

JETs getting ready to return

The After JET Conference is a relatively new feature of the JET Programme. **Mr Eden Law**, President of JETAA NSW and JETAA Oceania, was a presenter at this year's conference held in Tokyo in February. Here he reports on the conference and the purpose of the JET alumni associations.

It's amazing to think that the JET Programme will soon mark its 30th anniversary. With almost 26,000 registered alumni worldwide, in 19 countries and 52 chapters (not counting sub-chapters), the international exchange programme has left a highly influential mark, not just on lives, but in key spheres such as academia and international Japanese-related foreign policy, worldwide. Preparation and projects to mark this important milestone are already in motion, starting with the Satogaeri Conference in October last year.

Part of the Programme's success is the network and relationships the alumni community maintains, united by common experiences and a desire to give back to the programme. One of the more tangible ways of this "pay back" or support is the After JET Conference, which is hosted by CLAIR, MIC and MOFA. Its primary objective is to provide post-JET career support and networking for final year JETs, who register to meet local companies and recruitment agencies, as well as hear from and consult with past JETs. This year's conference was held on 3-4 February in Chiba City, and I was invited to present on two topics: on JETAA and on IT as a career path. I also provided one-on-one consultations with participants - a fully booked schedule!

The conference was a series of personal firsts for me - apart from being my first such conference, I found myself presenting (as first speaker, after the officials representing the ministries) to some 500 participants - a terrifying, but ultimately exhilarating experience - which I was to repeat (though to smaller numbers) later that day when I delivered a one hour presentation on IT careers. While exhausting, it was personally highly rewarding, and

sincerely inspiring. Judging by the positive response by participants, post-JET support is very important, not just for careers, but also in terms of emotional and social well-being. This was well illustrated by the reaction to the keynote speech by Anne Good, a career and life coach. Her message on finding one's passion in life and loving what one does was met with highly emotional responses. Observing this, and from the conversations I subsequently had with dozens of JET leavers, drove home the point that many have concerns about post-JET life, particularly those who had entered the programme straight out of university and stayed on for up to 5 years. Despite being bright, proactive, highly capable and skilled, it is not unusual for participants to have concerns about life post-JET.

Again, this is why post-JET support is so important. Last year, CLAIR encouraged JETAA chapters globally to develop measures on providing support for returnees, which JETAA NSW and I fully support and will continue to develop. We hope to involve more alumni - indeed, as the 30th anniversary is a great opportunity to reach out and connect with all alumni, we encourage past alumni to get in touch with JETAA NSW and work with us to come up with ideas on supporting and mentoring returnees, including job opportunities. While this year's current group of new JETs await anxiously interview results and for confirmation of their placement, we want them to be reassured that they can rely on their *sempai* after they return, and that JETAA NSW will build up a strong and reputable organisation that benefits all.

So, as the newly re-elected president of JETAA NSW, a very sincere *yoroshiku onegaishimasu*, and thank you for your continuing support.



AN EARLY TAKE-OFF FOR SYDNEY JETs

A group of nine Sydney JETs is scheduled for an early departure to Japan to take up their positions on the 2016 -2017 JET Programme.

Six Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and three Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) are being sent from Sydney.

April participants arrive at the beginning of the Japanese school and financial year. The main cohort of JET participants will arrive in late July.

The Consulate and all involved in the JET interview process in Sydney wish the April JETs well and hope that they contribute much to the local communities they will become a part of.

The Positions

There are two main positions on the program.

Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) work with Japanese English teachers at Japanese primary, junior high and senior high schools.

Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs) work with local government bodies to promote international exchange.

Both roles involve sharing knowledge of your own culture and offer participants the chance to experience Japan, the people and culture.

jetprogramme.org/en/