

Opening Remarks
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the 38th JET Programme Pre-departure Reception
On Thursday July 4, 2024

Acknowledgements

- The Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC, representing the Premier of Western Australia,
- H.E. the Hon Richard Court AC, Former Ambassador of Australia to Japan & Former Premier of Western Australia,
- 38th JET participants from WA,
- Returnees and former JET participants,
- Leaders of Japanese industries in Western Australia,
- Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome

I wish to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet tonight, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Thank for joining us tonight to this pre-departure reception for the 15 new JET participants who successfully qualified for the 2024 JET Programme from WA and departing Perth for Japan on 27th of this month. Congratulations to you all.

Tonight, we are also welcoming former JETs in WA including those who recently returned from Japan. I hope this is an opportunity to reconnect with Japan by catching up with former JETs, the JET Alumni Association in WA and key people of Japanese business and cultural spheres in Perth.

JET Programme and participation from WA

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET Programme) is one of the longest running and the most well taken-care programs of its kind worldwide. It aims to promote the internationalization of Japan and mutual understanding with people of Japan and other nations through teaching English and grassroots cultural exchange.

Now in its 38th year, it started in 1987 with Australia and WA participating right from the first intake together with the USA, UK, and NZ. Now, more than 77,000 people have participated thus far, and this year we are inviting JETs from 78 countries.

Australian JETs participants have always been positive mood makers. Within the 38 years, 555 West Australians have participated in the JET Programme.

Message to new JETs

To the new JETs, last week you had an opportunity to visit the Japanese School in Perth to experience a Japanese classroom environment, with the support of Natasha Sensei, who is also an ex JET herself, with Furukawa Sensei demonstrating collaborative dynamics between an assistant language teacher

and English teacher of Japanese curriculum.

It was reintroduced as a part of the pre-departure orientation proposed by JETA AWA, and I wish to express appreciation to Teramoto Sensei, the headmaster, for kindly accommodating them and offering the opportunity.

As Natasha briefed you, please teach your students to come out of their shell as Japanese children tend to be shy, and embrace the whole community especially if assigned to a rural area, *inaka*, where you might become one of first foreigners the children meet in their lives.

You will find yourself acting as goodwill ambassadors for Australia. You will have the experience of being a bridge between Japan and WA, making a positive impact on Japanese people. So, please make use of the opportunity and enjoy becoming an ambassador, learn about Japan, and come back to WA and continue to be a bridge. Furthermore, your interactions with JET colleagues from other countries will open your global vision and it will be useful to your future career.

Message to JET returnees

To the returning JETs, welcome back to WA from Japan. The contribution of ex JETs is remarkable. Some have become teachers, scholars, public servants, or managers at Japanese companies.

Four of our Australian staff at the Japanese Consulate are ex JETs and we are proud that we often debate issues in Japanese. I am delighted to know that one of the returnees who participated from Perth has returned to Australia and joined the Information and Culture section of Japanese Embassy in Canberra and continues promoting exchange between Japan and Australia.

Brittany who joined the Japanese Consulate here last year, travelled back to Japan in March to attend the graduation ceremony of high school students she taught during her JET days and had an unforgettable moment.

Globally Jeremy Hunt, former British Secretary of State was JET in 1990. Michael Green, CEO of United State Study Center in Sydney is also an ex JET, spending 5 years in Japan teaching English and became fluent in Japanese. Maynard Plant, vocalist of the Japan based band Monkey Majik joined JET from Canada. In Australia, Linus Power, Member of Legislative Assembly in Queensland is also an ex JETs. As you can see, JET provides an opportunity to gain inspiration useful for your respective careers.

To the business community, if you are looking for talented young workforce who know Japanese business culture and love Japan, please think of JETs.

You might have arrived back from Japan to WA and find yourself looking for some connection with Japan. In this regard, the Japanese Consulate and JETA AWA are happy to provide you with regular updates. Join us for the annual Perth Japan Festival that attracted more than 20,000 this year, the annual welcoming events of the Icebreaker Shirase at Fremantle Ports, and many important Japanese events in Perth are in the pipeline for next year. We will make sure to keep you updated.

Conclusion

This week we received a great news that the ANA Perth to Narita direct flight is resuming on the 14th of October, after a few months of technical break due to maintenance of Boeing made engines. The impact of the direct flight in the seven months since October last year to April was beyond our expectations. I hear people even say, “two thirds of Australians have visited Japan” which is not quite true but it sounds like it. If you ask anyone, someone in the family or close friend is visiting Japan.

I wish to emphasize again that people-to-people bonds are the most important asset of our longstanding friendly relationship between Japan and Western Australia and JET participants are making a remarkable contribution. I wish all new JETs good health and wish you a wonderful time working and living in Japan. Keep in contact with your JET colleagues nearby. Take good care of yourself and enjoy Japan.

Thank you for your attention.

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