

Remarks by Mr Sumio Kusaka, Ambassador of Japan
Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme 30th Anniversary and
2017 JET Programme Farewell Reception
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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen

To all new JETs, JET Programme alumni, university professors, and members of the Department of Education and Training and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, my wife Ikuko and I are delighted to host you all this evening to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme as well as farewell the 8 new JET participants from Canberra.

The JET Programme was launched in 1987 with 848 participants from the U.S., U.K., New Zealand and Australia in an effort to promote international exchange in not just classrooms but local communities as well. Now in its 30th year, some 65,000 people from 65 countries have participated making it one of the world's largest and most successful exchange programs.

As I look around the room this evening, I see many former JETs who have formed strong ties with Japan and its people. Many of you have continued to work as bridges between Japan and Australia, putting your experiences to use in various fields, from government organisations and Japanese companies to education, academia and cultural pursuits.

Even in the times of tragedy, many JET participants and alumni from all over the world have banded together to show their support. In the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, many of you expressed your support for the disaster stricken areas and for Japan as a whole by volunteering and contributing to charity relief funds.

We even had new JET participants who volunteered to be assigned to the disaster areas because they wanted to support and encourage Japan in its time of hardship. In this way, the bonds participants forge with Japan and its people extend far beyond the original expectations of the Programme to what we can now proudly call 'friendship'.

I feel very fortunate to have this unique opportunity to express my personal appreciation to all of you for supporting and participating in the JET Programme over the past 30 years. Through your active participation in JETAA or even by simply sharing your JET experience as well as your love and knowledge of Japan with people around you, you continue to play a pivotal role in further expanding the reach of the JET Programme worldwide.

In addition, I would like to thank all of the Australian universities, university professors and members of Australian government departments for their support for the JET Programme over the past 30 years. May this milestone mark the beginning of a new chapter in the JET Programme as we strive to contribute to a better future for Japan and the rest of the world.

To the departing JET participants of 2017 from Canberra, I congratulate you on being selected to participate on the Programme. The JET Programme is one of the most popular international exchange programs in the world and thus one of the most competitive. I commend you for your hours of study and diligent work in getting to this point and for your enthusiastic interest in Japan.

At the moment, you may be feeling a bit nervous about what awaits you in Japan, but please let me assure you that many Japanese school children, community members and local officers are eagerly awaiting your arrival and will help you adjust to your new life in the communities you will call home.

You will be making great contributions to their understanding of the English language, Australian culture and the world outside Japan. Your presence is sure to inspire your students to broaden their horizons and to learn more about life in other countries, much like you will be doing as a JET participant.

You will be setting examples as representatives of Australia while immersing yourself in Japanese culture, language, food, its natural beauty and the generous hospitality of the people.

As Japanese companies look to expand their reach globally and adopt an international approach, it is becoming more evident than ever how significant the JET Programme is in preparing younger generations for a more multicultural and outward-looking Japan.

Furthermore, the JET Programme is playing an important role at a local level as Japan welcomes an increasing level of foreign visitors each year and leads up to hosting the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

In closing, to former JET participants and JETAA, I am sure tonight will allow you to reflect and reminisce about your time in Japan and to reconnect with fellow alumni. I thank you for your invaluable support and most of all, friendship. And to our 8 new JET participants from Canberra, there are so many wonderful things ahead of you in Japan. I wish you a very profound and enjoyable experience while on the JET Programme and bid you a very fond farewell.

Thank you.