

Good evening,

Thank you everyone for coming to tonight's MEXT Scholarship Alumni Reception. As some of you are aware, the 2nd MEXT Scholarship Alumni reunion was unfortunately postponed at the last minute in 2020 due to the pandemic, so I am more than delighted that we are finally able to hold this event tonight.

For those of you who I have not met yet, I would like to briefly introduce myself. I am originally from Osaka – I know a few of you have graduated from universities there! Before coming to Melbourne, I had my postings in Washington D.C., Beijing, and Jakarta. Australia was the destination for my very first overseas trip as a university student, so I have been looking forward to returning here since then. I feel incredibly lucky to be able to live and work in Melbourne now.

The Monbukagakusho (MEXT) Scholarship was established in 1954 and to date, more than 112,000 MEXT scholars from around the world studied in Japan. For tonight's event, our office contacted more than 60 former MEXT scholars that has departed from Victoria as well as those who departed from other states and countries but now reside in Victoria. In fact, many of whom are currently living overseas or interstates, but I am glad that we are able to welcome 14 of you tonight.

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen work commitments at his dojo, Mr Douglas Noack, the president of the Melbourne MEXT Alumni Association (MMAA) is unable to attend tonight's event. He asked us to pass on his apologies to everyone here tonight and also informed of his intention to step down as president after over three years in the position. Shortly after the establishment of MMAA in 2019, the inaugural president, Mr Luke Duggan, had to move to Oxford due to family circumstances. Noack-san has kindly taken his place. Noack-san has worked hard to support and maintain the network of former MEXT scholars for over the last three years. He has also been actively involved in promoting the MEXT Scholarship to students and Japanese language teachers in Victoria – last year, Noack-san has taken the initiative to promote the MEXT scholarship at the 2022 Japanese Language Teachers' Association of Victoria annual conference. I heard some of you here attended the conference along with Noack-san.お疲れさまでした。

Since the beginning of 2020, it had been challenging to organise any events or hold a small gathering due to pandemic, but from now on, I strongly hope that the MMAA will develop to form a close-knit group and become a driving force in Japan-Australia relations. As we will be

electing a new president tonight, I am very much looking forward to see how the MMAA is going to thrive on in the future.

I trust everyone here is looking forward to catching up with old comrades, so I will wrap up my speech now.

Thank you very much. ありがとうございます。