

**Speech for the 2019 お帰りなさい会 JET Reception
by Ambassador Kobayashi
Wednesday, 12th February 2020**

I would like to acknowledge the presence of the following;

Ms. Jan Logie, sitting Member of Parliament for the Green Party;

Mr. Ray Wallace and Madam Linda, Chair and International Relation Manager of Hutt Minoh Trust;

Mr. Seamus Brady President of JETAA Wellington;

Ms. Hiromi Morris, President of Sister Cities NZ;

Mr. Hirotomo Akaiwa, Director of CLAIR Sydney.

こんばんは、Kia Ora, good evening, and to our JET Programme returnees, お帰りなさい—welcome home.

Thank you all very much for coming this evening.

Tonight, I have the pleasure of welcoming to my residence the JET participants who have returned to New Zealand after completing their contracts in August last year.

3,376 New Zealanders have participated in the Programme over its 33 year history that is about 100 participants per year.

Usually about half of them come back to NZ, the other half choose to stay in Japan longer or proceed to other destinations in the world.

This evening we are happy to receive 8 new JET alumina in Wellington area who have completed their work in Japan. It will be very nice if they share their experiences in Japan later this evening.

The JET Programme's main goal is: to encourage cultural exchange and mutual understanding at a grassroots level through teaching language or sports, coordination with local or communities and government organisations, or in other forms.

It is not easy, there are cultural or language differences or even barriers that they have to overcome, especially in Japan. Those 8 people here tonight, together with other former JET participants, have performed beautifully and completed their work. I wish to express, on behalf of the Japanese Government, and the people of Japan, our sincere gratitude to the latest JET returnees for their valuable dedication and contributions to the Programme. 皆様、有り難うございました。

Let me say my usual remarks. The Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games is coming up in Japan in July and August. Next year 2021, the Kansai World Masters Games. Then, the World Expo will once again be hosted in Osaka in 2025.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people who are helping our JET Programme continue including interviewers for the JET Programme candidates. We are looking forward to the results for New Zealand's next batch of JET participants. We hope you will assist us in getting them ready for their own exciting journey to Japan.

Thank you again and please enjoy yourselves this evening.