Newsletter







Welcome to **Hitachi City**

Hitachi City is blessed with rich nature and a mild climate, where the Abukuma mountains lie in the west and undulated Pacific coastline can be seen from the east. Since the Meiji period, modern industry mainly in mining and electrical machinery has been developed in the city, making Hitachi one of the leading industrial cities in Japan.

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Welcome to

Hitachi City

Hitachi City has been chosen as one of Japan's 100 best cherry blossom spots, and holds the Hitachi Sakura

Festival every spring, in the midst of rows of cherry blossoms in full bloom, attracting many people.

Another attractive aspect of the city is its easy access, and it only takes 1.5 hours from Tokyo by the Japan Rail Joban Line express train.



Hitachi City has a sister city relationship with Tauranga City in New Zealand and the two cities have been conducting many programs such as alternating official visits by the respective mayoral delegations, student exchange program, and a quilt art exchange program.

There are also active interactions of residents. For example, Girl Scouts of Hitachi City participated in the ceremony in March 2023 to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the sister city relationship.



Last April, a delegation led by the Commission Chair of Tauranga City visited Hitachi City to participate in the 7th Sister City Conference, where attendees including the mayors of both cities discussed about exchanges in different areas including culture, economy and tourism. The conference ended with both cities agreeing to further strengthen the relationship moving forward.





The high school students from Tauranga also visited Hitachi City in October to participate in homestays, school classes and Japanese cultural experiences, and they were able to have deep interaction through these programs. Some of the students were crying when they said their goodbyes to their host families, which reflected the invaluable experience between the residents of both cities. After their return to Tauranga, the students have continued to meet online with the host high schools, and some students are



even considering studying in Hitachi City in the future, indicating the great outcome of the exchange program.

Hitachi City will continue these exchanges so that the bond with Tauranga City will stay strong for many years to come.



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!







Announcement from Fukushima Prefectural Government

Please see the information below about "Fukushima's Revitalisation Today".

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



To clearly communicate "Fukushima's Revitalisation Today" to both domestic and international audiences, the Prefecture has created "Steps for Reconstruction and Revitalisation in Fukushima Prefecture", which summarises the progress and challenges since the Great East Japan Earthquake. We have recently made English, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Korean versions available for overseas visitors in our official website.

This issue's cover features photos related to the revitalisation efforts in litate Village, where the evacuation orders were lifted in most areas in March 2017. Please take a look!

The Fukushima Revitalisation Information Portal Site provides updates on the current status of Fukushima's revitalisation in 10 languages, and "Steps for Reconstruction and Revitalisation 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.

Information in English: https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/.../por.../ayumi-en-15.html
Fukushima Revitalisation Information Portal Site Top Page: https://www.pref.fukushima.lg.jp/site/portal-english/

Announcement from Kanazawa City Government

Please see the information below about the '2025 Kogei World Competition in Kanazawa'.

We are now accepting applications for the '2025 Kogei World Competition in Kanazawa', part of the 6th Triennale of Kogei in Kanazawa!!

The year 2025 marks the 6th 'Triennale of Kogei in Kanazawa'. Held as part of this event, the international '2025 Kogei World Competition in Kanazawa' showcases new innovations in craft (kogei). Applications opened in October 2024! Works that pass the first round of judging, along with award-winning entries, will be exhibited in the People's Gallery of the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, from Saturday, 8 November to Wednesday, 26 November, 2025.

*The information about judges and application is available on the website below.

[Application deadline: 16 April, 2025]

https://kanazawa-kogeitriennale.com/2025/en/



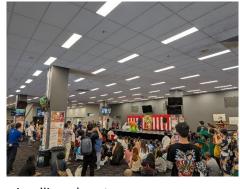


CLAIR Sydney December Activity Report

Matsuri Japan Festival in Sydney (1 Dec)

On Sunday, 1 December, the Matsuri Japan Festival, which celebrates Japanese culture and cross-cultural friendship between the Japanese and Australian people, took place in Sydney. The event was first held in 2006 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Japan and Australia's friendship. Since then, until 2019, it has been an annual favourite of many people and was held for the first time in five years.

Many event attendees enjoyed the Japanese music performances on stage, various Japanese food stalls and Japanese cultural experiences of trying origami, calligraphy, etc.





CLAIR Sydney promoted various regions of Japan by distributing tourism brochures and materials in collaboration with JETRO Singapore Ishikawa Prefecture Division, Nagano Representative Office in Singapore and Hyogo Business & Tourism Centre (HK).

As soon as the doors opened, a large number of people poured in to our booth

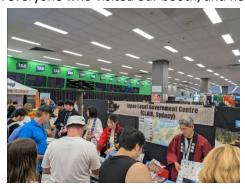
and enjoyed collecting travel information about Japan throughout the

event. Many of those who had visited Japan before told us about their wonderful experiences in Japan and said that they could not wait for their next visit. This reminded us of how much Australians love Japan and that it is one of Australian's most favourite holiday destinations.



We will continue to promote Japan in various places so that local fans will fall in love with Japan even more, and to welcome new fans of Japan.

We sincerely thank everyone who visited our booth, and hope to see you again next year.







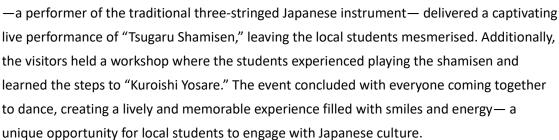


Support Activities for the Kuroishi City Government (2-3 Dec)

On 2 and 3 December, a delegation from Kuroishi City in Aomori Prefecture visited Tyndale Christian School in Blacktown, Australia, to promote youth and cultural exchange. The group included four junior and senior high school students, a shamisen player, and two staff members. Approximately 150 Tyndale students from Year 6 to Year 12 participated in activities centred around "Kuroishi Yosare," one of Japan's three major flowing dances.

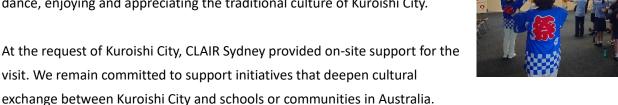


The Kuroishi students performed graceful hand dances and powerful songs of Tsugaru folk music, such as "Tsugaru Jonkara Bushi" and "Tsugaru Aiya Bushi." The shamisen player



On the afternoon of 3 December, a "Kuroishi

Yosare Workshop" was held at the Japan Foundation. The workshop was attended by many participants who were impressed by the Kuroishi students' exceptional skill in both dance and song. Attendees enthusiastically joined the dance, enjoying and appreciating the traditional culture of Kuroishi City.



















Support Activities for Fukuoka Prefecture (4, 5, 9 & 10 Dec)

From the 3rd to the 13th of December, eight selected swimmers from the Fukuoka Swimming Association visited NSW, where they participated in joint training sessions with a local school and competed in the 2024-25 Speedo NSW Senior State Age Championships.

During the joint training, the athletes deepened their connections, and in the competition, the Fukuoka swimmers achieved remarkable success, earning numerous medals.



The visit is based on the Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2023 between the Fukuoka Prefecture, the Fukuoka Swimming Association, and Swimming NSW. CLAIR Sydney received a request from Fukuoka Prefecture to assist them with their activities and accompanied them during some parts of their visit.

We will continue to support and deepen exchanges in the field of sports between Fukuoka Prefecture and NSW. To all the athletes, coaches, and accompanying staffs, *Otsukaresamadeshita!*







Support Activities for Kitakyushu City and Kumamoto City/Kyushu's Triple Delight Dinner: Kitakyushu, Kumamoto and Beppu (12 Dec)

On 12 December, a tourism seminar hosted by Kitakyushu City, Kumamoto City, and Beppu City was held in Sydney. The three cities showcased the attractions of the Kyushu region to approximately 30 local travel agencies. Attendees expressed interest in various destinations, such as the Kawachi Wisteria Garden and Mojiko Retro in Kitakyushu City, as well as Kumamoto Castle and Iaido (sword-drawing) experience in Kumamoto City.



CLAIR Sydney assisted the event by facilitating networking opportunities with travel agencies and gathering information for Kitakyushu and Kumamoto cities.

We will continue to support initiatives aimed at increasing Kyushu's recognition in Australia and attracting tourists to the region.

For Kyushu travel, check out the information here!

Kitakyushu City Tourist Information Website: https://www.gururich-kitaq.com/en/
Kumamoto City Tourism Official Guide: https://kumamoto-guide.jp/en/
Beppu City Official Tourism Site: https://beppu-tourism.com/en/







Support Activities for Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki and Oita in Kyushu Region (13 Dec)

On 13 December, officials from Kyushu region (Fukuoka, Saga, Miyazaki, and Oita Prefecture) visited the CLAIR Sydney office.

The delegation travelled to Sydney to participate in JAPAN EXPO, held on 14 December, to engage with local travel agencies. We exchanged information on the state of Japan-related events in Australia and trends in school trips to Japan.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support Kyushu in its efforts to attract tourists from Australia.

For Kyushu travel, check out the information below! ** ###



VISIT FUKUOKA: https://www.crossroadfukuoka.jp/en
SAGA Trip Genius: https://www.saga-tripgenius.com/
VISIT MIYAZAKI: https://www.discover-oita.com/
Discover Oita: https://www.discover-oita.com/







Japan Expo 2024 (14 Dec)

On Saturday, 14 December 2024, "JAPAN EXPO 2024" was held at Sydney Town Hall, where CLAIR Sydney participated with a booth.

This event, now in its fourth year, serves as a platform to showcase the diverse attractions of Japan, including tourism, local products, arts and culture. This year, approximately 3,000 visitors attended, enjoying 60 booths featured offerings such as Japanese sake, umeshu plum wine, sweets, bento boxes, and promotional materials for travel to Japan. The venue was also enlivened by 20 performances, including karate, dance, piano recitals, and live shows by female idol

groups, creating a vibrant and lively atmosphere.

At the CLAIR Sydney booth, we promoted information about various regions of Japan. Many visitors stopped by, ranging from those actively planning trips to Japan to those considering visiting in the future. We also had the opportunity to engage with many repeated visitors to Japan, reaffirming the high level of interest in and enthusiasm for Japan as a travel destination.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to actively participate in events like this, aiming to further increase interest in Japan and introduce the unique charm of its local regions to a broader audience.





Support Activities for the Nagoya City Government (16 Dec)

On 16 December, officials from Nagoya City visited the City of Sydney to exchange views with Sydney City staff on sister city exchanges, as Nagoya and Sydney prepare to celebrate their 45th anniversary of their sister city relationship next year. They also visited the CLAIR Sydney office to discuss inter-municipal exchanges and related matters.

The CLAIR Sydney office provided support by arranging and attending the visit to Sydney Town Hall, offering the use of our meeting room for discussions with local stakeholders, and temporarily storing promotional materials used for JAPAN EXPO on 14 December.

CLAIR Sydney remains committed to supporting Japanese local governments in their sister city exchange activities.



Support Activities for Fukuoka Prefecture (19-22 Dec)

From 19 to 22 of December, 16 high school baseball players representing Fukuoka Prefecture, visited Blacktown.

The team received a warm welcome from Baseball NSW and enjoyed practicing at the Blacktown International Sports Park, as well as participating in practice games and engaging in exchanges with the NSW representative team.



During the event, an officer from the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, graciously attended and threw the ceremonial first pitch.

The visit was made possible through the MOU signed in August 2023 between Fukuoka Prefecture, the Fukuoka High School Baseball Federation, and Baseball NSW.

CLAIR Sydney remains committed to supporting the ongoing exchange between Fukuoka and Baseball NSW ensuring it continues to thrive for many years to come!







From the Executive Director

New Year Greetings from CLAIR Sydney

On behalf of all the staff at CLAIR Sydney, I would like to wish all our readers a Happy New Year.

Looking back on last year, we believe that exchanges between Japan and Australia/New Zealand have become more active. We had many opportunities to participate in various events, where we reconnected with our partners, reaffirmed our collaborations, and built new networks. In addition, we completed the revision of our publication, the *Local Government of Australia and New Zealand* guidebook, which outlines information about the local government system in the two countries. Through the revision process, we deepened our understanding about these systems once again.

We find it very meaningful to exchange opinions on the differences in systems and policies between Japan and Australia/New Zealand, and we are eager to continue these exchanges. We would appreciate it if you could contact us if you are interested in Japanese local government policies and exchanges. First and foremost, we look forward to your participation in the CLAIR Forum, which will be held in early March.

We hope that you take care of yourself and that you, your family, and the wider communities around you remain well and healthy in 2025.



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