

**Speech for the 2017 お帰りなさい会 JET Reception**  
**By Ambassador Takata**  
**Friday 27 October 2017,**

Kia Ora, good evening ladies and gentlemen, 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 am very pleased to welcome back to my residence the JET participants who have returned to New Zealand after completing their contracts in August this year.

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. Of course, I hardly need to explain to you that 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, JET participants were also “Cultural Ambassadors”, constructively acting as bridges between Japan and New Zealand to promote mutual cooperation and communication. I wish to express, on behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, our sincere gratitude to this year's JET returnees for their dedication and contribution to the Programme. 皆さん、有り難うございました。

Now that you have returned to New Zealand, we hope that you will take the chance to become active in your local JET Alumni Association and its activities, which I think Mark Dittmer will mention to you after I'm

finished. The Wellington chapter of the JET Alumni Association is involved in many Japan-related community events throughout the year, such as spring Hanami picnics, the annual Japan photo competition, happening now, 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 also organises a number of our own events to promote Japanese culture and awareness throughout the Wellington region. As you know, there are some very exciting events taking place in Japan over the next few years: the Rugby World Cup in 2019, Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, and finally the Kansai World Masters Games in 2021. Whether your interests lie in sport, 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 our JET Programme participants, both past and present, and to everyone contributing to strengthening ties between Japan and New Zealand. Applications for the 2018 JET Programme are open now, so if you know a particularly wonderful candidate, be sure to let them know what a great opportunity it is! We look forward to receiving their application.

In closing, welcome home to Wellington, and thank you again for all of your heartfelt efforts and participation in the JET Programme in Japan.