

Young Australian Businesspeople in Japan on JENESYS FBC.AU

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Reasons for applying and previous experience of Japan

Ms Colleen Lum, Vodafone Hutchison Australia

It was not the first time for Ms Lum to visit Japan. Since her first trip when she was 16, she has loved Japan and visited regularly, including time as a working holiday maker. She harbours a desire to return to Japan one day to pursue work or even start her own business. She applied for JENESYS as a step to help her along this path.

Mr Mitch Garth, studying finance and law at the University of Sydney

For Mr Garth it was his sixth time to Japan having travelled and done a six-month language course in Kanagawa. He would also like to make his career in Japan, and he was “excited by the prospect of meeting young Australians who were interested in Japan from a business and economic perspective”.

Mr Lean Soh, Northern Territory Government

The JENESYS study tour was the first time Mr Soh had been to Japan. He described his motivation for applying as follows: “I wanted to gain a better understanding of Japan, its people, society, economy and place in the world. Japan is a major investor in the Northern Territory, particularly with the signing of the INPEX LNG project, my hope through this program is to better understand our Japanese friends and facilitate further cultural and economic links between Japan, Australia and the Northern Territory.”

Did they find the lectures valuable?

The lectures, for content and presenters, seemed to be evaluated as being highly relevant and interesting. The opportunity to hear information pertinent to Japan and Japan-Australia was appreciated by the three. Ms Lum valued the “great mix of different people and organisations” the participants heard from. Mr Garth said that the lectures strengthened his knowledge of economic issues as seen from a Japanese perspective. Mr Soh found the lectures which “discussed Japan’s current place in the world, various reforms being undertaken and recovery efforts in the tsunami-struck region” to be particularly valuable.

Visit to the Tohoku region

“Heart-wrenching” [Soh], “confronting” [Garth] and “eye-opening” and unforgettable [Lum] were the direct responses. Despite the devastation they observed at Minami Sanriku, Ms Lum was still able to be “amazed by how beautiful Minami Sanriku is – with beautiful views and ocean, and deeply saddened to think about how beautiful the town must have been before the tsunami.” The first-hand accounts they heard from local survivors had a great impact. Mr Garth admired “their strength during such difficult circumstances” and Mr Soh said he believed that “the inherent resilience of the Japanese people will triumph”. Ms Lum also wrote: “I was amazed to see how positive [the two local ladies who spoke to us about the tsunami] were and how much they look forward to the future. I will definitely visit Tohoku again and I hope others will do too because Tohoku still needs everyone’s support.”

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Colleen Lum

Benefits from their participation

Increased understanding of business in Japan and economic relations between Australia and Japan was mentioned by all three. Mr Soh wrote: “The most interesting observation from the program was the constant need for reform, both in Japan and the rest of the world to stay abreast of an ever changing international environment.” Mr Garth reported that the greatest benefit to him was that he now feels “confident and inspired to pursue a career in Japan”. Ms Lum wants to study more Japanese language and culture now that she has a “great motivation to return for either work or holiday”.

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Lean Soh

So, do they see themselves returning to Japan soon?

Happily, all three would like to do so. In fact, Ms Lum had already planned a holiday in Japan when *Japan Reports* contacted her; Mr Garth had teed up an internship with an Australian lawyer based in Tokyo; and Mr Soh told us he would like to visit southern Japan.

Japan Reports would like to thank Mr Garth, Ms Lum and Mr Soh for their contributions.