

2015 JET Programme Participants,
Ex-JET Participants,
Ms. Jane Coombs, Divisional Manager, North Asia Division of
MFAT,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good evening,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to my Residence here tonight at this reception to farewell the 23 new JET Programme participants who will depart from Wellington very soon to start their new lives in Japan.

First of all, I wish to thank all the new JET participants for your interest in Japan and in the JET Programme, and thank you for having applied for the JET Programme. I congratulate you for your success in the selection. I hope you will have an enjoyable and useful time in Japan, and because I am still very new here, I hope I will see you again back in New Zealand in a few years' time full of fond memories of Japan.

The JET Programme is one of the most important and successful exchange programmes between Japan and New Zealand. Its goal is to promote internationalisation in Japan's local communities by encouraging foreign language education,

and by developing international exchanges at the grassroots level. There are 92 JET participants leaving for Japan from New Zealand this year, and as many as 3,000 young kiwis in total have participated in the JET Programme since its beginning in 1987.

In Japan and in the host communities, the new JETs will be “Cultural and Goodwill Ambassadors”, bridging the peoples of Japan and New Zealand. While living in Japan, you will no-doubt be seen as a fountain of knowledge about New Zealand, its culture, and probably also the All Blacks and the Lord of the Rings. On the other hand, your friends and family here in New Zealand may come to see you as their personal expert on Japan. You will receive enquires about Japanese cuisine, technology, culture, language, and of course travelling in Japan.

The JET Programme will offer you the chance to not only immerse yourself in Japanese culture. At the same time, from my experience, I can tell you that living in a foreign country often gives you a chance to or forces you to reflect on your own self and on your country. You may gain a deeper understanding about what it means to be a Kiwi. I’m sure you will gain a better understanding of both cultures, and I hope that you will take every opportunity to promote a balanced picture of each country to those in the other. Through this you will play an

important role in enhancing the relationship between our two countries in the future.

Upon return from your adventure in Japan we hope that you will become active in your local JET Alumni Association chapter, in order to maintain contact with Japan and also with the others in this room with you here today. The Wellington chapter of the JET Alumni Association is very active and involved in many Japan-related community events. I thank the members of the JET Alumni Association of Wellington for their continued hard work.

Before concluding I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all the people who have contributed to the success of the JET Programme in New Zealand over the last three decades.

I wish the new JETs all the best for your time in Japan.

(End)