

JETAA 2019 Oceania Regional Conference

From 4 to 6 October, the JETAA 2019 Oceania Regional Conference was held in Sydney. JETAA is the alumni association for former participants on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme. Members from JETAA chapters in Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) and Singapore met to discuss the management and future direction of JETAA.

The JET Programme Alumni Association (JETAA) was created in 1989 to strengthen and maintain the bonds of friendship developed between JET Programme participants. The purpose of JETAA is to promote through its activities a broader and deeper understanding between Japan and the countries participating on the JET Programme. JETAA is a self-supporting alumni association and currently has 52 regional chapters located in 18 countries/regions encompassing approximately 22,000 members.

The theme of the 2019 Oceania Regional Conference was *2020 Vision—Looking Clearly to the Future*, held at the Japan Foundation, Sydney, which generously provided the venue. Presentations were given by each chapter and topics included supporting returnees' career development, using networks, contributing to exchange and international understanding between Japan and home countries, as well as how to remain relevant in the era of social media and the constantly changing internet, and how to keep regional members involved and included. Given the area that many of the Australian and New Zealand chapters cover, this last point is an important albeit challenging consideration.



On the opening night of the conference, a reception to welcome the delegates was held by the Consulate-General of Japan in Sydney, hosted by Acting Consul-General MATSUO Hideaki. Joining the JETAA representatives were supporters of the JET Programme, including academics from NSW universities and representatives from Japanese government organisations based in Sydney. The reception was honoured by the attendance of Mr Geoff Provest MP, representing the Acting Minister for Multiculturalism in NSW.

Conference delegates with Ms Ashlie O'Neill, President of JETAA NSW [front, 4th from left], Acting Consul-General Matsuo [front, 5th from left], Mr Geoff Provest MP [front, 5th from right], and Mr ISOBE Hiroaki from CLAIR Tokyo [front, 4th from right].

More than 7,800 Aussies and Kiwis have been on JET since 1987.

In 2019, there are 5,761 participants from 57 countries, and since its creation more than 70,000 participants from 75 countries have taken part in the JET Programme. In Australia and New Zealand alone, the number of former participants is more than 7,800. That represents a sizeable network of people to foster understanding between Japan and Australia and New Zealand.

JETAA is not just about former participants. Committee members of JETAA chapters help to promote the future of the JET Programme in practical ways, working with local diplomatic missions to give presentations about life on JET and helping with the selection process of prospective JET participants. JETAA chapters, such as JETAA NSW, also forge ties with other Japan-related groups in their area holding a range of social events to create even broader networks.



So what is the JET Programme? The Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme is a Japanese Government-run program which aims to foster internationalisation within Japan and improve foreign language education (largely English) while also promoting international understanding between Japan and JET participants' home countries. The JET Programme has been running since 1987 and has grown to be one of the largest international exchange programs around the world. Australia was one of the four original participating countries.

There are two main positions: **ALTs**—Assistant Language Teachers and **CIRs**—Coordinators for International Relations.

Learn more at:

www.jetprogramme.org