



NEWSLETTER

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

Welcome to Shibetsu City

Shibetsu City, which is located inland in northern Hokkaido, is a rural city rich in nature, with mountains such as Mount Teshio, a prefectural natural park, and the headwaters of the Teshio River, the second longest river in Hokkaido.

Shibetsu City has a population of approximately 17,000 and an area of approximately 1,119 square kilometres, of which approximately 75% is mountain forest.



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The city has a well-developed transportation network and is accessible to Sapporo, the central city of Hokkaido, in about 2.5 hours by car or 2 hours by train.

Shibetsu City has an inland climate with four distinct seasons, and is a heavily snow-covered and cold region with snowfall which starts around mid-November and can reach over 1 metre on the plains and 2 metres on the mountainous areas.

People can enjoy a variety of activities because there are campgrounds and ski resorts that take advantage of the natural surroundings, and various sporting events, such as the Suffolkland Shibetsu Half Marathon.



Blessed with abundant nature, Shibetsu City has developed agriculture and forestry as its core industries.

Shibetsu City produces a wide range of agricultural products, including rice, wheat, buckwheat, potatoes, beans, sugar beets, onions, pumpkins, broccoli, as well as livestock such as dairy cattle, beef cattle, pigs, and chickens.

As a sheep town, the city has been promoting town development with "Suffolk sheep" at its core, and is gaining recognition as a high-grade food product.

Restaurants in the city offer a variety of gourmet dishes using local ingredients, including Genghis Khan (Japanese grilled lamb) with Shibetsu Suffolk Lamb.



Through the common industry of sheep, Shibetsu City and Goulburn in New South Wales, Australia (now Goulburn Mulwaree) formed a sister city affiliation in 1999, and have continued to engage in mutual exchanges such as sending and receiving official delegations and mutual student exchanges.

Construction of the Shibetsu Garden has begun in Goulburn Mulwaree to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the sister city affiliation in 2019.

In conjunction with the visit of the Shibetsu City delegation in 2019, garden stones and garden lanterns for the Shibetsu Garden were sent to Goulburn Mulwaree and the garden is still under construction.

For the mutual student exchanges, high school student visits has started since 2002. Due to COVID-19, exchanges had been suspended since 2020, but they were finally able to resume it this July.

Five high school students visited Goulburn Mulwaree and had valuable experiences through homestays and classes at a local high school.

Shibetsu City values the exchange with Goulburn Mulwaree and hopes to further deepen it in the future.

The two cities will continue to build on the friendship that has developed over the years.



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!



<http://www.ilgc.org.au/international-exchange-2/sister-school-exchange/australia-%E3%83%BBnew-zealand/>

CLAIR Sydney September Activity Report

Matsuri Brisbane 2023 in Queensland (2 Sep 2023)

On Saturday, 2 September, Matsuri Brisbane 2023 was held in the City of Brisbane, the capital of Queensland. The venue was bustling with approximately 70 stalls and booths, attracting over 10,000 attendees.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at this event, promoting various regions of Japan through the distribution of tourism brochures and materials provided in advance by Japanese local governments which have friendly ties with local governments in Queensland.

Several local Japanese residents who visited the booth expressed, "I didn't know that there was a sister city from my hometown prefecture within Queensland," their surprised reactions to the unexpected aspect of their hometown prefecture were quite impressive.

In addition, we had the opportunity to interact with numerous local people who were enthusiastic about gathering information, and they mentioned, "I had only decided to travel to Japan, and I was planning to think about specific destinations later." This experience helped us realise the importance of face-to-face communication.

We will continue to spread information while cooperating with Japanese local governments, supporting those who have an interest in Japan, and ensuring that their visits to Japan become even more meaningful. We brought over 1,000 brochures this time, and they were all popular that we ran out completely'.



South West Japan Festival (9 Sep 2023)

On the 9 September, South West Japan Festival was held in Bunbury, Western Australia. The event was first held in 2018 to celebrate the sister city relationship between Bunbury and Setagaya, Tokyo, and is considered one of the largest Japan-related events in south Perth. With many visitors, there were stalls selling Japan-related goods and snacks, as well as a bonsai exhibition at the venue.

The CLAIR Sydney staff members promoted Japan's various destinations by distributing tourism brochures and through giveaways, both provided in advance by Japanese local governments that have a sister city relation with a local council in Western Australia.

The event started with radio-taisou (a Japanese style warm-up stretch), followed by Japanese drum and sanshin performances. It was impressive to see local people, themselves, spreading Japanese culture. In addition, a local resident who visited our booth said, "We have been hosting Japanese students as host families for many years, and we still keep in touch with some of them." It was a valuable opportunity for us as CLAIR to experience grassroots exchange between Australia and Japan.

We will continue to promote Japan to people in Australia and support local exchanges.



Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood 2023 (9 Sep 2023)

On 9 September, Matsuri Japan Festival in Chatswood 2023, a cultural exchange festival between Australia and Japan, was held at Chatswood Mall.

At the venue, there were a total of 23 booths selling food such as rice balls and curry, and offering origami, flower arrangement, calligraphy, and tea ceremony experiences. The event was crowded with many visitors.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth and conducted a survey regarding travel to Japan. Approximately 300 people visited our booth. We were happy to receive a variety of questions from people who had specific travel plans such as

“I'm planning my first trip to Japan and would like a pamphlet!” and “This is my second trip to Japan and I want to go to a place I've never been before.”

We also asked people “My impression of Japan”, many people gave us delighted answers such as #Amazing #Friendly #Beautiful #Traditional.

We will continue to promote all of Japan in order to strengthen the ties between the people of Japan and Australia and to increase the number of people who are interested in Japan.



Outbound Student Delegation farewelled by Campbelltown Council at a mayoral reception (13 Sep 2023)

On 13 September, 15 students were honoured to be farewelled by Campbelltown Council at a mayoral reception. They will visit their sister city, Koshigaya, Saitama, Japan. The student group presented various performances including songs, dances, and plays.

In July of this year, 15 junior high school students from Koshigaya City visited Campbelltown. The two cities, which established their sister city relationship in 1984, are approaching their 40th anniversary next year.



They were visibly delighted to resume mutual visits after a four-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support sister city exchange by local governments.

Sister City Exchange through Sports, Supporting Nagoya City Marathon Runners (17 Sep 2023)

Nagoya City and Sydney City are sister cities, and in sports the Nagoya City Marathon and the Sydney Marathon are sister marathon events. From 2012, winning runners from each of the two marathons are mutually to run in the sister marathon 8 times by 2019. Due to COVID-19, the exchange had stopped temporarily, however this year, the 9th exchange was achieved for the first time in 4 years.

On 17 September, two runners selected from the Nagoya City Marathon ran at the Sydney Marathon. They respectively participated in the 10km and half marathon, and the next day, the two runners paid a courtesy call at Sydney Town Hall. CLAIR Sydney supported the runners on the day of the marathon, accompanied them to the courtesy call at Sydney Town Hall and supported them for various adjustments.

CLAIR Sydney will continue to support sister city exchange by local governments.



Sakura Matsuri in Cowra (23 Sep 2023)

On 23 September, Sakura Matsuri was held at the Cowra Japanese Garden. Many visitors were attracted to the event by the many Japanese cultural and food booths and stage events such as sumo, shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute) and kyudo (Japanese archery).

CLAIR Sydney promoted cherry blossom spots in various parts of Japan, including Joetsu City in Niigata Prefecture, which has a Peace and Friendship Agreement with Cowra. Some visitors asked us specific questions, such as "I will be traveling to multiple prefectures in late March, when and where should I stay to see the beautiful cherry blossoms?"



The day after the Sakura Matsuri, we participated in Service of Respect at the Cowra War Cemeteries.

We will continue to strive to promote friendly exchanges between the cities wishing for peace and to strengthen the ties between Japan and Australia.



Japan & Friends Day 2023 in Queensland (23 Sep 2023)

On Saturday, 23 September, Japan and Friends Day 2023 was held in the City of Gold Coast, Queensland. This event is a Japan-themed event that has been running for over 20 years, with the purpose of interacting and building friendships with the local community.

CLAIR Sydney ran a booth at this event for the first time, and in line with the event's objective of "making the event serve as a showcase for Japan," we promoted various regions of Japan through the distribution of tourism brochures and materials.

The venue was bustling with approximately 6,000 attendees, and many people visited our booth as well. For Japanese people, the Gold Coast is one of the easiest places to visit in Australia, and many of the locals who visited our booth expressed to be fans of Japan, allowing us to experience the mutual connection between the Gold Coast and Japan.

Among the visitors, there were those who expressed their happiness and appreciation for our booth, saying, "We are delighted that you brought tourism information from various parts of Japan to the Gold Coast." We will continue to promote Japan in various places so that local fans of Japan will fall in love with Japan even more and also so that we can increase the number of new fans of Japan.



From the Executive Director

Sister Cities Australia 2023 National Conference

On 12 October, the Sister Cities Australia 2023 National Conference was held in Wyndham, Victoria. Over 100 representatives from Australian local governments, sister city committees, and relevant organisations participated in this conference. This year's theme was 'Linking the World Together', which I thought was timely, as it was the first face-to-face conference in four years after the COVID-19 pandemic. At the conference, topics such as examples of outstanding sister city exchanges, engagement of the younger generation, and the benefits of sister city exchanges were shared. We believed these topics were very interesting. We would like to express our respect for the efforts of all the SCA executives and everyone involved.

CLAIR Sydney promoted sister city relationships between Japan and Australia, and our Japanese local government support activities at the information table. We also exchanged opinions with the participants. The question that left an impression on me was, "Please tell us about good examples of sister city exchanges." I think people are trying to look for new methods of exchanges after COVID-19.

As you may know, according to a survey we did in 2021, when compared to other sister city relationships around the world, there was a much larger percentage of student exchange through sister city activities between Australia and Japan. Since this year, more face-to-face educational exchange programs have resumed, such as mutual student visits between sister cities. My personal opinion is that one way of future exchanges is to cooperate in dealing with administrative challenges. For example, as I reported at last newsletter, Osaka City does initiatives of city development based on sister city exchanges.

We believe that exchanges between local governments will become more active in the future, so we would like to understand and share examples of sister city exchanges.

For further information:

- Official website: <https://www.jlgc.org.au>
- Facebook:  CLAIR Sydney
<https://www.facebook.com/clair.syd/>

Website



Facebook

