

SUTHERLAND SHIRE – CHUO JAPAN SISTER CITIES STUDENT CULTURAL PROGRAM INFORMATION BOOKLET FOR TRAVEL TO JAPAN

**APPLICATIONS TO TRAVEL TO JAPAN WILL CLOSE
AT 9:00PM SUNDAY APRIL 12**



Thank you for your interest in the Sister City Cultural student program to Japan. This booklet aims to recap and summarise the information on the website before you start with the Application documents.

There are a few forms in the Application to Travel Package. Please don't let that put you off in any way. As a program taking students overseas we do need many permission forms and signatures on agreements. It is for your safety and security.

There are pages of information here as well. We hope it will provide a better understanding of the Program and what it would mean to be selected as an Ambassador representing Sutherland Shire on this fantastic trip to Japan.

If you have any concerns about the documents please call the President of the Association, Joel Johnson on 0423 965 360 or the Secretary Gaye Tie on 0438015962, or email sutherland.chuo@gmail.com.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM ALL ABOUT?

The Sutherland Shire - Chuo City Sister City Student Program aims to reconnect students with their own community as well as fostering understanding and friendship between Sutherland Shire and our Sister City of Chuo-ku. It offers participants the opportunity to not settle for visiting like a tourist but instead to be part of the life and culture of Chuo-ku, Tokyo and Japan.

Students who are selected to participate in the program will be representing not only themselves, their family and their school, but the Sutherland Shire and Australia as Young Ambassadors. The program is a lot of fun, and you will see many exciting places and sights, however the program as a Sister City Cultural program involves not only engagement with your own community and the community of Chuo City, Tokyo but a responsibility to do so with personal integrity, cultural sensitivity, social awareness and community participation.

The most powerful force in the promotion of international understanding and peace is exposure to different cultures. The Sister City youth program provides students with the opportunity to meet people from other lands and to experience their cultures.

.....and we DO still have lots of fun!



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria for student participation are that applicants must be:

- A student living in Sutherland Shire and enrolled in Year 7 - Year 11 at any High school at the closing date for applications
- and/or
- A student living outside Sutherland Shire but enrolled in Year 7 - Year 11 at any Sutherland Shire High School at the closing date for applications
- and/or
- A student living outside Sutherland Shire and enrolled in Year 7 - Year 11 at any High School outside the Shire but who can demonstrate a **significant** link with Sutherland Shire at the closing date for applications

APPLICATIONS

The last day for submitting application documents for the 2026 Sutherland Shire – Chuo Japan Sister City Student program to Japan is **9:00pm Sunday 12th April**.

The application form is:

- To provide information about the applicant. It is important that this part of the application is completed in its entirety.
- To provide School referee details with copies of school reports
- To give the selection panel an insight to the applicant's reasons for applying for the Sister City cultural program to Japan. This information (if the application is successful) will be forwarded to Chuo-ku, Japan.

After receipt of applications, the applicants and their parents will be contacted by email or telephone regarding the selection process for 2026.

SELECTION PROCESS:

1) **PHONE CALL:** After submitting application documents and receiving our email we ask that the student applicant please call the Committee for a chat about the program.

2) **THE SELECTION GROUP ASSESSMENT AND INTERVIEW:**

All applicants and families will be advised the date for the Selection Group Assessment and Individual Interviews.

At the interview session the student applicants will engage in various group activities. In these sessions applicants will be asked to interact in large and small groups and to achieve set tasks.

Each applicant will also have an individual interview with a Selection panel. At this interview the selection panel will ask the student questions covering various aspects of local and national interest, cultural awareness and reactions to situations. Parents will be asked questions pertaining to their understanding of the program and regarding the student's preparation.

Parent Interview: Parents will also be interviewed

CRITERIA: When selecting participants, the selection panel will consider:

- the student's application form
- Whether the family applied to Host
- any involvement in community activities and/or organisations
- telephone conversation with the coordinator
- School references and reports
- **personal appearance**
- initiative demonstrated in the application process
- engagement with peers, attitude and strengths / weaknesses demonstrated in the Interview session group activities e.g. cooperative skills, leadership, mentoring of peers, communication skills, ability to focus on and complete tasks
- responses and attitude during the individual interview demonstrating maturity, independence, genuine interest in Japan and an understanding of the program
- demonstrated knowledge about Sutherland Shire and the ability to communicate that knowledge effectively
- demonstrated understanding of the responsibility of representing their school and Sutherland Shire
- willingness to ensure attendance at preparation classes
- questions prepared to ask the interview panel to demonstrate an understanding of the program
- Parental interview - as the parent interview will also be taken into consideration in the selection process.
- School referees may be contacted before or after the interview.

IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS:

It is essential that parents are aware of important information issued at each of the following events:

- 1) The interview at Sutherland Shire Council
- 2) An Information evening on a date to be advised
- 3) Further Parent Information sessions as the preparation progresses (dates to be advised)

For this reason it is expected that at least one parent attends each of these meetings and parents must play an active role in seeking accurate information about the program.

LEGAL ASPECTS:

Sutherland Shire – Chuo Japan Sister City Association Inc. will require the parents' and student's acceptance of:

- 1) Both students and Parents' signed acceptance of a Conduct Contract
- 2) Parents' acceptance of an Indemnity Form

By signing these agreements parents and applicants are agreeing to full participation in the program and that they understand all instructions relating to acceptable behaviour and requirements whilst participating in the Program.

PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT TO JAPAN:

Between 5 and 12 students will be selected to visit Japan for 15-18 days around the NSW school holidays at the end of Term 3. The dates will depend upon the availability of airline tickets. Dates will be advised to successful students and families as soon as possible.

PASSPORTS:

To enter Japan, students will require a passport that is valid for six months after their arrival date in Japan. Any student not holding a valid passport should apply for one as soon as possible after their selection. Any students not travelling on an Australian passport or unsure about their passport validity should contact the Committee.

FLIGHTS AND INITIAL FEE PAYMENT:

The Sutherland Sister City Association Inc. will be responsible for the booking of airline tickets and families will be advised when their balance payments are due. Flights will be booked with a reputable airline, and the exact airlines will depend on cost and availability. Owing to current booking arrangements with the airline, fares have often had to be paid quickly to secure the booking. For this reason, once a student is selected:

1. a copy of his/her passport must be provided so that names can be accurately entered on the booking form *(if you don't have a passport we will need full name as is shown on your birth Certificate)*
2. a \$2000 initial payment will be required within 7 days of acceptance into the program *(depending on ticketing rules and cost of tickets part or all of this will be non-refundable)*

The remainder of the costs will be payable in 2 installments approximately 4 weeks apart.

TRAVEL INSURANCE:

Travel Insurance must be organised by families and a copy of the Cover supplied to the Escorts.

EXTRA COSTS:

Students must also meet their own incidental costs for their visit to Japan. These costs may include: costs of passport, gifts for host families, a few lunches while traveling in Japan, any excess baggage fees incurred, gifts/souvenirs to bring home and pocket money.

CULTURAL PREPARATION CLASSES:

All students accepted into the student program are required to attend a series of Preparation classes about Chuo-ku and Japan. These classes are held one weekday afternoon and either Saturday or Sunday afternoons (negotiable with the group), for 7-8 weeks prior to departure. Class times may interfere with other commitments of the students and each family should make arrangements to minimise absences. The aim of these information sessions is to prepare the students for visiting and living in Japan so that they may gain an understanding and respect for the Japanese culture and lifestyle.

The sessions will inform the students about the everyday lifestyle of Japan such as food, household arrangements, bathroom facilities and most importantly the difference between Australian and Japanese culture. What we consider to be acceptable in Australia may not be considered acceptable in Japan.

These sessions will also ensure that the students are prepared to undertake their role as young ambassadors of Sutherland Shire. Therefore it is important that the students know about their city and their country in order to answer questions which may be asked during their visit.

EXTRAS

GIFTS: It is a normal protocol for students to follow Japanese custom and take a gift for each member of the host family. Host family's information will be provided once available.

INCIDENTALS: Chuo City normally pays for entry and travel fees for students during activities organised by Chuo City. However students are expected to pay for their own incidental expenses, such as snacks and souvenirs at these events.

EXCESS BAGGAGE: If students depart Japan with excess baggage it is important to have enough money (in Japanese currency) to pay for any extra charges. The current cost of extra baggage from Japan is approximately US\$30 – US\$75 per kg or part kilo or US\$240 for one extra piece of luggage.

CLOTHING STANDARDS

This is always a big issue for participating students and sometimes it has been difficult for some parents to understand why the program has clothing rules.

One noticeable difference between Australia and Japan is their acceptable dress code for young teenagers. Australians are inclined to wear casual dress unless formal events are specified. However the reverse is more common in Japan.

More information will be given to successful applicants, however parents and students are required to at all times accept and follow the advice and requirements for culturally appropriate clothing for the trip to Japan as specified by the Sutherland Shire – Chuo Japan Sister City Association Inc.

At various official functions both before departure and in Tokyo, Mayors and Civic Officials will be present and full school uniform is to be worn (a detailed explanation will be provided for successful applicants). ***IF YOUR SCHOOL DOESN'T HAVE A UNIFORM this doesn't mean you can't apply.*** Please contact the Committee and together we can work out a solution. At all other times the students are together the Sutherland Shire – Chuo Sister City uniform of Sister City polo shirt and black trousers or shorts (school style trousers /long length shorts) will be worn.

As mentioned above it is necessary for successful students to understand the importance of attending preparation classes and information sessions prior to their departure. The people of Japan will see the students not just as tourists but as Ambassadors for both Sutherland Shire and Australia. These classes will greatly assist the students - and families - to understand the Japanese culture in depth. Students will also gain a greater understanding of acceptable behaviour and clothing and ways of interacting with the Japanese in order to avoid embarrassing their hosts. What is acceptable in Australia is often not acceptable in Japan.

PHONE & INTERNET USAGE:

The Sutherland Shire Sister City Association Inc. adheres to all Federal and State regulations regarding the use of digital devices and access to social media. We also adhere to New South Wales Department of Education regulations and guidelines for use of mobile phones and digital devices. There are a few rules to follow on the program regarding Internet and internet devices. These will be explained more fully during the interview process.

FINALLY

We hope you will continue with your interest in this program and submit your application documents. Past students have praised the program as not only a wonderful cultural and educational experience but a great time as well! They have loved their homestay experience and being at school. It is amazing to become an honorary member of a Japanese family and most students maintain their links with their host families for many years after returning home.

This is a wonderful opportunity. We look forward to hearing from you

