

2019 JET Programme Participants, JET Programme Alumni,
Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen:

Kia Ora, Good evening, Konbanwa.

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you here to farewell the 26 new JET Programme participants departing from Wellington for Japan tomorrow. New JET participants! Congratulations on your success in being selected for the JET programme! Thank you for choosing to travel to Japan after graduation, even though New Zealand's economy is currently strong. It is... how should I say? A seller's market.

32 years ago, in 1987, when the JET Programme began, to promote grass-roots cross-cultural exchange in Japan's local communities and schools by introducing foreign teaching assistants into their language education and New Zealand has taken part in the JET programme from the very beginning of it.

Since then, the JET programme has indeed been one of the most important and successful exchange programmes between Japan and New Zealand known internationally.

More than 3,300 New Zealanders in total have now participated in this programme over the years: it means there has been about 1 JET per only 1,500 New Zealanders!

This year, there are about 80 Kiwi participants from New Zealand. Here in Wellington, our 26 participants are all ALT, Assistant Language Teachers, bound for teaching at various levels throughout Japan's schools.

Currently, New Zealand has 44 Sister City relations with Japan, which is the most in New Zealand. Of the departing JETs today, eight of you will go to Lower Hutt's sister city, Minoh in Osaka Prefecture, and one to Ruapehu's sister city, Toyooka in Hyogo prefecture. I hope that those of you who are not travelling to sister cities take the opportunity to create and nurture ties with your placement, and possibly establish a new sister city relationship for the future. And, should you be passing by one of New Zealand's many sister cities in Japan, be sure to stop by and support that relationship.

When you do return home to New Zealand, I recommend joining your local JET Alumni Association chapter, in order to maintain a sense of connection with Japan. The Wellington chapter of the JET Alumni Association is very active and involved in many Japan-related community events. The president, Mr Seamus Brady, will be telling you in his address following mine.

I would like to thank the members of the JET Alumni Association of Wellington for their continued hard work, and dedication to Japan and support of the JET Programme.

Also, I would like to express the Embassy of Japan's deep appreciation for all the people here this evening who have contributed to the success of the JET Programme in New Zealand over the last three decades, and I wish them the best of luck in continuing to do so into the future.

Speaking of the future, thanks to the work of Mr Ian Kennedy and the Japan Information and Cultural Centre, the New Zealand JET Programme now has a presence on the Japan New Zealand Business, so when you return to New Zealand after the JET Programme, there will be opportunities for you to use your newfound skills in a related industry.

We are now only 50 days out from the 2019 Rugby World Cup, which will begin on 20th September this year, and only one year from the start of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020. Then, in 2021, we will host the Kansai World Masters Games. And, although it's not sports-related, Osaka will host the World Expo in 2025!

Many of our JETs this evening will be residing in sister cities and Rugby or Olympic host cities and towns across Japan, so I hope you will take the opportunity to get involved in these exciting activities as local government officials, volunteers, or fans.

Finally, I would like to wish the new JETs all the best for their time in Japan. Good luck and Itte-rasshai!