57th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin

This year marked the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin during World War II. The Ambassador of Japan to Australia, His Excellency Mr Sumio Kusaka, paid an official visit from 16 to 19 February. On 19 February, the Ambassador, as the representative of the Government of Japan, attended the commemorative service at Darwin Cenotaph which was attended by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and some 5,000 people.

Spotlight on sports—Swimming

The 2017 Swimming NSW State Championships was held at the Olympic Park Aquatic Centre from 3 to 5 March. It is a state championship with a high level of competition - Australian Olympic Medalists among the participants and international competitors from several countries. Japan sends a national team each year and this year thirteen team members including gold medalists took part in the championships.

During the championships, Japanese swimmers won the men’s 200m butterfly, 200m and 400m individual medleys, 4x50m and 4x100m club medley relay and mixed 4x50m medley relay.

On 4 March, Consul-General Keizo Takewaka visited the championships to support the team and award medals. The next championships will be held in January 2018.

New South Wales. For more than three decades, the JET Program has been helping with language education and internationalisation in schools and local government bodies in Japan. JETAA helps promote and recruit the program. It is also a great way for former JETs to keep in touch with Japan and its culture.

In late February, JETAA NSW held its annual general meeting to elect committee members. Many sitting members, including President Eden Law, were re-elected. The committee also installed two new current coordinators who kindly share some thoughts with us.

Meeting with Chief Minister Gunner (second left) left to right Admiral Kenjo Sato, Ambassador Kusaka and Consul-General Takewaka

Coinciding with part of the Ambassador’s visit, on 17 February, Consul-General Keizo Takewaka visited Darwin. It was his second time to visit the northern capital.

While in Darwin, Mr Takewaka attended talks with the Hon. Michael Gunner, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. In the evening of 17 February, the Consul-General attended the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to the Japanese I-124 submarine which was sunk with all 80 crew on board during WWI.

The unveiling [below] took place at a reception organised by the Australian-Japanese Association of the Northern Territory (AJTANT). The plaque has been laid near Darwin’s Casuarina Cliffs.

‘Language skills and cultural sensitivity will be the new currency of this world order.’

The Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove’s statement at the 2003 Asia Education Foundation Regional Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, captured beautifully why the new paradigm of language education—intercultural language learning (IcLL)—is so vital.

“Language skills and cultural sensitivity will be the new currency of this world order.”

Language teachers carry an enormous responsibility to ensure that their students are equipped with this intercultural competence, conducive to peace and mutual understanding between people in the classroom.

Intercultural language learning (IcLL) is incorporated in the Australian school’s language syllabus and encourages students to reflect on their own culture(s) through the study of other cultures and languages. Competent communicators must have an awareness of the knowledge of the language system, such as grammar and vocabulary, but they also have an insight into why people in a particular culture operate or express ideas in one way but not another.

IcLL allows students to make conscious choices about their style of communication - ‘why I say this way.’

An Australian student on an exchange program lived in an apartment in Osaka. Her Japanese friend upon returning home reported the following:

"Hello! "Yes, it is a nice room, isn’t it." - focusing on the room not on her attitude. Language should not be a mechanical translation of words, but be based on context and culture.

Even highly advanced bilingual speakers need to be able to continue navigating across languages, cultures and multiple perspectives.

Tomoko Koyama, Director MJS Centre, Macquarie University

Favourite memory from time on JET: The memories I have at school with the students have to be my fondest. I remember sitting with students at lunch time talking about Australia and travel and feeling like I had really inspired them to use their English and explore the world. These moments were definitely special and made me realise why I came to Japan.

Favourite holiday spot in Japan: I really loved so many places in Japan, because they are all so different and unique! But Kyoto has to one of my favourite spots. The beauty, culture and tradition in Kyoto never ceases to amaze me and showing Kyoto to my Australian friends and family was always something I looked forward to.

Best thing about where you lived: Sendai is such a great city to live in with a real community feel. Sendai has the benefits of a city, with great shopping and variety of restaurants but also has so much natural beauty, with hiking spots, oceans, mountains and trees. The community really look out for each other in Sendai and I noticed that in its friendly nature as a city.

Why would recommend the JET Program to others?

Definitely! Going on the JET Program was the best experience of my life. I taught so much about myself, the world and gave me a different perspective in how I approach Japan and Japan. I developed so many close bonds with people in Japan and from all over the world. Being a part of the children’s lives as an ALT and helping them achieve their goals was very rewarding and has now led me to be where I am now, studying to be a Japanese teacher in Australia.

Why did you decide to join JETAA NSW?

After learning about the JET Program I wanted to stay connected with Japanese culture, people and also others who had participated on the program. I also wanted to support others who would be participating in the JET Program and help them achieve their goals and share my experience in my own way. I am really excited to give back to JETAA and organize a lot of fun events as the Event Coordinator.

Ms Haruko Asakura receives Consult-General’s Commendation

Ms Ashlie O’Neill
Assistant Language Teacher (ALT)
Hynes High School
2013-2016

At the Himeji Yuraku Festival 2015

Favourite memory from time on JET: My favourite memory on JET was the day I sat and watched one of my students compete at the state speech contest. She was a quiet student from my ESL club who had not believed 6 months ago that she was capable of making a speech in English (especially in front of a large crowd). When she took the stage and opened her mouth she projected confidence, power and enthusiasm. She got the attention of the room and delivered every sentence and joke with her own personality injected into it perfectly. After her speech her mother handed me a letter. In the letter she explained about my student’s struggles in life and how she did not believe in herself until we began training. Being a JET I’ve been able to identify with my student’s struggles in life and with a high level of competition every year, I’ve had a student’s moments where I could see positive changes in those around me in school, my community and other JETs.

Why would you recommend the JET Program to others?

The JET programme changed my life. I learnt how to be a great teacher and communicator. Getting involved with your local community means that you can try new things and meet new people. Also getting involved in your local AJET chapter or National AJET will give you useful skills for the future, regardless of what you plan to do in life after JET. JET provided so much to me and surprised me every day. It will also give you a platform to travel and learn in a way that is unique and so very unlike being a tourist. Why did you decide to join JETAA NSW?

As the AJET Director of Alumni Relations I learnt a lot about JETAA. Becoming involved with JETAA not only allowed me to understand how important I feel about Japan and my experience but it also gives me the opportunity to do new things and meet new people. It’s been really important during my return to Australia. I am really excited to give back to JETAA and organise a lot of fun events as the Event Coordinator.

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Ms Elly-Kate McEwan
Assistant Language Teacher (ALT)
Sendai, Miyagi, 2014-2016

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Learning language, learning culture

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