A reluctant ‘sayonara’ for visitors

Farah Aburahman

The past year has seen Japan endure much devastation but in light of recent tragedy, Aussies, in true fashion, have united to show our Pacific neighbours that we are a friend in times of need.

Thomas Hassall High School at Middleton Grange last week welcomed 24 students and seven teachers from the Fukuroi High School in the Shizuoka Province — 100 kilometres south-west of Tokyo.

Yuki Nenburi, 17, who will graduate later this year, said this was the first time she had travelled outside Japan.

“It’s such a wonderful experience to be here — I love it,” she said.

“I didn’t know what to expect coming to Australia but so far I have met many people and made lots of friends.

“I would definitely come back.”

During their stay, the students receive one week of intense English training and live with a host family.

Thomas Hassall’s resident Japanese teacher Michelle Bainbridge said the buddy program offered a great opportunity for the students to make friends from another country and learn about a different culture.

“When you have someone stay with you, you form such a strong bond with that person,” she said.

“It encourages our students to want to learn more and develop their interest in learning a new language.

“Our students have been hosting for many years and we’ve kept a strong relationship with their buddy for years.”

Thomas Hassall farewell their visitors last Thursday with a scavenger hunt before they headed to the Blue Mountains for some rest and recuperation before returning to Japan.

Konichiwa: Thomas Hassall High School welcomed 24 exchange students from Japan last week. Pictured from left are Jay Gaard, Hironori Sugita, Danielle French and Yuki Nenburi.

Picture: Luke Fuda