

Attachment A

**Report on International Travel – Nagoya
Festival and 45th Anniversary Sister City
Celebrations – Nagoya, Japan**

Report on International Travel – Nagoya, Japan



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1. Executive Summary

Council endorsed Councillor Kok and Councillor Gannon to represent the Lord Mayor at the Nagoya Festival to be held in Nagoya, Japan from 17 to 19 October 2025. The visit coincided with the 45th anniversary of the Sydney–Nagoya sister city relationship, first established in 1980, and provided an opportunity to strengthen civic, cultural and educational ties between the two cities.

During the visit, Councillor Kok and Councillor Gannon participated in a range of official engagements with representatives of the City of Nagoya and members of the Sydney–Nagoya Sister City Committee. Key activities included a Courtesy Call hosted by the Mayor of Nagoya, Ichiro Hirosawa, and a Tree Planting Ceremony where the City of Sydney's official gift of four Banksia trees was presented to mark the enduring connection between the two cities. The visit also included a tour of the Koala House at Higashiyama Zoo, highlighting the longstanding collaboration between Taronga Zoo and Higashiyama Zoo, which forms part of the broader sister city relationship.

The delegation also attended a Welcome Reception hosted by Mayor Hirosawa alongside representatives from Nagoya's other sister cities, including Los Angeles, Mexico City, Nanjing and Turin. These engagements reinforced the importance of international friendships, people-to-people exchange, and cultural cooperation between cities.

Councillor Kok and Councillor Gannon also represented the City of Sydney at the Nagoya Festival, an annual cultural celebration held around Hisaya-odori Park and Nagoya Castle that showcases traditional performances, parades and local cultural heritage. As part of the festival program, Councillor Kok delivered remarks highlighting the significance of the long-standing student exchange programs between Sydney and Nagoya, acknowledging the schools that have participated and encouraging continued participation by young people from both cities.

The visit reaffirmed the strength and longevity of the Sydney–Nagoya sister city relationship and highlighted opportunities to continue deepening cooperation in the lead up to the 50th anniversary of the partnership in 2030.

2. Nagoya and City Sister City Relationship

Sydney and Nagoya established a sister city relationship in 1980. In 2025, the cities marked the 45th anniversary of this partnership. Since its inception, the relationship has supported staff trainee secondments and reciprocal visits by school rugby union teams, bands and dance ensembles. The City of Sydney also supports student exchange agreements between educational authorities and participates in the sister zoo partnership between Taronga Zoo and Nagoya's Higashiyama Zoo.

The visit commenced with a Courtesy Call hosted by the Mayor of Nagoya, Ichiro Hirosawa. In attendance were Councillors Gannon and Kok, Mr Omasu Yamanaka, Consul-General of Japan, Mr Warwick Miller (Chair, Sydney–Nagoya Sister City Committee), and Mrs Geri Miller (Member, Sydney–Nagoya Sister City Committee). The City of Sydney's official gift to the City of Nagoya was four Banksia trees, which were later planted during a Tree Planting Ceremony (**Figure 1**).

At the Courtesy Call, Councillor Kok reflected on several memorable milestones in the relationship between the two cities. These included the dedication of the Nagoya Gardens in Hyde Park and the koalas sent from Taronga Zoo to Higashiyama Zoo to commemorate the connection between the cities. Councillor Kok also acknowledged that much of the success of the relationship can be attributed to the work of the Sydney–Nagoya Sister City Committee, whose members foster strong people-to-people connections between the cities.

During the day, the delegation visited the Koala House at Higashiyama Zoo and was guided by Deputy Director Mr Yasuo Shiraki. (**Figure 2**)



Figure 1 Tree Planting Ceremony



Figure 2 Cr Kok and Cr Gannon at the Koala House

In the evening, Mayor Hirose hosted a Welcome Reception. **(Figure 3)** Approximately 30 representatives from the City of Los Angeles were also in attendance, as Los Angeles is another of Nagoya's sister cities alongside Mexico City, Nanjing and Turin. Guests were treated to a buffet-style reception featuring food from each of these cities. Geri Miller of the Sydney–Nagoya Sister City Committee kindly played the piano, which was enjoyed by attendees.

Councillor Kok delivered a speech and explained the significance of the Banksia trees planted earlier in the day. He emphasised the importance of friendships and strong ties between nations, particularly during times of global instability. He noted that people gain greater understanding and respect for one another through direct engagement and cultural exchange.

Exchanges have included collaborations between Taronga Zoo and Higashiyama Zoo, staff visits between the two city administrations, and participation by marathon runners in each other's events. The cities have also hosted school rugby teams, athletes, musical groups and dance troupes.

Australians have a strong affinity with Japan, with nearly one million Australians visiting Japan in the last calendar year. Councillor Kok encouraged guests to visit Sydney and experience all that the city has to offer.

In a letter dated 5 December 2025, Mayor Ichiro Hirose noted that the next major milestone in the relationship will be the 50th anniversary of the sister city partnership. He expressed his hope for continued cooperation between the two cities to further strengthen the bond in the lead-up to this occasion.



Figure 3 Cr Kok, Mayor Hirose and Cr Gannon at the Welcome Reception.

3. Nagoya Festival

The following two days of the trip were spent attending the Nagoya Festival.

The Nagoya Festival is held annually in October, with the main events taking place around Hisaya-odori Park and Nagoya Castle. The festival typically includes parades, traditional performances and cultural exhibitions.

First held in 1955, the festival aims to bring colour to Nagoya's autumn season. The festival's main spectacle is the Hometown Heroes Parade, in which the three great warrior figures of Japan's Warring States period with ties to Aichi Prefecture—Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu—march through the streets accompanied by an armour-clad entourage. In addition to the procession, parade floats representing historical traditions and designated municipal cultural properties appear alongside sacred music and traditional dances.

Councillor Kok delivered a speech at the festival reflecting on the long-standing Sydney–Nagoya Sister City relationship and the many exchanges between the two cities over the years (Figure 4). He highlighted the school exchange programs that many students from both Sydney and Nagoya have participated in over the years. He acknowledged the schools involved in these exchanges, including Kikuzato High School, Kita High School, Koyo High School, Meito High School, Midori High School and Sakuradai High School. He encouraged students to take part in exchange programs, noting that they provide valuable opportunities to learn about life in Australia and to form lifelong friendships.



Figure 4 Cr Kok delivered speech at the festival

