

CLAIR Sydney Newsletter

July 2026 -Vol.202-



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Cover Photo

Happo Pond in Hakuba, Nagano Prefecture



Located in the heart of Japan, Nagano Prefecture is known for its majestic mountains, rich natural environment, and distinctive local products, including apples, sake, and other regional specialties. In recent years, the prefecture has been expanding its international outreach by promoting its food, beverages, tourism, and cultural appeal to overseas audiences.

As part of these efforts, Nagano Prefecture recently made its first appearance at the Perth Japan Festival and also hosted a special “Nagano Night” event in the city. The following contribution from Nagano Prefecture introduces these initiatives and shares the prefecture’s observations on Western Australia, including the economic landscape, the community’s response to Japan-related events, and opportunities for further engagement with Australia.



Nagano Prefecture Makes Its Debut at the Perth Japan Festival



AUSTRALIA – JAPAN
50 years of Friendship and Cooperation
日本オーストラリア友好協力50周年

Nagano Prefecture made its first-ever appearance at the Perth Japan Festival, Western Australia’s largest Japanese cultural event. This year’s event was held in collaboration with Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Australia–Japan friendship. Set in a vast outdoor park in the heart of the city, the festival featured a temporary shrine and a traditional Bon Odori tower, creating an authentic Japanese atmosphere. Attendance reached a record high of approximately 27,000 visitors. Products brought over from Nagano, including apple juice and seasoned rice mixes infused with shichimi spice, sold out quickly.

Western Australia spans an area seven times the size of Japan yet is home to just 3.06 million people. Its capital, Perth, located on the state’s western edge, is widely recognised as one of the world’s most liveable cities. Driven by abundant natural resources such as iron ore and LNG, the region boasts the highest per capita GDP in Australia. The population has a relatively high proportion of residents of European descent, and the area has attracted migrants from a variety of backgrounds in recent years.

As of 2025, the Japanese resident population stands at 8,614. In addition, Japan’s Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has secured a contract for 11 Mogami-class frigates. While the first three vessels will be built in Japan, the remaining ships are scheduled for construction in Henderson, near Perth.

Looking ahead, several major Japan-related projects are lined up across Western Australia. These include one of the world's largest hydrogen and ammonia initiatives led by Kawasaki Heavy Industries in partnership with Wood Energy, as well as plans for a nuclear-powered submarine base that may host visits from Japan's Self-Defense Forces.

However, Perth faces a growing challenge in housing supply. Demand continues to outstrip availability, pushing prices steadily upward. Despite interest rates exceeding 6%, many investors are purchasing properties outright in cash, prompting the state government to consider regulatory measures.



One common observation among Japanese expatriates is the limited number of Japanese restaurants. Unlike Sydney and Melbourne on the east coast, where Japanese cuisine has firmly taken off, Perth is still catching up. That said, UDON noodle restaurants in the city are gaining popularity, often attracting long queues.

Interestingly, the coastline around Perth is rich in marine life. Sea urchins and abalone are found in abundance, while fish such as snapper and horse mackerel can reportedly be caught in large numbers, even without bait. For many Japanese residents, heading out for an evening fishing trip to catch dinner has become part of daily life. Western Australia truly offers a bounty from the sea.

Nagano Night in Perth

Alongside the daytime Japan Festival, a two-night "Nagano Night" event was held at a Japanese restaurant in the city. Tickets, priced at over \$85, sold out on the very same day.

Guests were treated to a full-course Japanese dining experience showcasing premium ingredients from Nagano, paired with Nagano-produced apple juice, sake, and beer. The evening truly captured the region's flavors.



Highlights included English-language presentations by participating businesses from Nagano, along with a stunning 4K screening of promotional videos produced by the prefecture. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many guests commenting on how genuinely moving and memorable the experience was.

We look forward to seeing the ties between Nagano Prefecture and Australia continue to grow even stronger.

Komei KONDO

Chief International Strategies Officer, Nagano Prefectural Government

Learn more about Nagano Prefecture:

- Official Nagano promotional video: <https://nagano-brand.net/en/>
- Highlights from "Nagano Night in Perth":
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DWEUUmzhETMt/?igsh=MWs4dHk3dGFoeHZzeA==>



Study Session with Burwood Council (1 Jun)

On 1 June, we joined Burwood Council for a study session. These sessions have been held annually since 2024, making this the third exchange between our organisations.

Representatives from CLAIR Sydney first introduced a project being implemented in Hokuto City, Yamanashi Prefecture, which is the home municipality of one of our Assistant Directors. Under this project, high school students collaborate with local businesses to develop specialty products. Burwood Council participants showed particular interest in how participating businesses are selected and were eager to learn more about this aspect of the project. We then introduced Japan's local government mascots, commonly known as "yuru-chara", which play an important role in enhancing regional recognition and brand value, as well as communicating government initiatives in an accessible and engaging way. The participating Assistant Directors introduced mascots from their respective local governments and organisations and explained the characters' backgrounds, roles and activities. In response, Burwood Council participants asked a range of questions, including how mascot designs are submitted and how the final designs are selected.



Burwood Council then provided an overview of its future-oriented urban development initiatives. Located approximately 15 minutes by train from central Sydney, Burwood currently has a population of around 45,000, which is expected to double over the next decade. In anticipation of this growth, as well as the planned opening of a new metro station in 2032, the Council outlined its approach to promoting high-density urban development alongside the enhancement of high-quality public spaces. Specific initiatives include the development of a new cultural facility that will serve as a hub for arts and culture, the installation of public art, and measures to stimulate the night-time economy and create a vibrant urban environment. The Council also explained its efforts to incorporate community input into urban planning through advisory committees made up of local residents and online consultation platforms that enable broad public participation.

Following the discussion, we joined Burwood Council staff on a site visit to observe projects aimed at enhancing public spaces through public art and promoting the night-time economy. With development and revitalisation projects underway across many parts of the city, we were able to gain valuable insights into Burwood's ongoing urban transformation. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone at Burwood Council for providing us with this valuable learning opportunity.



Pre-Departure Orientations for New JET Participants (June 2026)

JET Programme Pre-Departure Orientations were held at embassies and consulates across Australia and New Zealand for new JETs.

The orientations featured informative sessions led by a consulate official, who covered key points for new participants, as well as valuable advice and Q&A sessions facilitated by JETAA (JET Alumni Association) members.

CLAIR Sydney also provided an overview of our role in the JET Programme, including the support system and training we offer for new JETs.

The new JETs will be departing for Japan between late July and early August. During their time on the JET Programme, we hope they will gain a wide range of experiences and broaden their horizons in their respective placements across the country. We also hope that, through grassroots exchanges with Japanese people, they will serve as a bridge connecting Japan, Australia and New Zealand. We wish them all a wonderful and fulfilling time in Japan.



For more details about the JET Programme, visit the JET Programme official website below:

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

The Lismore Lantern Parade 2026 (20 Jun)

On Saturday, 20 June, CLAIR Sydney travelled to Lismore, New South Wales, to participate in the Lismore Lantern Parade at the invitation of Lismore City Mayor Steve Krieg.

Held annually on the Saturday closest to the winter solstice, the Lismore Lantern Parade is one of the city's signature winter events, attracting more than 30,000 visitors each year. Together with representatives of Lismore City Council and the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, CLAIR Sydney carried a lantern featuring Miku-chan, the mascot of Yamato-Takada City in Nara Prefecture. This lantern symbolises the longstanding ties between Yamato-Takada and Lismore, whose sister-city partnership, established in 1963, was the first between Japan and Australia.

Prior to the parade, we visited the Southern Cross University Japan-Australia Centre, where we received a warm welcome from university staff and students. We also visited an exhibition dedicated to Father Tony Glynn, a Lismore native who devoted his life to fostering friendship and understanding between Japan and Australia in the years following the Second World War. As 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between Japan and Australia, this visit provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on the importance of passing on the legacy of Japan-Australia friendship to future generations.



CLAIR Sydney looks forward to continuing to support sister-city relationships and broader cooperation between local governments in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

2026 ALGA National General Assembly in Canberra (23~25 Jun)

From 23 to 25 June, the 2026 National General Assembly (NGA) of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) was held in Canberra, bringing together more than 1,100 mayors, councillors and local government representatives from across Australia. This event featured keynote presentations and discussions on a wide range of issues facing local governments.

One of the key topics was the financial crisis affecting local government across Australia. Delegates unanimously adopted an emergency motion calling on the Australian Parliament to ensure a fairer distribution of funding by increasing untied Financial Assistance Grants, noting that the current level of funding is threatening the viability of local governments.

CLAIR Sydney hosted a booth at the venue to introduce our activities and promote two upcoming initiatives. The first is the CLAIR Forum¹, scheduled to be held in Sydney on 2 December 2026, where local government representatives from Japan, Australia and New Zealand will present case studies and exchange ideas and initiatives.

The second is the Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar², to be held in Goka Town, Ibaraki Prefecture, in February next year. Senior local government executives from Australia and New Zealand will attend to learn about Japan's local government and administration.



At the Gala Dinner on the final day, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese delivered a speech, highlighting the vital role local governments play in providing the services and infrastructure Australians rely on every day, including local roads, bridges, community facilities, parks and libraries. He also emphasised the importance of continued investment in, and partnership with, local governments to build stronger communities and a better future for Australia.

Participating in the NGA provided a valuable opportunity to deepen our understanding of the various challenges facing local governments in Australia, while also strengthening our network with local government representatives from across the country.



¹ An annual forum bringing together local government representatives from Japan, Australia and New Zealand to exchange views on shared challenges in local administration. Further details will be announced on our website and social media.

² A 7-day seminar offering a unique opportunity to learn about the Japanese local government system and visit a local government area in Japan to explore best practices and innovative initiatives. Details can be found on the next page.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Local Government Exchange & Cooperation Seminar

Join us for this 7-day seminar offering a unique opportunity to learn about the Japanese local government system and visit a local government area in Japan to explore best practices and innovative initiatives!

The **Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar** aims to promote a deeper understanding of Japanese local governments and their administration. The programme brings together participants from Australia, New Zealand and Japan working in local governments and related organisations to exchange knowledge on current local government challenges and practices.

Please find the details of the upcoming seminar themes below, along with information about **Goka Town** in Ibaraki Prefecture, the host local government of the 2026/2027 Seminar.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE & COOPERATION SEMINAR 2026/2027

Learn from Japanese Local Governments

Building an Attractive and Sustainable City for the Next Generation

DATE

14 Feb (Sun) – 20 Feb (Sat) 2027

LOCATION

Tokyo & Goka Town, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan

DURATION

7 Day Programme



Information and Application



CLAIR
Japan Local Government Centre
(CLAIR, Sydney)

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

DAY 1

- Arrival in Tokyo, Japan
- Programme Orientation

DAY 2

- Briefing on the Japanese local government system
- Welcome Reception and Dinner (Tokyo)

DAY 3-5

- Thematic discussions & site visits (Goka Town, Ibaraki)

DAY 6

- Return to Tokyo
- Free time

DAY 7

- Departure

*Participants may enter and depart from Japan at their own convenience before and after the official Seminar period. However, CLAIR will only cover expenses incurred during the Seminar period.

THEME

Building an Attractive and Sustainable City for the Next Generation
— Challenges of Small Local Governments and the Potential of Industry–Government–Academia Collaboration

ELIGIBILITY

- Local government executives
- Executives of organisations involved in regional promotion or international exchange
- Applicants from national organisations, research institutes, or other relevant organisations may be considered provided their background is relevant to the themes of the Seminar

Up to 4 participants from AU & NZ

COST

✓ COVERED BY CLAIR

- Domestic transportation in Japan
- Accommodation (during the official Seminar period)
- Group attended meals
- Travel insurance in Japan

✗ NOT COVERED

- Roundtrip airfare to Japan
- Personal expenses (e.g. telephone & internet expenses, meals)

FOCUS

- Japanese local government system
- Community-based initiatives for waste management
- Site visits and discussions to learn best practices

CONTACT

 **Japan Local Government Centre**
Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR Sydney)

 Level 13, 115 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

 TEL: +61 2 9241 5033

 E-mail: mailbox@jlgc.org.au

For more information and application
Please scan the QR code or visit our website



Learn more about Goka Town:

- Goka Town's official website: <https://www.town.goka.lg.jp/>



The 15th Annual Manga Kingdom Tottori International Comic Art Contest is now officially accepting entries, including the special 'U-15 Youth Manga Artist Prize' for entrants aged 15 and under. The contest is open to artists worldwide and submissions are accepted in any language! This year's theme is 'Clothing'.

Entries will be accepted until Monday August 31st (JST).

The Grand Prize winner will receive a cash prize of ¥500,000, and selected artists will be invited to Tottori Prefecture for the awards ceremony. Winning works will be compiled into a professionally published collection. Don't miss your chance to be part of this prestigious international celebration of comic art. Get your entries in before the deadline!



15th Annual Manga Kingdom Tottori International Comic Art Contest

Theme
Clothes

Illustration/Toono
11th Selection Committee Award,
12th Merit Award,
13th Grand Prize

Entry Category

- 1 frame manga (1 page)
- 4 frame manga (1-8 pages)
- 4 to 24 page manga story

Submission Period Submissions must be received between
April 20th 2026 and August 31st 2026
(no later than this date).

Grand Prize
500,000 yen 1 work

Merit Award
100,000 yen 2 works

Selection Committee Award
50,000 yen Approximately 3 works

U-15 Youth Manga Artist Prize
(for artists 15 years of age and younger)
prize item (30,000 yen value) Approximately 3 works

[Sponsor / Contact]
Tottori Prefectural Government TEL 0857-26-7238 FAX 0857-26-8307
Manga Kingdom Secretariat E-mail mangaoukoku@pref.tottori.lg.jp
Visit our website for more information.
Manga Kingdom Tottori Search
<https://www.pref.tottori.lg.jp/mangacontest/>



Nipponia nippon: Returning to Japan's Skies After Extinction

No account of the history of nature conservation in Japan would be complete without mentioning the Japanese crested ibis, known as the *toki* in Japanese. It is widely regarded as one of Japan's most symbolic birds, and its scientific name is *Nipponia nippon*.

The toki is a large waterbird measuring about 80 centimetres in length with a wingspan exceeding 130 centimetres. Its plumage is mostly white in colour, and its appearance is somewhat reminiscent of the Australian white ibis, a familiar sight in many Australian cities. The toki's wings and tail feathers have a delicate pinkish hue, and watching it soar through the sky is truly a beautiful sight.

Historically, the species was found across Japan, China, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan. In Japan, the toki once widely inhabited rural areas, wetlands, and other natural environments. However, from the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century, its population declined rapidly due to overhunting for its feathers, agricultural expansion, and a reduction in food sources caused by the widespread use of pesticides.

The habitats that once supported the toki were rich natural environments shared not only by the toki itself but also by a wide variety of other species. For this reason, efforts to protect and breed the toki are still important not only from the perspective of conserving biodiversity, but also in terms of restoring the rich natural environments that once existed throughout Japan. Against this backdrop, Japan began full-scale conservation efforts for the toki around 1970.

A significant development came in 1981, when seven wild toki, previously believed to be extinct, were discovered in China. Conservation and breeding efforts soon began there as well, and in 1999, China presented Japan with a breeding pair of toki, which produced Japan's first captive-bred chick.

Despite these efforts, the last wild-born toki in Japan died in 2003, marking the extinction of the country's wild population.



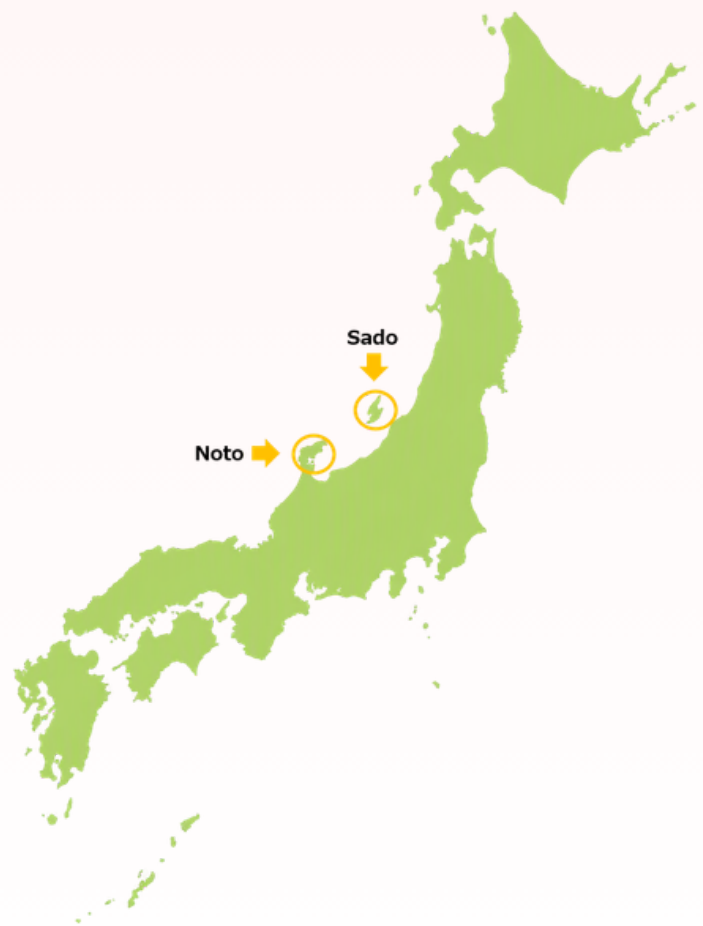
Source: Ministry of the Environment, Japan

However, Japan subsequently established successful captive-breeding techniques and the species also began breeding successfully in the wild in Sado, the last refuge of the species in Japan before its extinction in the wild. Today, the wild population has recovered to an estimated 500 or more individuals, and the toki can once again be seen flying freely, particularly over Sado.

Until recently, captive-bred toki had been released only in Sado. However, because the long-term survival of the species in Japan depends on having populations distributed across multiple regions rather than concentrated in a single area, release efforts have now been extended beyond Sado.

In May 2026, the first release of the toki outside Sado took place in the Noto region of Ishikawa Prefecture. Noto was the last place on the Japanese mainland where the toki survived in the wild until 1970. More than half a century later, many people in Japan have been deeply moved to see the toki flying once again over Noto.

Once lost from Japan's skies, *Nipponia nippon* now flies there again, its beautiful, pink-tinted feathers catching the light. The return of a species once extinct in the wild stands as a testament to decades of dedicated conservation efforts. It also reminds us of the importance of preserving a world in which humans and nature can coexist in harmony for future generations to come.



Source: Ishikawa Prefectural Government



Yuko Mitsunaga
Executive Director