22 February 2026, 10:30-16:30

Where: Auckland Showgrounds

(217 Greenlane Road West, Epsom, Auckland, New Zealand)

Details: <https://www.japanday.org.nz/home>

At this event, we'll showcase the unique appeal of various Japanese municipalities and provide brochures for attendees to take home with them.

For more details, visit our Facebook page!

(We'll post updates about a week before each event.)



← Follow us on our CLAIR Sydney [Facebook](#) page!



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://www.jlgc.org.au)

Announcement from Fukushima Prefectural Government

Check out "Steps for Reconstruction and Revitalization", which provides updates on "Fukushima's Revitalization Today".

In order to clearly communicate "Fukushima's Revitalization Today" to domestic and international audiences, the Prefecture has created "Steps for Reconstruction and Revitalization in Fukushima Prefecture", which summarises the progress and challenges since the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The English, Chinese, and Korean versions are now available on our website.

This issue's cover features photos highlighting the revitalization efforts in Namie Town. "Fuku no Saba" mackerel is anticipated to become a new local speciality. Raised in a fully closed-cycle land-based aquaculture facility, the fish carry a low risk of parasites and are safe to eat raw. Another feature is the lighting and firing of a noborigama, a traditional climbing kiln, for the first time in 14 years at "Togei no Mori Obori", or the Obori Soma Ware Products Hall of the town's traditional craft.

The Fukushima Revitalization Information Portal Site provides information on the current status of Fukushima's revitalization in 10 languages: English, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Korean, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Thai. The "Steps for Reconstruction and Revitalization in Fukushima Prefecture" is also available on the portal site. (You can change the language using the button in the top-right corner.) Be sure to check other pages on the portal site.

English: <https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal-english/ayumi-en-15.html>

Simplified Chinese: <https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal-zhc/ayumi-zhc.html>

Traditional Chinese: <https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal-zht/ayumi-zht.html>

Korean: <https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal-ko/ayumi-ko.html>

Fukushima Revitalization Information Portal Site Top Page: <https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal-english/>



From the Executive Director

2026: A Significant Year for CLAIR Sydney

On behalf of all the staff at CLAIR Sydney, I would like to wish you a Happy New Year and a healthy, prosperous and successful 2026.

The year 2026 is particularly significant for CLAIR Sydney, as it marks two major milestones: the 40th anniversary of the JET Programme (The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) and the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia.

The JET Programme was launched in 1987 to encourage international engagement at a community level by inviting young people from overseas to work in local governments and schools across Japan, where they participate in international exchange and foreign language education. CLAIR works in partnership with the Government of Japan to administer the programme and provide support for current participants.

When the programme first began in 1987, there were 848 participants from just four countries – Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom. By 2025, this number had grown to 5,933 participants from 54 countries, reflecting remarkable growth over nearly four decades. As of 1 July 2025, the cumulative total number of participants exceeds 80,000 from 82 countries. Of these, 5,060 have come from Australia and 3,643 from New Zealand, highlighting the invaluable contribution of both countries and their peoples to the JET Programme.

Although I have only been living in Sydney for about six months, I have had many opportunities to meet JET alumni at events and during visits across Australia and New Zealand. There have even been moments when I met JET alumni in places where I thought, “Surely there can’t be any JET alumni here!” Each time I hear these alumni share their stories and memories of life in Japan, I am reminded of the deep bonds the JET Programme has fostered between Japan and both Australia and New Zealand, and I am continually inspired by the programme’s enduring significance.

Another milestone is the 50th anniversary of the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty between Japan and Australia, signed in 1976, which laid the foundation for deepening mutual understanding and cooperation between the two nations. It is also known as the NARA Treaty, a name derived both from former Australian Prime Minister Edward Gough Whitlam’s visit to Nara City during the treaty negotiations and from the acronym for *Nippon-Australia Relations Agreement*.

On 19 December last year, both governments unveiled the official logo commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the treaty. Designed by a university student from Hyogo Prefecture in Japan, the logo embodies the themes of “Friendship Across the Seas” and “Hope for the Future,” blending Japan’s cherry blossoms with Australia’s Southern Cross.

At CLAIR Sydney, we aim to actively pursue initiatives that will further strengthen the JET Programme and Japan-Australia relationships during this milestone year of 2026. We would greatly appreciate your support as we work together to write the next chapter of our shared history. We sincerely look forward to working with you throughout this year.





Level 12, Challis House, 4 Martin Place, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Tel: 61-2-9241-5033