

**Speech by Ambassador Kobayashi
At the Opening Reception of the Japan Festival Wellington 2018
Te Marae, Level 4, Te Papa, the Museum of NZ
5:30pm, Thursday 22 November**



His Worship Justin Lester, Mayor of Wellington City
Ms Jennifer King, Chair of the Japan Festival Wellington Trust,
他 :

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora, good evening, and a warm welcome to the Opening Reception for the Japan Festival Wellington of 2018. It is my great pleasure to co-host this reception together with the Wellington City Council, for the purpose of the successful implementation of the festival this Saturday.

Since this may be the first time I meet some of you here, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Hiroyasu Kobayashi, and I began my official tenure as the Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand upon presenting my credentials to the Governor General on the 18th of October, shortly after my arrival to New Zealand on the 7th of the same month. I am very honoured to work in New Zealand, a country with such a positive bilateral relationship with Japan. During my tenure here, I will do my utmost to ensure the further strengthening of that amicable relationship.

The Japan Festival Wellington is held bi-annually, with the last one held in 2016. This year's festival was made possible thanks to the hard work and dedication of the members of the Japan Festival Wellington Trust and its Organising Committee. This is the first Japan Festival Wellington held by the Trust and its Committee, which were established in March this year. The Festival has shaped up so well that it feels like the Trust and Committee members have many years of experience! This also could not have been made possible without the strong

and valuable support of the Wellington City Council. The time and passion they have put in, and their cooperation with both the Trust and the Embassy of Japan are much appreciated. I would like to offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone involved.

Japan and New Zealand enjoy a very friendly bilateral relationship; something to be very proud of. These relations, based on respect for one another, profound mutual understanding, and shared fundamental democratic and societal values, have facilitated strong, positive and warm connections between our two countries in many aspects. Not only in areas such as trade and politics, but also in cultural areas, have Japan and New Zealand found common ground and interest in one another. The Japan Festival Wellington is just one example of how strong our people-to-people relationships are, with many different aspects of Japan's culture, including art, music, and food, to be put on display this Saturday for everyone to enjoy.

I would like to remind you all of some further events which I am sure will serve to deepen the bonds between Japan and New Zealand: the Rugby World Cup next year, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, and the World Masters' Games in Kansai in 2021. These large international sporting events are sure to give many people, especially New Zealanders, the chance to go to Japan and experience its culture first-hand.

In closing, I sincerely would like to once again thank you all sincerely for being present at this opening reception, and thank everyone whose hard work brought this year's Japan Festival Wellington to us. Please enjoy the rest of your evening, experience some of Japan's culture, and come to the Festival on Saturday to see what it offers.

Thank you.