

CLAIR Sydney

# Newsletter

June 2026 -Vol.201-

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## Cover Photo

Uwa Sea located on the western side of Ehime Prefecture (Photo by Eigo Shimojo)

## Welcome to Ehime Prefecture

Ehime Prefecture is located along Japan's Seto Inland Sea and is home to approximately 1.27 million people. It is known for its warm climate and outstanding scenic beauty, along with its long history of citrus cultivation. The prefecture is made up of many islands, with the unique landscape of the Seto Inland Sea spreading throughout. In recent years, Ehime has become increasingly popular as a tourist destination, welcoming many domestic and international visitors all year round.

In 2027, Ehime Prefecture will host "Velo-city," an international bicycle conference, for the first time in Japan. Velo-city is one of the largest academic conferences, bringing bicycle companies, researchers, and experts together from around the world. While discussing various topics including tourism, safety, and urban planning, participants can enjoy the cityscape of Matsuyama through a bicycle parade and will also be able to visit other parts of the prefecture via 'technical visits' (explained below).

In recent years, Ehime Prefecture has become one of the leading centers of bicycle culture in Japan. Many local residents begin riding bicycles at a very young age, and the majority of high school students commute to school by bike. Furthermore, the prefecture boasts Japan's highest helmet-wearing rate, demonstrating strong safety awareness throughout the community. This well-established environment, which allows people of all ages to use bicycles safely on a daily basis, positions Ehime Prefecture as a center of Japan's bicycle culture.



Venue: Ehime Prefectural Budokan



Technical visits are guided tours that allow participants to explore various locations throughout the prefecture during Velo-city, featuring multiple courses with different themes. There is a course to learn about the infrastructure and scenery of the "Shimanami Kaido," Japan's representative maritime cycling route; a course to study safety education initiatives in schools by observing Japan's typical morning school commute; and a course to experience the "Henro," a pilgrimage to Buddhist temples, by bicycle. By participating in these technical visits and experiencing the local atmosphere, participants can gain valuable insights into the prefecture's bicycle policies firsthand.

On the second day (Wednesday, 26 May 2027), a spectacular bicycle parade will fill the city center. While showcasing the prefecture's appeal as an international model bicycle city, the event will provide a chance for all participants to experience and share how bicycles act as a catalyst for regional revitalisation, bringing new possibilities for future urban space allocation, health, a sense of purpose in life, and friendship.

During the four-day event, approximately 80 plenary breakout sessions will be held at the venue, with discussions centered around key themes and priorities. The conference program content will be determined by selecting proposals submitted during the abstract submission period, which begins in September. To encourage active exchange of diverse perspectives, Ehime welcomes a large number of submissions. Participants are invited to apply and help make this event a success.



## REPORTS **CLAIR Sydney Recent Activities**

### Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS-NSW) 2026 Student Awards Evening (12 May.)

On Tuesday, 12 May, the Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS-NSW) held an awards ceremony to recognise outstanding achievement in Japanese-related studies. Certificates were presented to seven students, each nominated by a university across the Sydney metropolitan area.

Following the presentation ceremony, each award recipient delivered a speech, some in Japanese, reflecting on what inspired them to begin studying the language, its appeal, the challenges they encountered during their studies, and their future aspirations.

Their stories varied widely, ranging from students who began learning the language with the dream of working for a Japanese game company, to those whose exchange experiences at Japanese universities enabled them to build friendships with people from around the world.

Many of the students reflected on how learning Japanese had expanded their horizons and future possibilities and expressed their hope to continue taking on new challenges connected to Japan, including working or living there in the future. Learning and mastering a language other than one's mother tongue is never easy. We were deeply moved by the speeches of these students, who spoke passionately about maintaining their connection with Japan even after graduation.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to work closely with Japanese language education institutions and related organisations, further strengthening people-to-people exchanges through Japanese language and culture, and contributing to the ongoing development of Japan-Australia relations.



## Supporting the Yamagata City 🍒 (21 May).

On Thursday, 21 May, representatives from Yamagata City, who came to Australia to exhibit at the Snow Travel Expo held in Melbourne and Sydney, paid a visit to the CLAIR Sydney office.

During their visit, we outlined the role of our office and provided an overview of Australia's society and economy, as well as the current state of inbound tourism to Japan. This led to an engaging discussion on the differences in industry structure between Japan and Australia and recent trends in inbound tourism.

CLAIR Sydney also supports a wide range of initiatives undertaken by Japanese local governments in Australia and New Zealand. If you require assistance with your activities, please feel free to contact us.



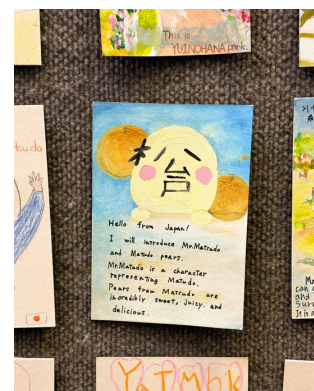
## Japan Festival 🇯🇵 - Melbourne ☕ (24 May).

On 24 May, the Japan Festival 2026 was held in the City of Whitehorse, located approximately 15 km east of Melbourne.

Around 100 booths and stalls lined the venue, offering Japanese goods and crafts as well as Japanese cuisine such as sushi and okonomiyaki. Visitors could also enjoy cultural activities including origami and shogi (Japanese chess). There were also a variety of stage performances, including taiko drumming, the Soran Bushi folk dance, and Tsugaru shamisen music, as well as kimono and cosplay contests. According to the organisers, the festival attracted approximately 5,500 visitors.

CLAIR Sydney also hosted a booth, promoting the attractions of regions across Japan through tourism brochures and other materials. Among the visitors to our booth were people planning cruise trips to Japan, as well as others who said they had visited the country more than ten times, reflecting the enduring appeal of Japan as a travel destination. We also spoke to visitors who had started learning Japanese after their travels and were hoping to move there in the future, highlighting a strong interest in Japanese culture and way of life.

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the sister-city relationship between the City of Whitehorse and Matsudo City in Chiba Prefecture. It is the longest-running Japan-Australia sister-city relationship in the state of Victoria. As part of the exchange program, the venue also displayed letters with hand-drawn illustrations created by residents of Matsudo, offering visitors a glimpse into the strong bond between the two cities.



## ANNOUNCEMENT **CLAIR Sydney New Office**

We relocated our office in early May.

Our new office features three meeting rooms of varying sizes, with the largest room equipped with a display suitable for presentations and video conferencing.

We look forward to welcoming you to our new office and thank you for your continued support!

### Our New Location

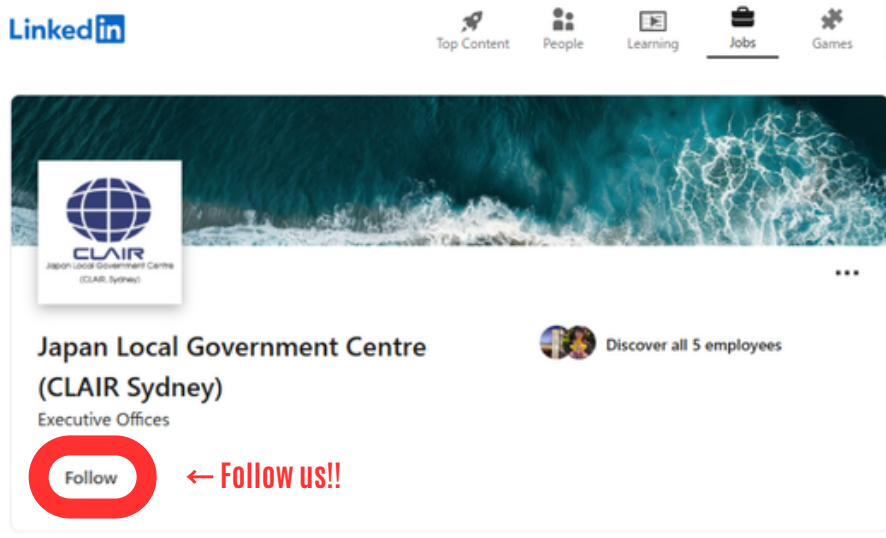
Level 13, 115 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000



## ANNOUNCEMENT **We have launched our official LinkedIn page!**

We are pleased to announce the launch of CLAIR Sydney's official LinkedIn page.

On this page, we will share updates on our activities and provide useful information for local governments in Japan. We would greatly appreciate your support and kindly invite you to follow our page!



▼ You can also follow us by scanning the QR code below.



### Beyond Language Learning: Toward Greater International Understanding

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend an awards ceremony recognising outstanding achievement in Japanese-related studies, hosted by the Australia-Japan Society of NSW (AJS-NSW).

On the day, certificates were presented to seven outstanding students nominated by seven universities<sup>1</sup> in the Greater Sydney region, and each recipient delivered a speech.

All of the award recipients shared reflections along similar lines, such as: “Thanks to studying Japanese, I’ve had incredible experiences, like studying at a Japanese university through an exchange program and making friends from diverse backgrounds, that have truly changed my life.” Another common sentiment was: “Looking ahead, I hope to pursue a career related to Japan or possibly live there in the future, so I will continue to work hard to achieve these goals.”

Learning and mastering a language other than one’s mother tongue is by no means an easy task. First and foremost, I would like to express my deep respect to the award recipients for their dedicated commitment to studying Japanese.

I am also delighted that their language studies have sparked such a strong interest in Japan and a genuine desire to deepen their understanding. I was deeply impressed by their determination to maintain a connection with Japan long after graduation.

On a personal note, I moved to Sydney last July, my first time living abroad, and I must admit that I still find speaking English challenging at times. However, seeing the dedication of the award recipients has inspired me to renew my own efforts. By conversing and connecting with others in English, I hope to further deepen my understanding of the local people, culture, and values in this region.

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<sup>1</sup> The seven universities were Macquarie University, The University of Newcastle, University of New England, University of Technology Sydney (UTS), The University of New South Wales (UNSW), The University of Sydney, and Western Sydney University.



Yuko Mitsunaga  
Executive Director

