## The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program **NSW JET** participants talk about living and working in Japan

Promoting the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program and recruiting new JETs are an important part of the Consulate's work. One of the best ways to explain the benefits of the program is to hear from participants.

As the latest group of JETs from New South Wales get ready to leave for Japan in late July, we asked two JETs who are coming to the end of their time on the program—Mr Alastair Evans and Ms Jessica Rigby—to share a little about their experiences working as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and living in Japan.

Following arriving in Japan on 28th July 2012, I have now been in Nagasaki for almost three years. As my time on the JET program will draw to a close in July 2015, and with the next stage of my life due to begin, this feels like a suitable moment to reflect on my experience of living and working in Japan. In addition to reflecting on my own experience of learning Japanese, I will consider the importance of learning a foreign language to become closer to the people and culture of the country.



**Alastair Evans** 

I plan to continue to live in Japan for the time being,

as from October 2015, I will enter university in

Nagasaki to study Japanese, and hope to continue to

learn about its people and its fascinating culture.

Japan has been my third experience of living overseas, as I was born in England, and then as a teenager lived and worked in Israel for three months fruit picking on a farm before moving to Australia in 2003.

My initial fascination with Japanese culture began prior to travelling to Australia, as I was a backpacker in New

Zealand and met and travelled with a number of Japanese people. Their sense of kindness and warmth towards me as a virtual stranger from a widely different culture was deeply moving for me, as I knew nothing about Japan prior to these initial meetings. Following my move to Sydney in 2003, I continued to become friends with a large number of Japanese people, and gradually, I became fascinated with Japanese culture, which convinced me to study Japanese language. So in 2011 for the first time I enrolled in beginners classes in Sydney.

Although for me this was a hobby and something I did for fun, I greatly enjoyed the challenge that it presented and it gave me a greater level of insight and understanding of Japan. Having visited Japan previously as a tourist, I noticed how much more I enjoyed the experience of visiting Japan and how many more opportunities to meet Japanese people were presented when I started to learn some basic phrases and grammar.

In addition to increasing our opportunities to travel, learn about and experience another culture, learning another language such as Japanese may also increase our employment opportunities. Whether that be to actually live and work in Japan, or to work for an international company.

This is something I have often emphasized to my high school students in class, when they ask me why they have to learn English. I always state to them that a greater range

of opportunities will often be available to them from learning a foreign language, such as English.

As challenging as I know that learning English may be for my Japanese students and learning Japanese is for me, I believe it is a challenge which is greatly worthwhile and which in turn will give them and myself a greater knowledge of the world, increased insight and cultural awareness and more opportunity to work for a larger number

of organizations in the future. This is why learning a language is so very important.

As to my own journey, I plan to continue to live in Japan for the time being, as from October 2015 I will enter university in

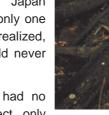
Nagasaki to study Japanese, and hope to continue to learn about its people and its fascinating culture. While I don't know where my life will take me

next or what opportunities will present themselves, I do know it will be an exciting journey.

Alastair Evans Nagasaki 9E7 2012-2015

Jessica Rigby

Two years ago, I was one of many young Australians arriving in Tokyo, for the JET program orientation. I had come to Japan expecting to stay only one year, but I soon realized, that one year could never be enough.



Before arriving, I had no idea what to expect, only that I was going to be rural.

Tokushima is a little known agricultural prefecture, on the island of Shikoku.

I have now come to love it as one of my favorite places in Japan, for its unbeatable natural beauty, traditional culture and warm, sincere people.

During my two years in the Tokushima prefecture, I worked at two small primary schools, a junior high school and an

eikaiwa (adult English class). My largest school had only three hundred students.

Smaller schools meant smaller class sizes, more interaction with the students, and more freedom to introduce new English

## I will treasure my experiences in Japan for as long as I live.

I saw each class once a week, and within two years everything was labeled in English, we had an English classroom, English board, English club, kids' eikaiwa and pen pals from the Australian Central Coast.



Jessica with her host family

My experience at these schools gave me a greater understanding of the Japanese culture, and enabled me to discover how to deal with various cultural differences within the classroom.

Unlike many other ALTs, I was given the unique opportunity for a home stay during my second year.

My host family were Awa Odori performers (Tokushima's traditional dance), and they perform in the world's third largest dance festival in Tokushima city every August. Learning the Awa Odori from professionals was a once in a lifetime experience that I could not have had elsewhere. The experiences that I have shared with my host family are ones that I will treasure forever.

There is no better way to understand the culture and reach out to the community.

I will treasure my experiences in Japan for as long as I live. Most were once in a lifetime chances, that I would not have had, had I not been on the JET program. I will always be eternally grateful for the experience. Jessica Rigby

7okushima 9E7 2013-2015

www.jetprogramme.org



**Rosehill Gardens** 8-9 August 2015

The bold and dynamic Japanese script in the logo is a bit of a give-away. This group is serious about enjoying Japanese popular culture! The SMASH! convention is Sydney's largest convention celebrating Japanese manga and anime. Now in its ninth year, the event has come a long way in a short time.

SMASH Inc is an incorporated non-profit organisation. SMASH stands for Sydney Manga and Anime Show. It was begun by fans for fans.

The first SMASH! convention was held at the University of New South Wales Roundhouse in 2007, attracting just over 1,400 people. Last year's SMASH! convention at Rosehill Gardens was a two-day event and attracted 13,617 people.

This year's event will again be a two-day convention and the organisers have lined-up some exciting guests for manga, anime and cosplay fans.

The guests for 2015 give an idea of the diversity of talents fostered within Japanese popular culture. Voice actor Noriaki Sugiyama, cosplayers KANAME☆ and REIKA, video games producer Hiroaki Yura and Japanese pop-culture presenter Danny Choo are all confirmed at time of writing.

Of course, there would be no manga or anime without art, be it traditional pen and ink, digital drawing, or 3D. There will be many artists

with their own booths, as well as competitions and activities inviting people, young and old, to create their own works of art.

The Japan Foundation, Sydney will again help to bring a voice actor to the SMASH! convention. In 2015, the Japan Foundation is proud to be sponsoring voice actor Noriaki Sugiyama.

Among Sugiyama's roles to date, his most notable is as the voice of Sasuke Uchiha, the antagonist from Naruto, a true hit anime series in Japan and overseas.



Noriaki Sugiyama

At last year's convention, there was a great range of activities and experiences for visitors to try. The atmosphere was friendly and

Find more details of the event, including access and ticketing information, on their website.

> **SMASH! Sydney Manga and Anime Show** www.smash.org.au

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