

**Speech by Ambassador Toshihisa Takata**  
**At FAREWELL RECEPTION FOR THE 2018 JET PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS**  
**The Residence of the Ambassador of Japan**  
**Friday 3 August 2018**  
**6:00 – 8:00pm**

2018 JET Programme Participants,  
JET Programme Alumni,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

Kia Ora, Good evening, Konbanwa.

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you here in order to farewell the 40 new JET Programme participants departing from Wellington to Japan tomorrow. JET participants, congratulations on your success in being selected for the JET programme! With your departure so close at hand, you may be feeling anticipation, and even some anxiety—especially about the heat!—but I am sure that you will have an enjoyable and productive time in Japan, and come back to New Zealand full of fond memories of your time there.

It was thirty one years ago, in 1987, when the JET Programme began, in order to promote grass-roots cultural 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 will be the Programme's 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary, and 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 3,200 New Zealanders in total have now participated in this programme over the years. When I made a similar speech last year, it was only 3,100! Comparing that to the current population of New Zealand, this is a remarkable figure: it means there has been about one JET per 1,500 New Zealanders!

This year, there are more than one hundred Kiwi participants leaving for Japan from New Zealand—the largest number since 2011. Here in Wellington, our 40 participants are made up of 36 Assistant Language Teachers, 2 Coordinators for International Relations, and 2 Field Hockey Sports Exchange Advisors. This is especially notable, as it is the first time we have sent SEAs to Japan on the JET Programme in several years. We are looking forward to their exciting stories!

In Japan, you will face another challenge to start an entirely new life in utterly different situations. But you won't be alone: many others will be at your side, helping you every step of the way. You will be regarded as a "Goodwill Ambassadors" from New Zealand, encouraging and nurturing cross-cultural understanding all over Japan, and each of you have the unique opportunity to bridge the people of Japan and New Zealand by introducing your culture, language, tradition and values – and when you return to New Zealand, I hope you will bring your new knowledge of Japan's own culture, language, tradition and values back home to share.

From my own experience, I can tell you that living in a foreign country often gives you the chance to reflect on your own sense of self and nationality. You may gain a deeper understanding about what it means to be a "Kiwi". Travelling the world, immersing yourself in different societies, and learning how things are both different and the same – this is a precious opportunity that I hope you will be able to make the most of while you live and work in Japan.

When you return home to New Zealand, I really recommend joining your local JET Alumni Association chapter, in order to maintain a sense of connection with Japan, and with other JETs who have shared your experiences. The Wellington chapter of the JET Alumni Association is very active and involved in many Japan-related community events, which I am sure its president, Mr Mark Dittmer, will be telling you in his address following mine. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the JET Alumni Association of Wellington for their continued hard work, and dedication to Japan and the JET Programme. Additionally, I would like 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.

As I am sure many of you are aware, Japan will be hosting several global sports events in the coming years; namely: The Rugby World Cup in 2019, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, and the Kansai World Masters Games in 2021. Many of our JETs this evening will be residing in sister cities and Rugby or Olympic host cities and towns across Japan, so I hope you will take the opportunity to get involved in these exciting activities as local government officials, assistance or volunteers!

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