

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Toshihisa Takata at the Awarding Ceremony of the Ambassador's Commendation to Teachers of Japanese Language

Tuesday 23rd January 2018

Distinguished Japanese Language Teachers,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora Koutou and thank you for being here this evening.

The purpose of this occasion is to express my sincere gratitude to the people standing before me, who have all been heavily involved in Japanese Language Education, for their contribution to the mutual relationship between Japan and New Zealand. Each of these people have influenced the youth of New Zealand, and devoted their efforts to the advancement of young New Zealanders' knowledge of the language and culture of Japan. I am very pleased to present: Haruko Stuart of the University of Otago
Naomi Collins of Massey University
Masayoshi Ogino of the University of Canterbury
Sharon Henry of Wellington High School
Jo Hawes of Upper Hutt College
Hidemi Fuke of Queen Margaret College
and Linda Tappenden of Cashmere High School,
with the Ambassador's Commendation, and I look forward to their greater successes in years ahead.

Three other teachers of Japanese also awarded with the Ambassador's Commendation were unfortunately unable to make it tonight, so I would like to also acknowledge:

Dean Rabbitt of Hutt International Boys School
Karen Thomson of James Hargest College
and Robert Arrell of Napier Boys High School.

The Ambassador's Commendation is awarded by Ambassadors of Japan to individuals or groups who have made a distinguished contribution to the deepening of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and their own countries of assignment, in this case, New Zealand. We are awarding

these teachers and coordinators for their efforts in granting the youth of New Zealand knowledge and understanding about Japan and its language and culture.

Japan and New Zealand currently enjoy a very favourable bilateral relationship in all areas, something reflected in the enthusiasm with which students of Japanese language take their class. This enthusiasm is thanks to the hard work and passion of the Japanese teachers who have instilled their own fascination for Japan and Japanese in their students, and advisors who help students realise their dreams of developing their Japanese abilities. Be it high school or university, young people are strongly influenced by their teachers' attitudes, something that judging by the people I have before me today, makes me very optimistic about the future of the relationship between Japan and New Zealand.

I have a lot of faith that students currently under the tutelage of the teachers here, will contribute to deepening the relationship between Japan and New Zealand, maybe some of them will also become language teachers!

There is no shortage of exciting events in Japan in upcoming years. As you know, Japan will host the Rugby World Cup next year, the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, and the Kansai World Masters Games in 2021. These events are all wonderful chances to promote Japan to the rest of the world, and also a chance for people from around the world to build relationships with Japan and the Japanese people. I am confident that the events will spark a renewed interest in Japan with more young people, and I hope that they will have the good fortune of coming into contact with someone like you, in the future.

Congratulations to each and every one of you, I will now present the awards.