

Good evening. 皆様、こんばんわ。

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all at the farewell reception for the twenty-five JET Programme participants departing for Japan this Saturday.

First of all, as I have asked in the past, I would like all the new JET participants to do the following three things while you are in Japan:

**First**, learn about Japan!

As we have just learned about Japanese sake from Ms Kana Aoyama, a qualified sake educator, I hope you will learn as much as you can about Japanese culture, language, and people. I would like to thank Kana-san for providing a special sake seminar tonight, and I hope you will all try the sake introduced by her later. From Hokkaido to Okinawa, every region of Japan has its own unique sake. I encourage you to enjoy as many varieties of sake as possible when you visit Japan. I hope many of the new JET participants will find their favourite sake during their stay in Japan. Just as many different sake in different parts of Japan, there are also many different festivals in different parts of Japan. Tanabata is of course one of them.

**Second**, please know your country well and be able to explain it yourself; and

**Third**, become a permanent point of contact between the two countries.

Strengthening Japan-Australia relations cannot be achieved through government efforts alone. Grassroots international exchange by people like the JET participants is essential to achieve it. With this in mind, I would like to thank everyone here for your continued support of the JET Programme. In particular, I would like to thank the Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Japan, Ms Roma Britnell MP, and former JET participant and current Victorian Parliamentarian, Mr David Limbrick MP. We look forward to your continued warm support for the Japan-Australia relationship.

In addition, tonight's guests from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Melbourne, the Japanese Studies lecturers at various universities, the representatives

of the Melbourne Japanese government scholarship Alumni Association, both of whom are former JET participants, and many former JET participants, have strong connections in the various locations where new JET participants go. New JET participants, I hope you will get to know and talk to these people tonight and gain valuable information from them. By the way, my wife Kaoru and I are originally from Osaka. Last year, Osaka celebrated the 45th anniversary of its sister city relationship with Melbourne. Osaka will host the World Expo from April to October next year, so I hope many of you will be able to visit Osaka.

Finally, I wish all new JET participants good health, and a great time living and working in Japan. Please explore the local culture and SAKE of your assigned cities or towns, and make long-lasting friendships. And of course when you feel lonely, keep in contact virtually with your family members and friends back in Australia, which will definitely be of help!

Thank you and take care. 行ってらっしゃい!