

Ambassador's Message No.46 (30th Anniversary of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme)

21 July 2017

Dear friends,

On Thursday 6 July, I hosted a reception at my residence to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme and bid farewell to the 8 new JET Programme participants from Canberra. This reception was cohosted by the JET Alumni Association of Canberra (JETAA Canberra).

The JET Programme is a Japanese government initiative that invites university graduates to Japan to work as Assistant Language Teachers, Coordinators of International Relations and Sports Exchange Advisors in kindergartens, elementary, and junior and senior high schools, boards of education, and local government offices.



The JET Programme was launched in 1987 with 848 participants from the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia in an effort to promote international exchange in not just classrooms but in local communities as well. Now in its 30th year, some 65,000 people from 65 countries, including approximately 4,000 Australians have participated making it one of the world's largest and most successful exchange programs.

At the reception, I was delighted to welcome a large number of former JET Programme participants, university professors, officials from the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) Sydney, and members from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Education and Training.

In my speech, I expressed my sincere gratitude to everyone who has supported the JET Programme over the last 30 years. I shared my thoughts on how the experiences in Japan by JET Programme participants will make a great contribution to the relationship between Japan and Australia in the future. I also encouraged the new JET Programme participants who are about to embark on their journey to continue to be a bridge between our two countries in a professional capacity upon completing the Programme.



With the JET participants this year

JET Programme participants from all over the world have great interest in Japan and after returning to their home countries, many have gone onto putting their experiences to use in various fields, such as government, education, academia, media, and Japanese businesses and organisations as well as art and cultural pursuits. Many have also chosen to maintain their connection with Japan as members of JET Programme alumni associations (JETAA). At present, there are 53 JETAA chapters in 16 countries where members continue being a bridge between their country and Japan by promoting Japanese culture and the JET Programme. 5 JETAA chapters have been established in Australia and each chapter has made significant contributions to grass-roots exchange with Japan.



Delivering speech at the reception



With all the participants at the reception

Even in the times of tragedy, many JET Programme 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 them expressed their support for the disaster stricken areas and for Japan as a whole by volunteering and contributing to charity relief funds. Every year since 2012, JETAA Canberra has kindly cohosted a memorial service in the Canberra Nara Peace Park with the Canberra Japan Club and the Australia-Japan Society

(ACT) Inc. to remember the victims and show support for those recovering from the Great East Japan Earthquake. The Japanese community here in Canberra together with my wife and I are very grateful for this heartfelt gesture by our friends of Japan.

This year's new participants leave Australia on Saturday 22 July, and start their JET Programme experiences by attending a post-arrival orientation in Tokyo.

Yours sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia