

Good evening,

Thank you everyone for coming to tonight's MEXT Scholarship Alumni Reception. This is the 3rd MEXT Scholarship Alumni reception and I am delighted to see both new and familiar faces this evening.

For those of you who have not yet met me, please let me briefly introduce myself. I first arrived in Melbourne in January 2021, so it has already been three years. As some of you may be aware, my hometown is Osaka which is also a sister city of Melbourne! Before coming here, I was posted to Washington D.C., Beijing, and Jakarta, but Australia has always held a special place in my heart, as it was the first foreign country I travelled to when I was a university student!

After the first MEXT Scholarship Alumni Reception here in 2019, we unfortunately had to pause all of the Melbourne MEXT Alumni Association (MMAA) activities from 2020 to 2022 due to the pandemic. Last year, we were finally able to hold the second reunion and it is my pleasure to welcome another 15 of you here tonight. Last year, 12 scholars attended the reception and we are delighted that more and more scholars are attending each year! We hope to continue this event every year for years to come.

Today, we also have a special guest from a Japanese university, Mr Koichi Yamaguchi. Mr Yamaguchi is currently the director of Konan University Network Campus Tokyo. He has kindly brought some bottles of Nada no Sake from Kobe, which we will use for our *kanpai* tonight! We hope you like it!

There have been new developments within MEXT alumni associations at a national level recently, and the MMAA has become even more active. In particular, last September, our president and vice-president, Leonie-san and Jason-san, represented the MMAA at an inaugural online networking meeting for reuniting alumni in Oceania. Moreover, just about two weeks ago, Jason-san attended the MEXT conference held in Tokyo as a representative of the MEXT Alumni Associations in Australia. It is wonderful that our Melbourne association was chosen to represent Australia! Jason-san will tell us more about his trip later tonight!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Leonie-san and Jason-san for your

dedication to your duties as the president and vice-president of the MMAA and for keeping the MMAA active and close knit.

I hope the MMAA will continue to thrive and I hope that all of you here will continue to be the bridge between Japan and Australia.

I trust everyone here is looking forward to reconnect 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。