

**Speech for the 2016 お帰り会 JET Reception**  
**By Ambassador Takata**  
**Friday 10 February 2017,**

Kia Ora, good evening ladies and gentlemen, and to our JET Programme returnees from around the world, お帰りなさい — welcome home.

Thank you all very much for coming this evening.

Tonight, I am very pleased to welcome back to my residence the JET participants from New Zealand and America who have returned to New Zealand after completing their contracts in August 2016.

The JET Programme is one of the most important exchanges between Japan and New Zealand, with over 3,000 New Zealanders having participated in the programme, which celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year. The programme aims to promote internationalisation in Japan's local communities by helping improve foreign language education and support international exchange at a grassroots level.

During their time in Japan, participants were not only English teachers in their offices and schools, but also “Cultural Ambassadors”, constructively acting as bridges between Japan and New Zealand to promote mutual cooperation and communication. The JET Programme offers participants the chance not only to immerse oneself in Japanese culture, but also to gain a deeper understanding about what it means to be a Kiwi – or an American! Through fully experiencing the highs and lows of both your adopted and mother countries, you play an important role in enhancing our relationships in the future.

Now that you have returned from your time on the JET Programme, we hope that you will take the chance to become active in your local JET Alumni Association and its activities, and continue to promote a broader and deeper communication between Japan and New Zealand. The Wellington chapter of the JET Alumni Association is involved in many Japan related community events throughout the year, such as the spring Hanami picnic, the annual Japan photo competition, and weekly Japanese classes. A number of their members are here tonight, so I hope you will take the opportunity to chat with them about their upcoming events, and their own experiences of returning home.

The Embassy of Japan supports the Wellington JET Alumni Association with their activities, as well as organising a number of other events to promote Japanese culture and awareness throughout the Wellington region. Additionally, as you may know, there are some very exciting events taking place in Japan over the next few years, most notably the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the 2020 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Whether your interests lie in sports, education, culture, or beyond, there is no better time to be actively connected to Japan.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have taken part in the JET programme, and to everyone contributing to strengthen ties between Japan and New Zealand.

Applicants for the 2017 JET Programme have already been processed and interviewed, so if you know anyone who has applied this cycle, please wish them luck!

So in closing, welcome home to Wellington and thank you again for all your efforts while in you were on the JET Programme in Japan.