

**Speech by Ambassador Toshihisa Takata  
At FAREWELL RECEPTION FOR THE  
2017 JET PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS  
The Residence of the Ambassador of Japan  
Friday 28 July 2017  
6:00 – 8:00pm**

2017 JET Programme Participants,  
JET Programme Alumni,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen :

Good evening.

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you here in order to farewell the 33 new JET Programme participants departing from Wellington to Japan.

First of all, I wish to congratulate the participants this year for their success in being selected for the JET programme. The final orientation of the JET programme in Wellington was just held today and you are leaving very soon. I presume you are now full of anticipation and some anxiety, but I am sure that you will have an enjoyable and productive time in Japan, and come back to New Zealand with full of fond memories of your time there.

It was thirty years ago, in 1987, when the JET Programme started to promote internationalisation in Japan's local communities and schools by introducing foreign teaching assistants into their language education, and by developing international exchanges at the grassroots level. This year is its 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary.

New Zealand has taken part in the JET programme from the very beginning. Since then, the JET programme has indeed been one of the most important and successful exchange programmes between Japan and New Zealand, and I am happy to inform you that more than 3,000 young New Zealanders in total have participated in this programme. Comparing that to the population of New Zealand, this is a remarkable figure! (One JET per 1,600 New Zealanders)

This year, there are more than 80 Kiwi participants, including 33 here, leaving for Japan from New Zealand. You will be regarded as a “Goodwill Ambassadors” from New Zealand, encouraging and nurturing cross-cultural understanding all over Japan.

After the Orientation in Tokyo, when you are dispatched to your placement cities or towns, you will face another challenge to start an entirely new life in utterly different situations. But you won't be alone: your Japanese co-workers, neighbours, and fellow JETs will be alongside you, helping you every step of the way. You have the unique ability to bridge the people of Japan and New Zealand by introducing your culture, language, and tradition – and when you return to New Zealand, I hope you will bring your new knowledge of Japan's culture, language, and tradition back home to share with the people here. Through this you can play an important role in enhancing the relationship between our two countries in the future.

At the same time, from my own experience, I can tell you that living in a foreign country often gives you a chance to reflect on your own self and on your country. You may gain a deeper understanding about what it means to be a “Kiwi”. Travelling the world, immersing yourself in different cultures, and learning how things are both different and the same – this is a precious opportunity that I hope you will make the most of. Particularly, the next couple of years will be a very interesting time for you, as Japan will be working hard to make RWC in 2019 and the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 a success.

When you return home to New Zealand, I really recommend joining your local JET Alumni Association chapter, in order to maintain contact with Japan, and with other JETs who have shared experiences. The Wellington chapter of the JET Alumni Association is very active and involved in many Japan-related community events. I would like to thank the members of the JET Alumni Association of Wellington for their continued hard work, and dedication to Japan and the JET Programme.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to take a moment to reflect upon the recent untimely passing of a beloved Wellington 2015 JET participant, Mr. Kelly Savage. He was, in many ways, the ideal JET, adored by students and community people alike. Even in his absence, this esteemed young man's work will surely live on through those whose lives he touched. Though he will be missed dearly, his commendable deeds inspire all of us to continue to work together towards mutual cooperation and understanding between New Zealand and Japan.

I want to express the Embassy of Japan's deep appreciation for all the people 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.

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

(End)