

Newsletter

March 2026

199



We are pleased to share a contributed article from the Campbelltown – Koshigaya Sister Cities Association, which celebrated the 40th anniversary of its sister city relationship with Koshigaya City, Japan, in 2024. The article highlights the Association's history and recent activities, and introduces an online learning program developed by the Association, which is used by Campbelltown student delegations to prepare for their visit to Japan. We are delighted to present it here.



The group was welcomed by the Koshigaya International Association

Strengthening Ties:

The Campbelltown – Koshigaya Sister City Relationship After 40 Years

Since 1984, Campbelltown and Koshigaya have maintained a strong and active sister city relationship. Except during the COVID-19 pandemic, at least one, sometimes 2, student delegations have travelled between the two cities each year.

During COVID-19, the student exchanges moved online, allowing students from Campbelltown and Koshigaya to meet virtually, discuss and ask questions about common areas of interest.

Delegation visits of Sister City Association members from both cities have been organised every few years to bring the two Sister City Associations and their councils together.

C O N T E N T

- ★ The Campbelltown – Koshigaya Sister City Relationship
- ★ CLAIR Sydney Recent Activity Reports

- ★ News From CLAIR Sydney
- ★ From Executive Director

Outbound students

Each year, around April, the Campbelltown- Koshigaya Sister Cities Association (www.cksca.org.au) promotes its annual student delegation trip to all 16 high schools in the local government area. The Association seeks applications from students aged 14 to 18 who wish to travel to Japan during the September school holidays.

Fifteen students are selected following the interview process. President Terry Crotty explained that the Association receives 40 or more applications each year, which means “we have the unfortunate task of telling many students that they haven’t been selected. However, we encourage all unsuccessful applicants to reapply in the following year. In many years, up to 6 students are selected from those who were unsuccessful previously. That year of personal growth really shows through at the interview”.

Two adult leaders are also selected to accompany and guide the group throughout the trip.

The selected students and their parents or guardians attend their first group session, a parent information evening, where they meet other students in the delegation. They receive details about the trip, including costs, schedule and host family accommodation, and have the opportunity to ask any questions about both the preparation and the trip itself.

The group then comes together for orientation sessions, held over 8 Friday evenings. These sessions help students to bond, learn basic conversational Japanese, and understand what to expect on the trip. They also gain insights into Japanese customs and etiquette, practice using chopsticks and develop and rehearse a performance to be presented several times during their visit to Japan.

Prior to their departure, the student delegation attends a civic reception to see them off. At the event, the students receive words of encouragement from the mayor and representatives of the Campbelltown-Koshigaya Sister Cities Association, and also present the performance they will deliver during their time in Japan.

The performance showcases distinctly Australian elements such as Australian football, meat pies, kangaroos, Holden cars, as well as Australian songs such as ‘Waltzing Matilda’. The show also highlights Australia’s rich ethnic diversity and multicultural coexistence, reflected not only in its themes but also in the students who embody that diversity on stage.

Upon arrival in Japan, the delegation is welcomed to Koshigaya at an official ceremony. The students visit sights in and around Koshigaya, including local schools, take day trips to Nikko and Tokyo Disneyland, as well as an overnight trip to the Hakone / Mt Fuji area.



A visit to Disneyland on the last day capped off a great trip

Online learning

The Association offers online training resources to support the group's preparation. Students study the content and complete assessments at the end of each module. Modules include learning about Koshigaya City, Japanese culture, language and etiquette, including shoe removal, the use of chopsticks and bathing practices. If you require any further information about these resources, please email secretary@cksca.org.au.



The online training program helps prepare the students

During the trip, parents and friends can see photos each day on a dedicated Facebook site set up for each delegation.

When the group returns to Campbelltown after their 12-day visit to Japan, they reflect on their experiences at a storytelling evening soon after their return.

Inbound students from Koshigaya

Each year, around the end of July, a group of 15 students and 2 leaders arrive from Koshigaya for a 10-day stay in Campbelltown. Host families accommodate each student and leader. The program includes an overnight stay in Canberra, as well as day trips to Manly, Bondi, the Blue Mountains, and various attractions around the Campbelltown and Macarthur region. Of course, there is also plenty of time for the students to go shopping.



The farewell party cake was a big hit

Each day, the host families bring their students to the meeting point at around 8 am. The group then boards the bus for a fun-filled day. Around 6 pm, the host families collect their student and provide dinner and evening activities.



Welcome to Sydney



The group visited Canberra



A wet morning for the group to leave Campbelltown after a fantastic visit

Annual awards for students studying Japanese

Each year, in early December, the Association holds an event to recognise the achievements of students studying Japanese at 7 high schools in the Campbelltown local government area.

Award recipients not only demonstrate strong academic results but also engage in broader extra-curricular activities to deepen their understanding of Japanese language and culture.

Awards are presented to students in Years 8 and 9, and to students in Year 11. School principals and language coordinators attend to explain why each student has received their award.

Family and friends of the award recipients also attend to share the celebration.



Students from Airds High School receive their award



Mayor Darcy Lound presents Emma Reynolds from St Patricks

40th anniversary

In 2024, the Sister City relationship between Campbelltown and Koshigaya celebrated its 40th anniversary.

Council and Association representatives visited each city to mark the milestone and reaffirm their commitment to continuing the long-standing and successful relationship.

Campbelltown welcomed the anniversary delegations to Koshigaya Park, named 40 years ago at the beginning of the Sister City relationship. The group also held an event at the Campbelltown Arts Centre Japanese Garden, which houses an authentic tea house, gifted by Koshigaya City.

Similarly, Campbelltown delegations were welcomed at Campbelltown Park in Koshigaya.

To commemorate 40 years of the Sister City relationship, a special logo was designed for the anniversary.



The 40th anniversary logo



The Japanese Teahouse provided by Koshigaya City to the Campbelltown Arts Centre



Sister City Association President Terry Crotty with Koshigaya Mayor Akira Fukuda



Koshigaya City representatives visited Koshiyaga Park in Campbelltown with Council Mayor and CEO



Koshigaya International Association members also visited Koshigaya Park

Conclusion

President Terry Crotty said the long-standing success of the relationship with Koshigaya has been the result of the strong support of the councils in Campbelltown and Koshigaya, as well as the dedication of Association members in both cities who generously volunteer their time.

For more information about any aspect of the Campbelltown-Koshigaya Sister City relationship, please email secretary@cksca.org.au



DISCOVER
JAPAN

CLAIR Sydney Recent Activity Report

Supporting the Fukuoka Prefectural Government(29 Jan- 1 Feb)

From 29 January to 1 February, 15 players from the Fukuoka Prefectural Selected High School Girls' Hardball Baseball Team visited New South Wales. During their visit, they took part in matches and exchange activities with the NSW State Selected Girls' Hardball Baseball Team, interacting with players of a similar age. This exchange was made possible under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2023 by Fukuoka Prefecture, the Fukuoka High School Baseball Federation, and Baseball NSW.



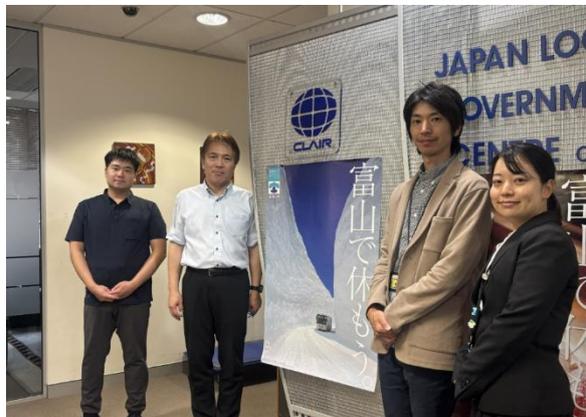
CLAIR Sydney provided support by accompanying the teams during the exchange matches and the players' city-based training and educational activities. We will continue to support Japanese local governments in promoting exchanges with local councils and organisations across Australia and New Zealand. If you would like assistance in facilitating such exchanges, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Supporting Toyama New Industry Organization (5 February)

On Thursday, 5 February, two staff members from the Asia Business Promotion Center of Toyama New Industry Organization visited the CLAIR Sydney office.

The visit coincided with a Toyama Prefecture products fair being held at supermarkets that sell Japanese food across Australia and formed part of a study tour aimed at conducting promotional activities and site visits to food retailers and related businesses.



At the CLAIR Sydney office, we provided an overview of Australia's administrative systems at the national, state and local government levels, together with a general briefing on the tourism sector, with a particular focus on inbound tourism. We also exchanged views on the expansion of distribution channels in Australia, as well as areas of interest among Australians in relation to Japanese tourism, food products and related fields.

CLAIR Sydney supports a wide range of activities undertaken by Japanese local governments in Australia and New Zealand, including policy research, promotional activities and study tours. If you require support for such activities, please feel free to contact us.

Supporting the Horokanai Town Government (10 February)

On 10 February, two students and two representatives from Horokanai High School in Hokkaido visited the CLAIR Sydney office. Horokanai Town is actively promoting regional revitalisation through its renowned buckwheat (soba) industry, and the group travelled to Australia to research examples of soba exports as well as to provide the students with a vocational training experience.



At CLAIR Sydney, we briefed the group on our organisation's work and on Australia's multiculturalism policies. We also received questions regarding sister-city relationships and exchanged views on effective approaches to international promotion and communications.



On 12 February, with the generous cooperation of a Japanese-owned restaurant, the two students were able to try their hand at making soba using Australian-produced buckwheat flour. Their focused expressions and clear determination throughout the activity left a strong impression on us.



Visit by Students from Kanazawa Seiryō University (20 February)

On 20 February, 16 students from the Department of Child Study, Faculty of Economics, and Department of Intercultural Studies at Kanazawa Seiryō University in Ishikawa Prefecture visited the CLAIR Sydney Office as part of their overseas study program.

Our office provided a briefing on Australia that covered key facts such as its land area, population, and economy, the historical development of Australia as a multicultural nation, recent trends in outbound travel from Australia to Japan, and an overview of the country's education and childcare systems.



The students asked a wide range of questions, including differences in working styles between Australia and Japan and the foreign languages (other than English) that Australian children learn in primary school. Their enthusiasm for learning left a strong impression on us.



Following their visit, the students travelled to Melbourne to observe a local primary school. We sincerely hope that their time in Australia, including their visit to our office and the school, was both rewarding and meaningful.

Japan Day 2026: One of New Zealand’s Largest Japanese Cultural Events (Auckland) (22 February)

Japan Day 2026 took place in Auckland on 22 February 2026, marking the event’s 22nd anniversary.

The venue was buzzing with excitement, featuring a wide variety of attractions from Japanese food stalls, a Hina doll and Mikoshi (portable Shinto shrine) display, to hands-on cultural experiences such as tea ceremonies and calligraphy. The stage performances added to the energy, with dynamic shows including Yosakoi dance (a lively modern Japanese folk dance), Aikido (Japanese martial arts), and Iaido (Japanese swordsmanship).

CLAIR Sydney hosted a booth showcasing the unique attractions and cultural highlights of regions across Japan. Using brochures and maps provided by local governments, we introduced visitors to a wide range of destinations beyond Tokyo and Kyoto.



Many visitors expressed strong interest in regional Japan and traditional culture, asking questions such as “Which regions do you recommend besides Tokyo and Kyoto?”, “Where can we see historic buildings and experience traditional culture?”, and “When and where is the best time to see cherry blossoms?”

Our team engaged with each visitor individually, listening to their interests and providing tailored information on Japan’s scenic landscapes, cultural heritage, and hands-on experiences.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to promote regional Japan to audiences in Australia and New Zealand through events like this, strengthening awareness of the country’s diverse local cultures. Thank you very much to everyone who visited our booth!



Celebrating the Emperor's Birthday Across Australia

A series of receptions celebrating the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan were held at the official residences of the Ambassador and Consuls-General of Japan across Australia, including in Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra. The events were attended by numerous distinguished guests, including representatives from government agencies and Japanese affiliated companies.

At each venue, proceedings included the singing of both national anthems and the traditional kagami-biraki ceremony (a ceremony in which a sake barrel is opened with wooden mallets to celebrate a special occasion and pray for harmony and good fortune). Booths hosted by Japanese companies and other organisations were also featured, providing attendees with a valuable opportunity to further deepen their interest in Japanese culture.



At the official residence of the Consul-General of Japan in Sydney, the CLAIR Sydney office also exhibited a booth. Through brochures and other materials, we introduced our initiatives, with a particular focus on Japanese local governments that have sister-city relationships with municipalities in New South Wales.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia, a significant milestone for both countries.

Building on the connections fostered through these receptions, CLAIR Sydney will continue to support the strengthening of local government exchange between Japan and Australia.



CLAIR Forum 2026(4 March)



On Wednesday, 4 March, CLAIR Sydney held the CLAIR Forum 2026 in collaboration with the Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). The CLAIR Forum is an annual event where CLAIR Sydney staff and local government representatives from Japan, Australia, and New Zealand come together to share initiatives and exchange views on policy challenges common to local governments in these countries. The forum provides a valuable opportunity for participants to share their knowledge and learn from one another.

This year's forum was held under the theme "Sustainable & Thriving Communities." Presentations included examples from Japan such as regional revitalization through the Okayama Marathon in Okayama Prefecture, bicycle policy initiatives in Ehime Prefecture, and high school students' development of local specialty products in Hokuto City, Yamanashi Prefecture.



From Australia, Mr Daniel Cove from Bathurst Regional Council shared efforts toward sustainable community development, and Mr Brendan Shipley from Parkes Shire Council presented on community activation through Elvis Presley-themed events. Participants exchanged insights and perspectives during the Q&A session discussion, fostering meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing. We extend our sincere gratitude to all participants who joined us in person or online, as well as to everyone who contributed to making this forum a success.



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 \(jlgc.org.au\)](http://jlgc.org.au)



From the Executive Director

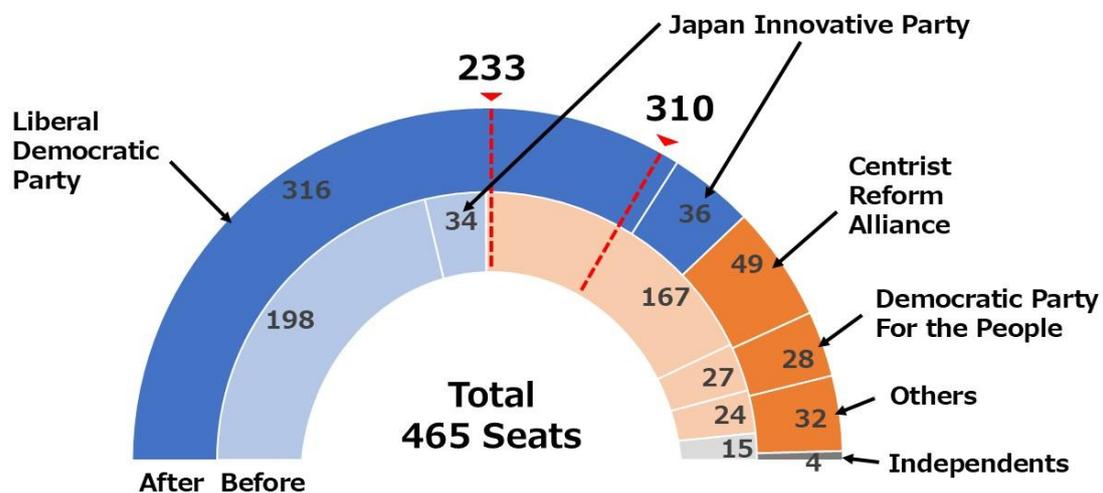
Japan's First Female Prime Minister Takes on a National Election

Last October, Japan welcomed its first female Prime Minister in the nation's history. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi dissolved the House of Representatives only a few months into her term, stating that she wanted to 'secure a clear mandate from the people.' As a result, a general election for the House of Representatives was held on 8 February 2026.

The National Diet of Japan is a two-house parliament, as is the case in Australia. The upper house, the House of Councillors (*Sangiin*), corresponds to the Australian Senate, while the lower House of Representatives (*Shugiin*), serves a similar role to Australia's House of Representatives. The government is formed by the party that holds a majority in the lower house, like Australia. The terms of the two houses are six years and four years respectively, but the lower house is often dissolved by the Prime Minister, who, like in Australia, is chosen from the lower house. As a result, elections are usually held every two to three years.

In the recent election, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) increased its number of seats significantly and is said to have achieved its largest victory since its founding in 1955. Of the 465 seats in the House of Representatives, the LDP won 316 seats on its own. Combined with its coalition partner, the Japan Innovation Party (JIP), the total rose to 352 seats. As a result, the LDP alone secured more than a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives (with two-thirds equivalent to 310 seats).

Party Seats in the House of Representatives Before and After the General Election



In Japan, a bill generally must be approved by both houses in order to become law. However, if the House of Representatives approves the bill with a more than a two-thirds majority, it can pass the bill again even if the House of Councillors rejected it, allowing the bill to be enacted. At present, neither the LDP alone nor the governing coalition of the LDP and JIP holds a majority in the House of Councillors. For this reason, the fact that the LDP by itself secured more than a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives is of great significance to the Takaichi administration. Close attention will be paid to how the administration proceeds from here in the months ahead.



Japan Local Government Centre

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