

# Newsletter

Special Issue  
February 2026



*Greetings!* As March approaches, some of our colleagues will begin an exciting new chapter in Japan. This year, we bid farewell to our two Assistant Directors as they return to their home organisations. Below, you'll find their personal farewell messages.

*CLAIR Sydney wishes them all the best!*



# Farewell messages

## Masahiro Nishimura

Assistant Director from Tokyo Metropolitan Government

As my term comes to an end, I will be returning to Japan. Over the past two years, I have been warmly welcomed by so many people across Australia and New Zealand. I am truly grateful for the generous support and cooperation I received throughout my time here.

During my assignment, I worked on the Australian Multicultural Policy Exchange Program and the CLAIR Forum. Through discussions and exchanges with representatives from state governments, local councils, and universities, I gained valuable insights into a range of policies and practical initiatives. I was particularly struck by how multiculturalism in Australia is not simply articulated as a principle but integrated into the framework of public administration. This offers important lessons for local governments in Japan, where the number of foreign residents continues to grow.

Another aspect that stood out to me was the proactive role councils play in working closely with their communities to address local challenges. Beyond drawing on census data and other evidence in policy planning, I was impressed by how councils actively engage with communities and incorporate local voices into decision-making. These practices offer valuable insights for local administration in Japan.



Visit to Cumberland City Council  
(I am on the far left)



Presentation at the CLAIR Forum

On a personal note, I greatly enjoyed spending weekends surfing at Manly and Bondi, playing baseball with the Sydney Japan Baseball Club, and travelling around Australia and New Zealand with my family. Through these everyday experiences, I came to appreciate the natural beauty of the region and the warmth of its people. They also gave me a real sense of the strength of local communities.

I hope to continue sharing the knowledge and networks I have gained in Australia and New Zealand with local governments in Japan, and to contribute to further strengthening the ties between our countries. Thank you once again for your support over the past two years.



Playing with the Sydney Japan Baseball Club



Family photo with the Sydney Harbour Bridge

## Morihito Munakata

Assistant Director from Kuroishi City

Before I knew it, nearly two years had passed since I arrived in Australia. As I prepare to return to Japan, I've found myself reflecting more and more on the work, the people, and the countless memories that have shaped these years.

During my two years as part of the CLAIR Sydney team, I was fortunate enough to learn so much from people across Australia and New Zealand. Attending local government meetings and visiting sites allowed me to see firsthand how communities tackle challenges and make creative use of limited resources. What stayed with me most were not only the practical aspects of their work, but also the candid conversations about why certain approaches were chosen, and how councils communicate and foster understanding with residents.



Taituarā Conference  
(Auckland, New Zealand)

I also had many opportunities to share Japan's local initiatives and regional attractions at Japan-related events. Even brief conversations at a booth taught me how meaningful it can be to use words thoughtfully and show genuine interest, as small efforts can go a long way. It made me happy to be able to introduce aspects of Japan in a meaningful way and even offer small ideas that could help someone plan their next trip to Japan.



Perth Japan Festival  
(Perth, Western Australia)



JETAA Oceania Conference  
(Christchurch, New Zealand)

On a personal level, I'm grateful for the connections I have made here, including friends, colleagues, and the JETAA community. Weekends filled with outings, shared meals, BBQs, and even a bit of sauna-hopping became an invaluable source of strength and joy amid busy days. I sincerely thank everyone who shared their time with me.

Through both professional and personal travel, I was able to visit many places across Australia and New Zealand. Experiencing the beauty of nature, the charm of local towns and the warmth and kindness of the people are memories I will always treasure. The backpack I bought at the beginning of my journey, before I realised it, has become thoroughly worn, bearing the marks of its years as my trusty travel companion. Seeing how much it has aged reminds me of how far we've travelled and all the adventures we've been on together. Everywhere I went, the landscapes I saw and the conversations I had along the way quietly became part of the learning and experiences that have defined the past two years.



Exploring Kangaroo Island  
(South Australia)



A Day at a Vineyard  
(South Australia)

One particularly memorable highlight was the Local Government Exchange & Cooperation Seminar held in 2025. As part of the program, we visited Kuroishi City, my hometown and the city from which I was seconded. Being able to walk through local sites with the participants and openly exchanging views on local government systems and challenges was a significant step toward deeper mutual understanding and building stronger networks. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the six participants who attended the seminar.



Local Government Exchange & Cooperation Seminar 2025  
(Aomori Airport, Japan)

I could not have continued this work without the support of so many people, including local government partners, related organisations, my wonderful colleagues at CLAIR Sydney, along with countless others who assisted along the way. I will carry the lessons and connections I gained in Sydney back to Japan and build on them in my work, while continuing to nurture the relationships and exchanges I have been fortunate to experience.

I look forward to the day our paths cross again.

Thank you all, sincerely for everything.

# Announcement: 2026 CLAIR Forum

CLAIR Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) cordially invite you to the 2026 CLAIR Forum.

**This year's theme is 'Sustainable & Thriving Communities'.**

The 2026 CLAIR Forum will be held in person and livestreamed via Zoom.

Register from the link below: (Select 'Get Tickets' for both the in-person and online options)

<https://events.humanitix.com/clair-forum-2026-sustainable-and-thriving-communities>

**Participation is free!** More information below:

Upcoming Event

**Free Event**

## 2026 CLAIR Forum

Theme

### Sustainable & Thriving Communities

The CLAIR Forum is an annual half-day seminar co-hosted by CLAIR Sydney and the Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) at UTS. Japan, Australia, and New Zealand face shared challenges, as population growth concentrates in major cities while regional and rural areas experience decline. This Forum will showcase practical initiatives by local governments in Japan and Australia and provide a platform for exchanging views on building sustainable and thriving communities.

- ✓ **Date and Time:**  
Wednesday, 4 March 2026  
2:00pm to 5:00pm (AEST)
- ✓ **Venue:**  
Hybrid Format: On-site & Zoom  
University of Technology Sydney, Building 1,  
Level 22, Room 10  
Address: 15 Broadway, Ultimo, NSW 2007
- ✓ **Speakers:** (This forum will be conducted entirely in English.)  
3 Assistant Directors from CLAIR Sydney  
2 speakers from local governments in Australia

Register via the link to see full details and secure your spot!

(Select 'Get Tickets' for both the in-person and online options)

<https://events.humanitix.com/clair-forum-2026-sustainable-and-thriving-communities>





## Japan Local Government Centre

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