JAPANESE TEACHERS' NETWORK TASMANIA (JATNET)
PRESENTATION OF STUDENT AWARDS FOR THE
2026 TASMANIAN JAPANESE SPEECH COMPETITION
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2026

VICE-REGAL SALUTE

Good evening, everyone, and *yōkoso* to Government House.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all this evening for the presentation of awards for the Japanese Teachers' Network Tasmania's 2026 Japanese Speech Competition.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Palawa people as the First Peoples of lutruwita/Tasmania and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather.

For countless generations, they have cared for this island, its landscapes, waterways and communities. I feel very fortunate to call Tasmania home.

I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to any Aboriginal people joining us this evening. Your continuing contribution to the cultural, social and spiritual life of our State is deeply valued.

The Japanese Teachers' Network Tasmania, or JATNET, is a wonderful volunteer organisation supporting Japanese language education and the dedicated teachers who inspire students across our State.[1]

I am particularly pleased to share that I recently accepted the invitation to become Patron of JATNET. It is an honour to be associated with an organisation doing such valuable work, and I look forward to supporting its contribution to language learning and cultural exchange in Tasmania.

Each year, JATNET brings students together through competitions in poster design, calligraphy and speech. These events celebrate not only students' developing language skills, but also their creativity, curiosity and enthusiasm for Japanese culture.[2]

Learning another language opens a door to another culture. It helps us see the world from a different perspective and creates opportunities to connect with people whose experiences may be very different from our own.

Rob and I were fortunate to spend time in Japan a couple of years ago, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We were particularly taken by the warmth and hospitality of the Japanese people, the richness of the culture and the wonderful balance between a deep respect for tradition and an embrace of modern life.

Since I commenced as Governor, we have also enjoyed a number of diplomatic meetings and engagements with Japanese representatives. These experiences have reinforced the importance of the friendship between Australia and Japan, and the many connections that bring our two countries together.

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[1] https://sites.google.com/site/japaneseteacherstasmania/welcome
[2] https://sites.google.com/site/japaneseteacherstasmania/student-engagement/speech-competition/senior-competition

Those connections are strengthened through education, cultural understanding and the relationships that develop when people make the effort to learn one another's language.

For the students here this evening, learning Japanese may be the beginning of something much bigger. It might lead to travel, further study, new friendships or career opportunities, or simply a lifelong interest in another part of the world. Whatever path it takes you on, I encourage you to keep learning, practising and, above all, being curious.

It is very encouraging to see the strength of Japanese language education in Tasmania, with Japanese currently taught in more than 65 schools across the State, supported by around 50 dedicated teachers.

Tonight, we also celebrate the achievements of approximately 300 students who participated in this year's speech competition. That is a wonderful reflection of the enthusiasm for Japanese language learning in our schools and the commitment of everyone involved.

Preparing and presenting a speech in another language takes considerable effort. Students are assessed on pronunciation, intonation, fluency and body language, but we can all appreciate that the achievement goes well beyond those criteria.

It takes courage to stand before an audience, express your thoughts and communicate in a language that may not be your own. It takes practice, persistence and a willingness to step outside your comfort zone.

In such a strong field of Japanese learners from across Tasmania, those receiving certificates this evening have been recognised for presenting outstanding speeches in their respective year levels and categories.

To all the students who entered, my warmest congratulations. Whether or not you receive a certificate tonight, you should be very proud of what you have achieved. Having the confidence to speak another language and share something of yourself with others is an accomplishment in itself.

I would also like to acknowledge the teachers who have encouraged, guided and inspired these students. Language teachers do so much more than teach vocabulary and grammar; they introduce young people to new perspectives and cultures, and help build bridges between communities.

To the families and friends here this evening, thank you for the encouragement and support you provide.

And to JATNET and its volunteers, thank you for your ongoing commitment to Japanese language education and for creating opportunities for students to challenge themselves and celebrate their achievements.

It is a real pleasure to be part of this celebration. I hope every student leaves tonight feeling proud, encouraged and inspired to continue their Japanese language journey.

Now, it is my great pleasure to present certificates to the students recognised by the judges as outstanding in their respective year levels and categories.

Congratulations to each and every one of you. We look forward to seeing where your enthusiasm for the Japanese language takes you.

Thank you, and do enjoy the evening.