

## The JENESYS Program fostering understanding — Australian university students visit Tokyo and Tohoku, Japan

The Japan East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths Program, referred to as the 'JENESYS' program<sup>1</sup>, is now in its fifth year. JENESYS is a Japanese Government program, and since its inception in January 2007, its goal has been to foster links between young people in East Asia and thereby stronger solidarity among East Asian Summit member states (ASEAN plus Australia, China, India, New Zealand and the ROK).



Lisa Huxley, Emily Child and Dr Rowena Ward at the University of Wollongong [left to right]

Japan on the program. Some participants had been to Japan before; for others it was the first time to Japan or to travel overseas. Their short but intensive schedule included lectures on culture, economics and Australia-Japan relations held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters and the Australian Embassy in Tokyo. They had the chance to interact with Japanese people including university students. Participants also took part in

UOW, led the group during the trip to Japan<sup>2</sup>.

Both Lisa and Emily appear to have enjoyed their time on the program, gaining new knowledge and perhaps more importantly greater interest in Japan.

Emily was pleased to have seen something of Japan's agricultural side. Her trip included visiting a restaurant business which sources its lamb exclusively from Armidale in NSW.



JENESYS participants in Japan

Dr Ward too was impressed by students' volunteer activities at the small university of 1,200 students she visited in Iwate. Among their initiatives was to make items such as keychain decorations from the wood of a tree felled by the disaster and to sell these knick-knacks to raise money to help others.

When asked what could have been done better, both Emily and Lisa would have appreciated more time. In particular, a longer home stay was wished for. Lisa also expressed regret that the visit to Tokyo's Edo Museum wasn't longer.

Return trips to Japan seem to be on the horizon for both Lisa and Emily, and interestingly, their contact with Japanese and Australian officials involved in foreign affairs has made them consider this as a possible career option.

Another of the benefits gained from the program was the opportunity for participants to meet like-minded Australian university students.

It is hoped that this type of exchange will not only help participants gain knowledge to help them with their studies and future aims, but that they will also share their experiences with family and friends. Having spoken to Emily and Lisa, it would seem that JENESYS is on the right track.

1. JENESYS is pronounced as for 'Genesis'.
2. Dr Ward was invited to take part in the program after all the students had been selected.

The JENESYS scheme has evolved to include several exchange programs—programs for high school students learning Japanese, for teachers of Japanese, for young business people and for university students studying Japanese—each with a slightly different focus to suit the needs and interests of the groups.

One of the programs to take place in December 2011 was the **JENESYS Invitation Programme for Japanese-Learning Students at Australian Universities**. This exchange program aims to deepen understanding of Japan among young Australians who are strongly interested in strengthening relations with Japan and who will assume greater responsibilities within society in coming years.

From 6 to 14 December, a total of 45 Australian university students visited

an overnight home stay.

Apart from Tokyo, the schedule took them to Tohoku where they were able to see areas affected by the 11 March 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster with their own eyes. (Note: students were aware of this when they applied.) Divided into two groups based on language skills, basic and advanced, one group went to Iwate and the other to Miyagi, two of the coastal prefectures most heavily devastated by the disaster.

### So what did participants think of the program?

In January, *Japan Reports* had the opportunity to speak with two of the participants in this year's program—Ms Emily Child and Ms Lisa Huxley, both from the University of Wollongong. Dr Rowena Ward, also of

When her group visited a coastal town in Iwate, she was struck by the townscape of concrete bases, all that remained of buildings, and by how much of the town still had to be rebuilt.

On this point, Lisa's experience was quite different; she was impressed by how much new housing she saw in Ishinomaki in Miyagi. Her group visited a Kirin beer factory where production was greatly disrupted by the disaster. She said this gave her an idea how much companies and their workers had pulled together after the disaster.

Throughout the Tohoku leg of the trip it seems that participants were moved by what they saw and the experiences that others shared with them. For example, they learnt how people had volunteered to do what they could.

## Results of the 29th Australia-Japan Relations Essay Contest

**NSW students win first prize in Junior A and B divisions**

**NSW school named Australian School of the Year**

**Congratulations** to **Ms Erica Zhou** for winning first prize for her entry in the Junior A division for Years 7 and 8 students and to **Mr Vincent Ching** for his first-prize-winning essay in the Junior B division for Years 9 and 10 students.

Congratulations, too, to **North Sydney Girls' High School** for being named the Australian School of the Year. New South Wales' schools have continued their strong performance in the competition.

And to all students who received outstanding and highly commended prizes, congratulations!

### Thank you

The Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney would like to thank all students and teachers who participated in the 29th Australia-Japan Relations Essay Contest.

The Australia-Japan Relations Essay Contest is conducted annually by the Embassy and Consulates-General of Japan in Australia. The Consulate hopes the knowledge students gained writing their essays will contribute to the mutual understanding and respect between the Australian and Japanese people.

### Prize Winners

An **awards ceremony** will be held for NSW prize winners during Term 1 in early March 2012 (TBC). All prize winners receive plaques, certificates and prizes in recognition of their achievement.

The **Junior A winner** and the **School of the Year** will receive \$300 and \$400 worth of books respectively. The **Junior B** winner wins a return ticket\* to Japan courtesy of **Japan Airlines** and three nights' accommodation in Tokyo and a Japan Rail Pass courtesy of **JTB Australia**.

\*exclusive of taxes

### PRIZE WINNERS — NSW

#### JUNIOR A (Years 7 & 8)

First Place      Erica Zhou, North Sydney Girls' High School

Outstanding      Bora Hyoung, North Sydney Girls' High School

Highly Commended      Julie Cao, North Sydney Girls' High School

Melissa Chu, North Sydney Girls' High School

Teagan Fisher, St Columba's High School

Sarah Li, North Sydney Girls' High School

Ms Grace Liu, North Sydney Girls' High School

#### JUNIOR B (Years 9 & 10)

First Place      Vincent Ching, Penrith High School

Highly Commended      Vysh Anura, North Sydney Girls' High School

Anita Niu, North Sydney Girls' High School

Vivian QingYu Zhang, North Sydney Girls' High School

SENIOR (Years 11 & 12)      Sarah Webster, Cecil Hills High School

Outstanding      North Sydney Girls' High School NSW

### SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

North Sydney Girls' High School NSW



### Letters to the Editor

The Editor of *Japan Reports* welcomes any comments and suggestions you may have.

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