

**Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador SUZUKI Kazuhiro at the Conferral
Ceremony of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays,
on Dr. Peter Hendriks**

15 July 2026

Good evening and thank you all for joining us.

We have a double celebration on our hands tonight: we are here to honour the wonderful achievements of Dr Peter Hendriks, and to bid a fond farewell to our latest cohort of JET Programme participants from Canberra.

I am especially delighted to host this gathering as we mark a major milestone.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia.

Fifty years of our two countries being great partners, great friends, and as tonight proves, great company.

Our celebrations begin with recognising Peter's significant contributions.

I am proud to share that Peter is receiving the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to promoting academic exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and Australia.

Peter has been a cornerstone of the Australian National University for nearly three decades, shaping the minds of countless students in Japanese language and studies.

In fact, looking around the room, I suspect some of you here are former students of his at some point.

Since 2015, Peter has looked after domestic and international students alike as the Deputy Dean of Students.

But his contributions stretch far beyond the lecture theatre.

For more than twenty years, Peter has sat on the JET Programme selection committee.

This means that a massive portion of the 5,000-plus Aussie JETs who have made the leap over the decades have him to thank for launching their journeys.

He has also chaired the National Japan Essay Competition, inspiring generations of language learners to stretch their skills, think creatively, and find their own voice in a second language.

Peter, your tireless work at the grassroots level has truly woven our two countries closer together, and Japan owes you a debt of gratitude.

Now, speaking of those gruelling JET Programme selection committees... today we are also sending off seven new JET Programme participants from Canberra, joining at a momentous time as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the JET Programme.

I want to thank Ms Mitsunaga and the Japan Local Government Centre in Sydney for their vital partnership in ensuring the continued success of this program.

An initiative where Australia is proud to hold a perfect attendance since day one.

Our JET alumni represent an incredible pool of talent. In fact, we value them so much that we refuse to let them go entirely! We have four former JETs working as Locally Engaged Staff right here at this Embassy. Simon, Greg, Mark, and Julian.

I strongly encourage our seven new JETs to talk to our alumni throughout the evening, because if there is one thing I have learned about former JETs, it is that they love talking about their time in Japan!

To our departing cohort: you are our newest cultural bridges. As you head off to your placements right across Japan, from Hokkaido to Kyushu, I urge you to dive headfirst into your new communities and make the absolute most of this rewarding experience.

In conclusion, let us once again offer our warmest congratulations to Peter on this richly deserved decoration. And to our new JETs: we wish you a safe journey and the very best of luck as you embark on this next exciting chapter.

Thank you.

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